

Be Prepared, part 2 – Counting the Cost

Last week we looked at the first step in preparing ourselves for Christ's return and the trials of life. Who knew that we would see the largest military action in Europe since WW2 kick off this week? We don't know what this may lead to, whether those results are higher prices for goods, humanitarian crises in Europe, or a new world war. Whatever trials may come our way, the one sure need is ensuring we are "in the faith." As Jesus asked, "what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" We identified several components to saving faith. First is to acknowledge our sinfulness, that we are guilty before a holy God. In that recognition of sin there is also the concept of repentance, a changing of the mind or a turning from sin. It's not enough to just say, 'yep, I'm a sinner,' and continue on in it. As Paul said in Acts 17:30, God "commands all people everywhere to repent." Second, we believe that Jesus died for our sins and was raised to life again for our justification. As I said last week, this isn't simply an academic belief, but an ongoing action, placing our trust in His sacrifice, His death as our substitute. Third, we confess with our mouths what we believe in our hearts. Confessing our guilt, our sinfulness, and also confessing Christ Jesus as Lord. I mentioned last week we need to acknowledge that Christ Jesus is God in the flesh, but there is another important element to this; our submission to Him as master, Lord. Full surrender.

The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Cor 5:14-15 "for the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." If you claim Christ as your Savior and Lord, you no longer live for yourself, but for Him. 1 Cor 6:19-20 state, "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." Your life is placed at His disposal, to be used for His purposes. Paul in Romans 6:18-22 said we are slaves of God and slaves of righteousness. A slave is at the beck and call of his master, ready to obey every order. This has implications for the initial receiving of salvation as well as the ongoing process of discipleship.

Let's take a deeper look at this concept of discipleship. In Luke 14:25-33, Jesus delivered some difficult words to the crowds of people who were following Him. "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. 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.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."

Counting the cost of discipleship. We often talk about forgiveness of sins and the blessings that accompany our faith in Christ, but we sometimes ignore or overlook the costs. Jesus gave this message to the crowds of people who were following Him, as a kind of gate check for those who were ready to commit their lives to Him. He emphasized that for some of us, the cost of following Him will be the loss of our families. Are you still willing to be His disciple if your family disowns you? He used the picture of bearing the cross – that is an instrument of suffering and death. If that's what God calls you to, are you still willing to be His disciple? A disciple is a student, a learner, one who comes under the discipline and

order of a teacher. Are you willing to do whatever the Master tells you? Notice that in the examples of the builder and the king, the cost was counted before entering the venture. Then Jesus said that if we are not ready to renounce all that we have, we cannot be His disciple. What about your career, your plans, your wealth? Is Jesus worth more than these things?

Now, once you make that choice to follow Jesus, you also need to know there is a promise Jesus gave related to all this. We find it in Matt 19:29, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life." There is a reward offered in exchange for what we give up here. Whatever we give up for Christ's sake, we are sure to receive many more blessings in return. We may not see them here in this life, but we will certainly see them in eternity. The question is, are you ready to give up the temporary, in order to serve your Lord and Savior now, and to receive the eternal blessings in heaven? This is what discipleship is about. This is how we prepare ourselves for the future, knowing that any sacrifice for Him here is rewarded in eternity.

As His disciples, those who have been bought with a price, we also need to be reminded of the cost Jesus paid for us. This is one reason we are commanded to keep the Lord's Supper. Look back at some of the verses we already talked about this morning. 2 Cor 5, "the love of Christ controls us, because...one has died for all...who for their sake died and was raised." 1 Cor 6, "for you were bought with a price..." Our salvation cost was paid by the death of the Lord Jesus. He suffered horribly in order that we might live and have our sins forgiven.

Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, instructed the disciples "do this in remembrance of me." We take the unleavened bread, which represents the sinless body of our Lord, and break it, as He was broken on the cross for our sins. We're told to examine ourselves before we partake of this, lest we eat and drink damnation on ourselves. That's how seriously God takes this. To eat this bread without faith that His death was for you, is to become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. If you are a disciple of the Lord Jesus, having faith in His sacrifice for your sins, you are invited to partake.

Next we read that Jesus took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." Just as His body took the punishment our sins deserved, His blood satisfied the debt our sins incurred, and by paying that debt, freed us from condemnation. By our faith in His blood payment, we enter into a new covenant relationship with God the Father, and we commemorate that by drinking this cup. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."