

AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP
According to Jesus and His Doctrines of Grace

CHAPTER 3
AUTHENTIC SEVERE DISCIPLESHIP
AND COMMITMENT

AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF

LUKE 14:25-35

PREFACE TO CHAPTER 3

From the very beginning of the Christian experience (initial salvation) Jesus becomes Lord as well as Savior. That Lordship over His disciples is essential at beginning and during and concluding Christianity in this present phase. Jesus' Lordship is as basic as deliverance from sin. In fact, it is itself the fundamental of deliverance from sin. One is not delivered from sin from any other source except the Lord Jesus Christ. Lordship is the essential of salvation because of the resurrection, not only proving He is indeed Lord of Creation, but by affirming His death as absolutely sufficient for His Lordship's reign over, and thus His deliverance from, His disciples' sin. No disciple exists an authentic disciple without this Lordship. There is no deliverance from sin without the reigning Lordship of the Savior over the sin in every disciple. Hence, Jesus must be Lord else He is not Savior, both in essential reality of His Saviorhood and in the essential reality of the salvation of His authentic disciples.

Throughout the years of ministry among a large number of very distinct churches (yet each presuming always to be Christ's Bible-oriented church), we have seen much deviation from real Christianity, in doctrine and in lifestyle.

By deviate lifestyle we mean that people who profess to be real followers of Jesus Christ live lives that are so foreign to His ways as to be a reproach upon Biblical truth. These professors of religion live as though Christian discipleship is a sideline, a partial hobby, and a sometime on, sometime off, experience. With these pretenders everything comes before Christ—business, job, family, recreation. But authentic discipleship is a supernatural enabling by the Sovereign Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus' teaching in *Luke 14:25-35*, our study text for this chapter, requires that absolutely nothing will come before Him in genuine or authentic disciples.

By deviate doctrine we mean failure to comprehend Jesus' sovereignly provided grace that effects His required discipleship in fallen humans. In *Luke 14* Jesus requires the life of a disciple be lived for virtue, for others, and for Him. The doctrine held by these vast numbers of religious professors argues a Christianity void of God's grace and void of God's initiation, as if people of fallen natures can be good, do good now, and hence experience good in the afterlife from themselves and by themselves, while living only for themselves.

Christ showed in *Luke 14:1-14* that love—mercy, humility, and graciousness—are vital realities in His real disciples; and in *verses 15-24*, He taught those virtues come only through a spiritual calling from His Holy Spirit, Who changes the natural human into the supernatural disciple by an altogether sovereign act. Christ's teaching in *verses 25-35*, our text for this chapter, shows that His supernatural disciple rejects, turns from, and repudiates all other relationships with other persons, possessions, and primacies, in favor of Jesus Christ. This expository study in this chapter clarifies this teaching from Jesus Christ concerning the supernatural disciple and is the truth of His required Authentic Severe Discipleship.

Amen!

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The Severity of Christian Discipleship *Luke 14:25-35*

²⁵ *And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them.*

²⁶ *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.*

²⁷ *And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

²⁸ *For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?*

²⁹ *Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,*

³⁰ *Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.*

³¹ *Or what king, going 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?*

³² *Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.*

³³ *So likewise [better, So therefore], whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

³⁴ *Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?*

³⁵ *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.*

Luke 14:25-35

Volume II, Chapter 3

AUTHENTIC SEVERE DISCIPLESHIP
AND COMMITMENTITS SEVERITY ACCORDING TO JESUS
AND HIS DOCTRINES OF GRACE*Authentic Discipleship is Determined only by
Jesus Whose Disciples We Are.*AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF *Luke 14:25-35*The Sword and the Trowel:
The Battles and Building of Christ

True discipleship is not easy, but is strict and uncompromising, and connotes a total absence of softness, laxity, and frivolity. Christ could never win the battles to be fought against His archenemies' forces if He attempted to fight with self-indulgent and lax disciples. He has no room in His army for slack and sluggish warriors else His cause in the gospel be brought to reproach, and shame be attributable to His Father's name.

In addition, Jesus requires rigid and tight, exact and precise discipleship for the building of His church. He assembles His own Body as the perfect structure, mandating workmen who hold a plumb line, and fit the structure together true to the level. Every joint must be fitted exactly with no loose, careless, or sloppily laid stones. There is always the possibility of failing His quality control, or of running short of resources, or lacking patience, or steadfastness, or strength, or one of the ten thousand other required means; therefore Jesus' own standards require Him to demand no less from His disciples than He required of Himself. Indeed, Jesus Christ has only a severe discipleship to offer men.

A Sanctified Strategy

Christ's strategy is simple. The enemy is formidable; Satan is a worthy opponent. He is imposing and impressive in his evil sanction and use of devious and conniving and underhanded and deceitful tactics by all his veteran corps. How could Jesus expect to win for the honor and glory of His Father's Kingdom if He were to enlist anything but the best for His army and building crew? He needs hard and stern, tough and serious, disciples if He is to win, else when using flesh-entrenched troops they retreat or turn against Him in the heat of battle, else while fashioning His Body some hideous, shabby, and unstable building emerge from the fleshly-oriented designs of carnal propensities. No! This must not be. Such a thing must not be even imagined; therefore Jesus made it clear that His qualifications for true discipleship call for stringency and austerity. Disciples must have a disposition that is completely sold-out to His cause. His sanctified strategy is to win at all cost; and that cost is a severity of life in His disciples, which alone assures honorable victory in the holy war, and a majestic embodiment of Himself in His Church.

This teaching from Jesus is the most poignant and penetrating of His requirements for success where Jerusalem and Israel had failed. This is Jesus' ultimate word regarding authentic discipleship.

Contextual Considerations

These severe requirements for discipleship are immersed in the events of this Sabbath day and with Christ's complaint of the Jew's deficiency concerning their duty to receive Him, and to fulfill Jerusalem's task serve to God.

³¹The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.

⁰⁰ *Matthew 16:16*

³² *And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.*

³³ *Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.*

³⁴ *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!*

³⁵ *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

Luke 13:31-35

The first of Christ's ministry had for three years been aimed at verifying to His disciples Who He was. Until Peter's great confession, Christ had by miracles and teaching shown conclusively that He was *the Christ, the Son of the living God.*⁰ Since that confession, Christ has now to teach His disciples of His coming death, resurrection, and departure. The Apostles especially had to have His Deity firmly fixed prior to their confrontations with their Messiah's death, not to mention Christ's emphasis now upon their similarly self-deprecating life of severity as His disciples. This overriding emphasis concerning authentic discipleship then becomes paramount for that essential training to ready His disciples for that day of His exodus.

Luke's arrangement has laid a foundation for this teaching concerning full and unreserved commitment to Christ. In the just given parable, it is Christ's Servant that is instrumental in assuring lovers of Jesus their power and provided provisions to be authentic disciples. Luke now will give Christ's most stringent and demanding requirements for His Disciples.

Following this teaching on His severe discipleship in our text, *Luke 14:25-35*, Jesus described the kind of men who are called into His Kingdom—not righteous or godly or guiltless, but only the lost, *15:1-32*. First they are sought for by Him, Jesus, The Great Shepherd. Second, the Holy Spirit illumines them concerning their lost condition. And third, they are Divinely chosen, Providentially prepared, and awaited and longed for, by the Father. Only lost and hopeless prodigals can be enabled to become true disciples, because only they who are made self-aware of personal evil and emptied of self, as was the prodigal son, are ready to be called to Christ. Only then can a man be made fit for joining Christ in battling for and building up the Kingdom of God.

Analysis of the Text

Our text verses, *Luke 14:25-35*, records Christ's teaching that just such an emptying of self and just such spiritual preparation as related in the parables of the Lost (*Luke 15:1-32*) and the Great Supper (*Luke 14:15-24*) are necessary for true discipleship, because it is a severe and harsh, demanding, discipleship. The severe characteristics of mercy, humility, and graciousness already presented in *verses 1-14*, are now joined by this severe austerity of complete devotion to Christ's work of Kingdom priority. In fact, this severe discipleship can only be realized in those who have indeed been divinely and spiritually called, and then empowered by the same Spirit Who originally called. The terms of God's spiritual calling and its severe conditions, which are impossible for and repulsive to men of the natural realm, are accurately and essentially related in our text verses.

Christ had been teaching His disciples of the coming death and resurrection awaiting Him in Jerusalem (*Luke 9:22*), and had Himself *steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem* (*Luke 9:52*). His crown would be set aside in favor of a cross, and it is

that cross which is now to be the disciples' burden also. He must have in His disciples the same kind of austere and devoted discipline that compelled Him under the threat of death on to Jerusalem, if He would ultimately accomplish the intended objective of His death at Jerusalem. Therefore, Jesus first stated plainly His terms for discipleship in *Luke 14:25-27*. Second He justified those terms for discipleship through two parables and a summarizing requirement in *Luke 14:28-33*. And third, He applied those terms for discipleship through the use of a final parabolic illustration in *Luke 14:34-35*. In accord with this analysis, we would divide our exposition thusly:

- I. Christ Declares His Severe Terms for Authentic Discipleship, *Luke 14:25-27*.
- II. Christ Requires His Severe Terms for Authentic Discipleship, *Luke 14:28-33*.
- III. Christ Applies His Severe Terms for Authentic Discipleship, *Luke 14:34-35*.

I. CHRIST DECLARES HIS SEVERE TERMS FOR AUTHENTIC DISCIPLESHIP

And many multitudes were going along with Him, and having suddenly turned, He said to them,

If anyone comes to Me and hates not his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and yet further, even his own soul, he is not able to be My disciple.

Whoever does not support his own cross as a [personal] burden, and come behind me, is not able to be a disciple of Mine.

*Luke 14:25-27 ADT*¹

Having now left the Sabbath day feast, our text has Jesus continuing His tour of Perea with great multitudes following Him in His final approach to Jerusalem. But there is a close connection between this first recorded teaching following that feast and the teaching of the Parable of the Great Feast given at that Sabbath day feast. That parable (*vs. 15-24*) centered upon His Servant compelling the Gentiles to enter the Kingdom. This work of compelling is the effectual work of the Holy Spirit, perceptibly effected through the testimonies of the disciples of Jesus throughout this gospel period. The substance of the invitations are the testimonies of word and life by the subjects of the Kingdom, who are the disciples of Jesus, being validated by the Servant in the parable, the Holy Spirit. As they live merciful, humble, loving, and gracious lives, their testimonies of truth are carried home to hearts through the operations of the Holy Spirit. But that Servant, the Holy Spirit, must have dedicated, elite, and intense disciples through whom to work. Christ means to show exactly and clearly the severity of His own terms of discipleship. He must maintain a certain class of disciple with whom His Holy Spirit will work in order to carry out His important work of building His Kingdom's ranks with fit soldiers of the cross.

¹ We will place our translation throughout this exposition. It is not meant to replace the Authorized Version or any other translation, but is included in order to help readers in personal study and understanding of this passage. It is the result of considerable study and meditation, and will be denoted, ADT.

Jerusalem had failed in the task assigned it by Christ. Now He would establish a new order so that the Great Feast in heaven would be filled with guests. Once for a short time, Jerusalem stood as the garrison of God's mighty battles against sin in man. It stood as the Temple of the Living God. But now Christ would install a new spiritual garrison from which to launch the holy war. He would build a new Temple of living stones for a habitation of God through the Spirit. Consequently, he must set a higher priority for these soldiers and workmen. He must and will succeed where Jerusalem failed.

Want-a-be Disciples

*And many multitudes were going along with Him, and having suddenly turned, He said to them,*² *Luke 14:25 ADT*

During this final period of His ministry, Christ's cross was becoming the dominant and ever increasing burdensome reality for Him. *Luke 9:51* confirms this in the words, *He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*. Christ was approaching a cross of suffering, humiliation, and in the end of it all, death. What disgrace and dishonor would be temporarily associated with such an ignominious end! These thousands of unthinking people flocked around Him in order to share in His crown. Like the Pharisee to whom Jesus had just taught the Parable of the Great Feast, these multitudes of followers were mindful only of the externalized kingdom for externalized subjects. These 5,000 plus were following behind Jesus as He walked. Jesus, after a sudden physical turn to face them (Greek aorist, pointed tense), spoke to them this teaching about true discipleship. He meant to check their hollow, earthly enthusiasm through this very deliberate and calculated act. If they really understood that a cross awaited Him at Jerusalem and not a crown, their ardor would cool considerably.

² Jesus was followed by a *great multitude* KJV. The Greek has the same words used by John of the feeding of the 5,000 in *Jn. 6:2*, rendered there a *great multitude* KJV, cp. *6:10*; the only difference being the Greek singulars in John (*οχλος πολυς*, lit. "a crowd much") while the words in our text are plural (*οχηλοι πολλοι*, lit. "crowds many"). This means that the number here following Jesus during His final approach to Jerusalem was a crowd of at least 5,000, probably much greater, as suggested by the plurals in Luke.

Their eager applause would dim to cries of *Crucify Him, Crucify Him*, and to a *Give us Barabbas*. Then the spiritual Kingdom would be inaugurated by His death. The death of the King was required. Even before Calvary He was already bearing His unseen cross, carrying the reality of His sufferings of guilt for the sins of His own people. It lay heavily upon His consciousness until finally the sweat as drops of blood would test His faithfulness to the task of the Kingdom ideal realized in Himself. This dramatic act of turning suddenly would check the wild eagerness of the ignorant multitude of want-a-be disciples. Jesus is about to declare the severity of discipleship, because He wished no followers upon whom He could not count in the heat of battle or in the grueling pace of building His Kingdom's ranks. He desired no discipleship numbers for numbers' sake. He would stop false want-a-be discipleship in its false want-a-follow tracks.

Luke, in the *order* of his gospel, means for this and all the subsequent teaching on this Sabbath day to confirm the appropriateness of Jerusalem's rejection that he recorded in *13:35*. Jerusalem and all Israel lacked this true spirit of rigorous pursuit of God's reign in everyday life. This rigor of commitment, this stringency, this austere self-extermination, would prove to be the foundation of the Kingdom in Christ Himself. Therefore, He requires no less in His disciples, and He will declare in no uncertain terms the extreme harshness of His commanded discipleship.

A Question of Priorities

If anyone comes to Me and hates not his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and yet further even his own soul, he is not able to be a disciple of Mine.

Luke 14:26 ADT

Jesus elsewhere confirmed love for one's family, and that men are to honor parents (q.v. *Mt. 15:3-6*). Even when hanging on His cross, Jesus remembered and honored His mother (*John. 19:25-27*). Jesus taught that kind of love, but here He means for all who come to Him to understand the appropriate difference

between adherence to Him and adherence to family, and *yet further even to his own soul*. The interchange of feelings between family members, and *yet further even* within oneself for oneself, must be properly consigned. Proper priorities must be acknowledged and observed.

Comparative Hate

Jesus uses the word *hate* in its comparative meaning; that is, hate suggests here “to prize less dearly.” The same use is found in *Genesis 29:31* when *the Lord saw that Leah was hated* [by Jacob]. But in *Genesis 29:30*, Jacob’s love for Leah is confirmed, while being readily acknowledged as less than his love for Rachel, *He [Jacob] loved also Rachel more than Leah*. The word *also* requires that we acknowledge Jacob’s love for Leah *also*. This comparative hate does not void human love, but consigns it to its lesser importance in comparison to the higher and eternal divine love.

The Lord’s words here, *and yet further [you are to hate] your own soul* (*life* in KJV, ASV), would be in direct contradiction to the apostle’s word in *Ephesians 5:29*, if taken very literally in their fullest meaning, and this comparative meaning is not understood,

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.

Ephesians 5:29

But Jesus’ own teaching elsewhere will clarify this human love versus divine love,

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

[Added emph.] ***John 12:25***

The little phrase, *in this world*, signifies the life meant. Certainly, no disciple is to hate the Life that is possessed of God! And so it is the same with the *hate* in our text. This love for family is really an altogether human love in this world. While it is not to be conceived as a “worldly love,” still it is a love that is of this world, of this flesh, of this physical existence. It is as Paul said in *II Corinthians*

5:16, *Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh.* He meant that the mere human relationships are of no importance as regards his spiritual ministry, but only the divine, the everlasting, the infinite relationships with other men are to be considered as worthy of his attention.

What Jesus is teaching is this: When one comes to Him, all other attractions in life are of less importance than the new close relationship that He must establish with His disciple. Even those between husband and wife will not come before His. In fact, one's loyalties and priorities will center upon Him alone. Even in one's own soul (*life* KJV) Christ demands absolute precedence. It is in one's soul that this foremost position is to be granted Christ. The soul is the medium which houses the likes and dislikes, one's desires or inclinations about one and a thousand even trivial as well as important ideas and concepts and things. It is one's thoughts or ideas about a million things. It controls what one desires and decides in this life. It is the course of one's dreams and ambitions. The soul is everything of one's life; it is one's "being," or identity, in one's self-consciousness in its entirety. That, all that, takes a second seat to true discipleship. Coming to Christ, really coming to Christ, gives all that up for Him; that giving up for Him is itself the priority.

That is the loyalty required, demanded, expected, and warned about by Jesus. The life *in this world*, and all else in this place down here that is the activity of human existence takes a secondary place to Him and to His work. Every disciple lives *in this world*, and even though a resident of it, gives up his prerogatives for it. Before coming to Christ, one possesses exclusive rights and privileges to a peculiar franchise called life or living or "doing one's own thing." But as a true disciple to the true King in the true Kingdom, all that is changed. One's individual rights are given up to the King and Savior. One's peculiar prerogatives in all pursuits of life are secondarily regarded. Now, the King, the Christ Whom this new disciple has approached, sets upon the Id or inner throne of one's

Self. Now the self-ego has given way to the Indwelling Christ. No longer is the priority oneself, but now it is He. That is authentic discipleship; and that is what Jesus still claims today from all would-be disciples.

Hate?

However, if this comparative meaning for hate were conclusively and finally adopted, why did not Jesus simplify it by saying that? He could have said, "If anyone comes to Me and does not prize less dearly his father, etc., he is not able to be My disciple." While strictest interpretation must acknowledge the comparative meaning given above, still one must not discount altogether the idea of perfect and unabridged hate. If one asked Jacob, "Do you hate Leah? Surely you must love her a little. She has borne your children. She is your first and, therefore, true wife. Do you really hate her?" He might amplify this concept of hate which our Lord also used by answering, "Yes, I do hate Leah when compared to the love I have for Rachel. When Leah hurts Rachel or hinders my relations with Rachel, I hate her. I hate anything and everyone who would in any way affect my love for Rachel." This idea is also in our Lord's words.

When father, or mother, or wife, or yet further, one's own soul's desires and decisions estrange one from Christ, the true disciple will feel absolute hate towards them or it. In fact, the whole of all the created things in this world's enterprise, which opposes his Christ and Lord, is hated absolutely by the true disciple.

For whoever hath obtained from Christ a full knowledge, taste, and desire of God and heavenly blessings,...has also a contempt and hatred of self and of the whole creature [i.e. creation] that is subject to vanity, a hatred at once noble and at the same time devoid of all bitterness.³

—John Albert Bengel, 1864

³John Albert Bengel, New Testament Word Studies (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971) I, pp. 169-70.

Do you hate the life in this world? If not, you are not His disciple. Everything in this world, everything in the flesh, and every exercise of the Devil is opposed to your Lord. Everything of *this world* seeks, and successfully accomplishes in differing degrees, to separate you from the Savior. You must hate everything of *this world*, even those things ordinarily closest to you, if and when they hinder your relation to and the enterprises of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If you cannot hate those things listed here by Jesus, you as well cannot be His disciple.

My Own Cross

Whoever does not support his own cross as a [personal] burden, and come behind me, is not able to be a disciple of Mine.

Luke 14:27 ADT

The words of Jesus about hate for one's own life led into this additional explanation of the severity of discipleship. He moves from hate to death, the death of one's own soul or life. The true disciple *bears* (KJV) or supports his own cross. There are in the Greek New Testament three words that the human writers used to describe cross bearing. In Matthew and Mark αἰρω is used when describing the action of Simon bearing the cross for Jesus on His way to Calvary. The word they used emphasized the "taking up" or "picking up" the cross. Luke used the word φερω when referring to the same incident to emphasize the movement or transport of the cross by Simon. Only John used this Greek word for Christ's cross bearing which is also found here in *Luke 14:27*, βασταζω.

The meaning of this word is best understood in its use of Jesus' own weakened support of His wooden cross. He had been beaten, lashed, and physically abused. The extremities of His injuries are understood best by studying the Old Testament prophecies because they best depict and describe His condition at that time. He had been severely traumatized and was infirm to the point of nearing an entry into shock. Simon was not bodily weakened when conscripted to carry the cross; therefore αἰρω or φερω is used of his cross bearing. He was

healthy and in good physical condition. But for Jesus the cross was an enormous load. He was weakened to the point of finally being physically unable to continue to carry it at all. Realizing this, the soldiers in charge drafted Simon to carry it the rest of the way to Calvary. The point of all this explanation is this: Christ referred to the cross bearing of true discipleship in those same terms as His own burdensome and exhausting cross. This Greek word is not used freely of cross bearing in the Scripture. It is reserved for real, arduous, strenuous, and onerous carrying of a weight which tries and tests one's endurance. Just as Jesus' cross was more than He could physically endure, so also is the cross of discipleship often so exhausting that the true disciple may be nearly overcome from its burden.

The disciple's cross is not borne as a light, easily lifted and carried object. It will be to the disciple as Jesus' cross was to His weakened and frail condition. It will be a burdensome inconvenience and perplexing distress. The false thought is often presented, thinking to exalt Christ and to encourage some weakened soul, that Christ will always bear your cross with you, and that He will always make it a pleasing and free-from-impossible-trials affair. But Jesus says that our cross of discipleship is as His cross, and it is a personal cross. We must bear it, support its awful taxing and rigorous demands upon us, and no one else. Our cross may indeed become so weighty that we fall under its stress, but unlike Jesus Who had Simon, we have the inner Indwelling Christ to help with the spiritual and emotional, but not the physical. We also find in the church Christians who heed the admonition to *bear ye one another's burdens*, but our crosses are personal; therefore that reference is not to cross bearing. We must take up our own cross and alone bear it as we go in behind Him to our own personal Calvary. Our personal cross will be a burden; just as Christ's cross was extremely hindering, just as it was an impediment to ordinary movement, just as it offered only stricture and confinement, just as it was tiring and exhausting and painful, so also will the disciple find his own cross.

The cross of true discipleship will never be any thing that Christ's cross was not. Since Jesus' cross was voluntary, so is His disciple's cross. No sickness or injury, no providential accident, no ugly circumstance, is a real cross. Nothing that comes upon us involuntarily is cross bearing. We take our own personal cross up and come after Jesus by an act of our volition. And it cannot be a shared burden; that is, a friend, or loved one, or one's pastor, or spouse, cannot lessen its weight. Each cross is as particular as was Christ's. No one could have borne Christ's cross except the God-man; no one could perform the task required by Christ's cross but Jesus. And also, my works, whatever the burden or cost, can only be performed by my own self-sacrifice and death to self. Furthermore, Christ's cross was vicariously carried for others. It was just to benefit others that Jesus carried the cross to Calvary, certainly not to pay for His own crimes. Likewise, the cross of true discipleship is a self-humbling dissolution of self-interests in order to promote the welfare and good of others. His cross determines the limits and sets the broad parameters of our crosses.

The Enterprise of Jesus: The Cross

Each disciple has a specific burden (cross) in a particular area of service to be carried out to completion in the face of all opposition or difficulties. But the profundity of the cross concept and a disciple's duty to bear it, is best understood in the light of the then common practice of crucifixion.

It was an often repeated spectacle for a convicted criminal to be seen carrying a rather large wooden beam upon which he was to be put to death. While at times the beams or poles for crucifixions were already at the site of execution, other times when they had to be taken to the site, the condemned persons were made to carry them. A man must suffer a terribly excruciating and agonizing death by being nailed to a pole stuck in the ground, and to add to the insult, he is forced to exert his last remaining strength to help supply his own personal implement for it all. The very last activity

of his life, of enjoying being an entity, of achieving and existing as a living creature, must be spent in an activity that only promotes the end of it all. That is what cross bearing is about.

Jesus spent the last waning energies of physical life bearing the same instrument by which His life would be ended. He was so weakened that His Human creatureliness cried out within Him,

Conserve your energies, you are weak, your life is nearly drained, save your life and cease this foolish work of bearing the instrument that will end your life. Stop contributing to your own demise! Your very actions are draining your endurance, and all this spending of yourself is only going to hasten your own death. Stop carrying that cross and save yourself.

True discipleship? What is it? It is that same cross bearing as Jesus' was. It is spending yourself for others, which exertions are the very means of an unalterable end to your own chief desires (selfishness). Such a death to self comes only when one has *come after* Jesus. The word *after* means "behind," and is used figuratively by Jesus in the sense of an adherent. Christ is demanding of you and of me that this cross bearing be done as an adherent of His, as a disciple, as a follower. The disciple comes right behind Christ. We bear the burden of our crosses just as He did. There is a succession of supporters right behind Jesus, following Him with the same actions and ministry as He had. Everything that His cross bearing was, ours must be, short of atonement. All the enterprises of Christ were wrapped up in His bearing His own cross, and then dying upon it. Similarly, every disciple is to be engaged in that same kind of fatalistic enterprise as Christ. We must contribute to our own peculiar death to self, bare the burdens of our service voluntarily, and exert our remaining energies to fulfill the eternal purpose of our Father in heaven, all the while knowing fully that these actions which we take irreversibly guarantee and heighten our own loss of selfish life.

II. CHRIST JUSTIFIES HIS SEVERE TERMS FOR AUTHENTIC DISCIPLESHIP

For who of you desiring to build a tower, would not first, when you sat down, count the cost, if he has [sufficient] for completion?

Unless, when he has laid a foundation and not having resource to finish, all who see begin to ridicule him,

Saying, This is the man. He began to build and had no wherewithal to finish.

Or what king going to attack another king in war sits not down first and determines if he is mighty with ten thousand to meet [adequately] him who comes with twenty thousand.

Otherwise, while he is far off, he sends an envoy asking the things toward peace. *Luke 14:28-32 ADT*

After explaining the severity of His terms for discipleship, Jesus now begins to justify those terms to His hearers. Jesus wants us to understand why He demands such a severe discipleship. He does this through the use of two parables, meant to exonerate any charge of unfairness for such demands as He has just stated.

A Sword and a Trowel

And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. *Matthew 16:18*

After the great confession of Jesus' Deity by Peter, Jesus then made His own great confession as to His use of His powers of Deity as the Savior of men. He announced that He was to build His Church, His Body, and be its Head to supply it with living entity, and to make of it an alive organism. In this process of building, He would battle the gates of hell and prevail against the Devil and the evil he promotes. His enterprises of building His Body, and the subsequent warfare that this involves, are difficult tasks. Therefore, He must have only dedicated disciples such as *verses 26 and 27* described. Here in these two parables He is suggesting to us that planning a building, we make sure it will be completed; and if fighting a war we would not settle for defeat if we had opted for no compromise. Therefore, how much more must He.

I am building an habitation of God through the Spirit. I am pulling down strongholds through the might of God. I must have the very best adherents for handling the sword and the trowel in order to complete My building and to win the holy war.

—Jesus Christ, 35 AD

In that way Jesus speaks to us through these two parables.

A Completed Building

For who of you desiring to build a tower, would not first, when you sat down, count the cost, if he has [sufficient] for completion?

Unless, when he has laid a foundation and not having resource to finish, all who see begin to ridicule him,

Saying, This is the man. He began to build and had no wherewithal to finish.

Luke 14:28-30

Great care must be taken in interpreting this and the second parable. It is imperative that strict rules for interpreting parables be observed. This will guard against the all too common errors connected with these and many other parables. Since a parable is a human story which parallels a spiritual truth, and since a parable's characters and objects represent some true persons and things, one must be careful not to confuse the symbols with the spiritual realities. Those spiritual realities are the reason for this parable. In the present parables, Jesus is not suggesting a disciple do in his own spiritual life what the tower builder or king did. Notice carefully the words of Jesus, *For which of you (v.28)*. These words mean that this tower-builder is really doing what any ordinary person would do. The tower-builder, the king, and Jesus' listeners (we) are the symbols and not the spiritual reality of the parables' application. That is important to see. Common everyday logic, in other words just plain old common sense, represents some other higher spiritual logic used by Whomever the tower-builder and king represent. Jesus is the spiritual Tower-builder and the spiritual King represented by those persons in the parables.

He is not teaching in these two parables, “This is what you are to do to become a disciple.” But He is saying, *Reasonable preparation by any thinking person—any of you for instance, who wanted to avoid the humiliation of being ridiculed—would not attempt to build a tower that his resources could not complete, or start a war he could not win.* These parables are revealing Jesus’ strategy, and justify His strict requirements for His disciples. The parables show His own logic, His own planning, and vindicate His procedures that will assure His final and complete success. He is the Tower-builder, and He is the King represented in the parables, Who counted the cost and is sure to finish what He has started. His planning required that He possess adequate resources in His holy construction and war; His sanctified rationale calls for dedicated disciples. His builders and battlements will be of the same excellent caliber as He.

The correct translation of *verse 33* is the principal reinforcement for this proper understanding His words. After He gave the parables, Jesus immediately began to apply these terms of strict discipleship, saying,

Under such circumstances, therefore, every one of you who does not repudiate all his resources ⁴ is not able to be a disciple of Mine.
Luke 14:33 ADT

The Authorized Version has contributed to the misunderstanding of this entire passage by incorrectly translating the opening Greek particles of *verse 33*, *So likewise*.⁵ *A therefore*, which is the correct translation,

⁴ The Greek word here used is interesting. It is a plural neuter present participle of υπαρχω, which is a compound of υπο, “under” + αρχη, “beginning” in the sense of existence or a sort of originality and authority. With the neuter participle, it might be rendered “things of existence,” with the idea of one’s possessions on which we humans must subsist in order to maintain physical life. The word denotes absolute needs as well as wants.

⁵ Here the Gk. reads ουτως ουν, lit. *So therefore*, as also ASV, NAS, RSV. The KJV, *So likewise*, is one of the more unfortunate translations in the usually excellent Authorized Version, whose improper idea here of *likewise* has been continued in many modern translations and by most expositors to this day. The proper understanding of this one Gk. phrase is the key to a [fn. cont.on next p.]

brings the parables' correlation to Jesus, and not to us disciples. In *verse 33*, Jesus is saying in effect:

I used common sense like these two in these parables, just as you would in a similar situation, "therefore" whoever does not repudiate every worldly possession and become entirely dedicated to Me, cannot be My disciple at all. I have determined that to be successful I must have an uncompromisingly severe discipleship corps.

—Jesus Christ, 35 AD

From eternity Jesus has planned His Building (His Church, us Christians) to be erected during, and from the spoils of, His holy war. He chose each building stone,⁶ and counted the supreme cost for the construction.⁷ The price for the construction of the Building was also the first Royal Casualty of the war, His own precious Life. Disciples must also count the cost required for their own discipleship. That is a part of this teaching on the severity of discipleship, but only indirectly and in the sense of knowing fully what true discipleship really entails before making a profession of Christ. This passage is not directly teaching that in these parables, but refers to Jesus' cost counting alone. These two parables teach what Jesus had done from eternity.

A No-compromise Warfare

Or what king going to attack another king in war sits not down first and determines if he is mighty with ten thousand to meet [adequately] him who comes with twenty thousand.

Otherwise, while he is far off, he sends an envoy asking the things toward peace. *Luke 14:31-32 ADT*

[Fn. cont. from prev. p.] proper understanding of this entire passage, and just what Jesus is really meaning. Just how instrumental this one mistranslated phrase has been in minimizing Christ's demand for severe discipleship, and in developing the present day Laodician spirit of lukewarmness, only eternity will reveal.

⁶ I.e. us Christians, *1 Peter 2:4-5*.

⁷ *1 Peter 1:2* with *2:5*; *John 15:16* with *Ephesians 1:3-5*.

It was a somewhat common practice in the ancient world to negotiate with a threatening kingdom if the odds were against successfully repelling their threat.

Behold I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it.
Isaiah 13:17

In this verse from Isaiah's prophecy, God made plain to the Southern Kingdom of Israel that Babylon would one day be overrun by the Medes, and in that day the Medes would not negotiate when they came against Judah's enemy, Babylon. Usually, precious metals or other lesser commodities could be given to appease a potential invader, as referenced in Isaiah's text; but the Medes would not be so easily restrained from attacking Babylon.

In His parable, Jesus used that practice as an illustration, that of sitting down first with an enemy to ransom one's threatened land. But unlike the sometimes-compromising earthly rulers, Jesus could not make concessions to the evil forces of darkness and remain holy. God's victory must be complete. Therefore, that was out of the question. Christ had already considered this, and had determine that to win He had to have soldiers who could unquestionably defeat such a menacing enemy as Satan's kingdom of darkness.

Satan and his forces present a formidable foe; his armies are well organized, filled with trained veterans who are battle-hardened. He knows absolutely no restraints on his corrupt and treacherous and deceitful tactics. No method is beneath his use. Also, according to the numerics of the parable, twenty thousand against ten thousand, the odds against Christ's army are two to one. The edge falls to the forces of darkness, the odds are in favor of evil, and much seems to be overwhelmingly against Christ's final victory, if He did not prepare His forces adequately.

These kinds of completely dedicated disciples, therefore, are essential for total victory. He could not compromise the victory for God, and compromise He must if His terms for His disciples are

not maintained. This means that all unfit disciples who seek to engage the enemy will fail. Unfit disciples are strangers to the rigors of real cross bearing, and are as David's *faint* warriors who shared in the victory over God's enemies, but had to wait with the *stuff* while the battle was being waged.⁸ The privilege of sharing in the actual defeat of the enemies of Christ, the joy in seeing the "powers of hell" crushed before the powers of the Savior's army, the exhilaration of seeing men and women and boys and girls *delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son*, the miracle of being a part of translating persons *from death into life*, is reserved for and is only possible through a severely disciplined discipleship corps. Christ's forces will not be overcome, or ever be allowed to compromise a complete and final victory in any way; therefore Jesus' terms of severe discipleship are necessary, and these facts of His strategy vindicate those severe demands. Amen!

Dog-lappers only

And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place.
Judges 7:7

The children of Israel faced an overpowering antagonist in the hordes of Midianites who had encamped in the east end of the Plain of Esdraelon in the Land of Israel. They *destroyed the increase of the earth...*, and left no sustenance for Israel, ... for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. They had *impoverished* the people of God (Judges 6:4-6). But God moved to deliver Israel through Gideon, and when the time came for their deliverance, He called him to the difficult task. However, God had "counted the cost" for victory, and said to Gideon, *The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me* (Judges 7:2). God must use

⁸ I Samuel 25:13; 30:10, 21-24

an elite force of specially endowed men who would not shrink back from the overwhelming odds against them at some critical time. In this way the victory would be so clearly His own that the glory of the victory would be His alone as well; therefore He instructed Gideon to allow all the *fearful and afraid* to go home (7:3). There had been 32,000 men with him for the engagement of God's enemies, now there were 10,000 (7:3). But there were still too many for God's use and glory.

God then instructed Gideon to make a final discriminatory cut in their number by causing them to approach a water source for a drink. Out of the remaining 10,000, whoever put their mouths on the water to suck up a drink were to return home with the 22,000 fearful men. However, *Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself;...By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand* (7:5). Out of those remaining 10,000, only 300 men met God's precise and severe requirement. Chapters 7 and 8 relate how God gave Israel the decisive victory through these 300 dog-lappers. The host of Midian was enormous, the odds against God's forces were perhaps 500 to 1, but the rout of the enemies was a thorough one.

The lesson to be learned is parallel to Christ's teaching in our text. God had a strategy for victory that used only 300 select men. Those men, by lapping up their water, perhaps from cupped hands raised up to their mouths, evidenced their primary concern, not for the satisfying of self-need, but one of alertness and intensity for God's interests. The water-suckers fell to their knees to fulfill their need for water quickly; it was their major concern, revealing a mind to bodily needs. But the dog-lappers considered their thirst only as secondary in importance. They must remain upright, alert, and the water drinking is only casually done. Only with these kinds of disciples would God win a battle of such overwhelming odds. Men who had their minds and their hearts in God's work could certainly be counted on when the awesome and

nearly devastating odds against God's forces would be even more distinguishable—500 to 1. God had counted the cost; He knew that only attentive and self-denying men—filled with the importance and priority of God's program—could assure a victory when faced with the seemingly disastrous odds against winning.

This was also the sanctified rationale of Christ from beyond eternity. He also counted the cost for building and for battling. These severe terms of discipleship are necessary for the glory of the victory to be indisputably God's. The work of building His Church, and the ferocious combat of His holy war plays upon the needs and fears of His disciples. True discipleship extracts an extremely injurious and costly toll from disciples. That costly toll is not of any spiritual value, that is, it will not cost any disciple any eternal endowments; but is the toll of worldly concerns, pursuits, and pleasures. The true disciple must be set upon not making this world—its wants or even its needs—his primary concern, motive, or pursuit of this life. Therefore, Christ, as God did in Gideon's forces, must refuse any untried, lazy, self-indulgent, alive-to-self, material-minded, and even necessity-minded followers. Only disciples whose priorities are properly "dog-lapper oriented" will succeed in the King's building program and battlefield prowess. They alone of all other kinds of disciples will face the overwhelming odds against them in this world and never turn from the extreme heat of the fiercest battles of the Lord. Accordingly, alert and intense, dead-to-self-and-to-this-world, disciples are the required resource that will insure a no compromise victory. Christ will send no envoy into the Devil's camp to work out a negotiated truce with evil. He will have an irresistible rout of Satan's forces. That will only be possible, to the glory of God, by using a few, select, dedicated, and sold-out disciples. He will have it no other way because it can be no other way.

III. CHRIST APPLIES HIS SEVERE TERMS FOR AUTHENTIC DISCIPLESHIP

Under such circumstances, therefore, every one of you who does not repudiate all his resources is not able to be a disciple of Mine.

Therefore, [true] salt is good; but if even the salt should become insipid [foolhardy], with what will it be seasoned?

It is not suitable for the soil, or even for manure; they cast it outside. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Luke 14:33-35 ADT

The Greek word rendered *So* (KJV), and *Under such circumstances* (ADT) in *verse 33*, is meaningfully used by our Lord. Its use means that He is in effect saying ,

Since these things have been taken into account, since I have counted the costs for My Building, the Church; and I have determined the strategy necessary for its complete and uncompromised victory, I must have these terms of discipleship met absolutely. Since the very demands of common, everyday logic would necessitate this determination concerning My disciples, I assure you that I have done no less; and that unless you repudiate every substance of your life and being, you cannot be My disciple.

—Jesus Christ, 35 AD

That is the beginning of His application of His severe terms for true discipleship.

Sold-out Disciples

Under such circumstances, therefore, every one of you who does not repudiate all his resources is not able to be a disciple of Mine.

Luke 14:33 ADT

Does this saying from Jesus mean that all saved persons must immediately sell all their possessions in order to be an effective disciple for Jesus' Kingdom? No, unless He should

specifically instruct you personally to do that. But ordinarily, that is not what He means here. The Greek word translated *repudiate* above in the Author's Translation, or *forsake* in the Authorized Version, is the key for understanding His teaching here. The Authorized Version's *forsake*, as well as the New American Standard Version's *give up*, are really not representative of the Lord's meaning. The idea of His meaning might best be illustrated using again the episode with Gideon. The temper exhibited by the dog-lappers is the same concept here. They *repudiated* the value of water as being of primary importance at the moment. In view of the relatively important task which lay ahead of them—namely, fighting the Lord's battle—they were disinterested in fulfilling any personal pursuit, even those of personal bodily needs, if it hindered the more important spiritual matters at hand. They lapped the water because they were not primarily interested in satisfying their thirst. Their primary concern was to remain alert and intense in the things of God. That is Christ's meaning in this first application of His own severe terms for discipleship.

Jesus is not teaching His disciples to decline ownership of things, or to reject as “worldly” all possessions. He is teaching His disciples to disavow or to cast off with condemnation any real value to possessions. He desires for His work, disciples who consider wealth and things as having no authority, worth, or validity, compared to the real issues of building His Kingdom structure and of fighting in the spiritual battles for His claims. He demands a sort of indifference toward possessions, family, and even self when it comes to Kingdom good. He is seeking disciples who exhibit a dog-lapper philosophy, which is a commendably wise impartiality towards physical life.⁹ There must be a certain lack of selfish motive or desire for personal gain. A certain aloofness from the things of this life, even those considered necessary, is possible only because there is no emotional involvement or struggle for personal pursuits. Jesus means that for true discipleship to become a reality

⁹ Compare *Philippians*. 1:21-24.

one must *repudiate all resources for My Kingdom*. May He by His Holy Spirit captivate our minds in order to effect such a temper in us!

Powerless Disciples

...*he cannot be my disciple.*

...*[he] cannot be my disciple.*

...*he cannot be my disciple.*

Luke 14:26, 27, 33 KJV

After every solemn statement and strict demand of His severe terms for discipleship, Jesus used this same sentence or phrase. Each time He declared a severe requirement in a conditional statement, and then added that if it is not met or fulfilled, *he cannot be my disciple* (KJV). He said it first following the priority of His discipleship over all mere human relations (including self) in *verse 26*. Second, He stated it following His requirement for personal cross bearing in *verse 27*. Third, He summarily repeated it when applying His severe terms to the literal refutation of all worldly matter and matters in *verse 33*. Three times He repeated that if a particular criterion would not be realized in a person's life, *he is not able to be a disciple of Mine* (ADT). It becomes obvious, therefore, that all three are requisites, and they together will be the disposition and experience of all true disciples. While the lack of just one of these mark a person as a false disciple, not even one of the three can be eliminated from Christ's austere specifications for true discipleship.

If the translator followed a very literal process in dealing with this sentence, *He cannot be my disciple*, and the principal Greek word, δυναμαι, used in its construction, he could come up with something like this: *Not he has power to be, occur, or exist a disciple of Mine*. Smoothed out it would become, *He has no power to be a disciple of Mine*, and again, *He has no power to exist as a disciple of Mine*. One might even add a bit of paraphrastic interpretation and come up with, *He possesses no*

power to exist as a disciple of Mine.¹⁰ Since this Greek stem, δύω, is used prominently for the power of the Holy Spirit in such well known texts as *Acts 1:8, But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you*; and since the Holy Spirit calls the elect both to salvation and regeneration with this same δύω-power, this use by Christ is an obvious interpretive reference to the power of the Holy Spirit, which power must be very unmistakably explicit in true discipleship.¹¹

This means that there is a certain disposition in all true disciples which, without exception, (1) will readily choose the correct priorities in life, (2) will readily choose to take up one's personal cross in life, and (3) will readily choose to repudiate all material possessions when given a choice by Jesus. Christ mentioned the important, fundamental, and distinctive displays of genuine loss-of-selfism; and leaves the hundreds of other individual displays unspoken. However, since Christ exclusively names these three, they are absolute in His required demands for true discipleship. No true disciple will fail in any one of these three or *he cannot be my disciple*.

By being thrice used, this sentence, *he cannot be my disciple*, more than suggests that one must have become (1) a "priority-orientated," (2) a "cross-bearing," and (3) a "repudiating-all," kind of disciple, at least in conviction, if he is a true disciple and not just

¹⁰ The Author has done what he considers considerable research into this Greek root, δύω, and its correlated words, which is largely responsible for his liberties with it. Multitudinous authorities could be mentioned to justify such "liberties"; but the word is so profound in its usage in the Greek New Testament that it would require volumes to demonstrate its complex meaning and usage adequately. Perhaps Mr. Walter Grundman's contribution to the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, D-H (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), pp. 284-317, would be a place for the scholarly seeker to start.

¹¹ This "power" from the Holy Spirit, both to become and to continue as a disciple of Jesus Christ, is the especially focused theme and recurring emphasis of the New Testament, and hence is also the focus of much of this series on Authentic Discipleship. Indeed, it is just this power of the Holy Spirit which distinguishes between true "Lord and Savior possession" or false "Savior-only profession," between Authentic or Unauthentic Discipleship.

a false professor. For many, salvation indeed seems to pivot upon their unwillingness to come to Christ because of these kinds of demands placed upon them. Certainly, salvation and eternal destiny rest upon becoming this kind of disciple. In addition to referencing the power to become a disciple, effective and useful discipleship is the primary emphasis with this thrice-repeated phrase. There can be no strong discipleship except the disciple is meeting these three severe terms. Too many true disciples, after once submitting to these kinds of requirements when first saved, allow themselves sometimes to drift away from first this one and then the other of these rigors.

We should therefore pay the more careful attention to what we have heard, so we may nowise drift by.

*How shall we escape in case we [true disciples] neglect so great a salvation?*¹² *Hebrews 2:1,3*

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

How shall we [true disciples] escape, if we neglect so great salvation. [Added emph.] *Hebrews 2:1,3 KJV*

This *drifting by* of *what we have heard* is severely condemned throughout the Book of Hebrews. This *what we have heard* does include every aspect of severe Christian discipleship; every true disciple *heard* its severity and entered the *strait gate* and began to walk the *narrow way*. The Author of Hebrews, when warning against allowing one's original commitment to Christ and His severe terms for discipleship to *slip* away, strengthened his admonition with the threat of an apostasy which would end in destruction, which in turn would prove one's false profession of the Savior to have included no possession of the Lord.¹³

¹² Gerrit Verkuyl, The Berkeley Version (Grand Rapids:Zondervan Publishing House, 1945), p.238.

¹³ See *Hebrews* 6:1-8.

No Power

This power or strength concept is the most meaningful aspect of this thrice used phrase, *He cannot be my disciple*, and should be applied to both the initial experience of salvation as well as to the continuing discipleship of building and battling for the Kingdom of Christ. The original has the Greek word, δυναμια, used each of the three times with precisely the same Greek syntax, or construction. The word's basic meaning is to "be able"; it concerns ability, that is, being in possession of strength enough to become a disciple, and being in possession of strength enough to accomplish the work of a disciple. Both notions are present in Christ's meaning. The person who fails to recognize proper priorities, to volunteer to personal cross bearing, and to repudiate all worldly goods, displays impotence at possessing and fulfilling authentic Christian discipleship requirements. He has no strength to be a disciple in the sense of origination or actualization. The lost person can never begin true discipleship, nor can the saved person ever succeed in true discipleship amid the temptations of one's own fleshly nature and this world's hostile environment, without this ability from God's Holy Spirit.

There are several important implications in this phrase in addition to, or better, in relation with, this strength concept. One is Christ's use of the Greek "to be" verb as an infinitive following δυναται, and could be translated *he has no power to be, or to exist a disciple*. While generation ("becoming" something) is not usually attributed in this "to be" infinitive, there is the idea of existing, being, living, alive. Like the English "to be" verb, "is," or "are," its import is one of actuality, reality, authenticity. Jesus denies that one can "exist" as a disciple without this power; implying also that no one can have this power or ability except true disciples; or rather, one cannot effect this kind of severe discipleship without this faculty-building power. Just as He said,

If any of these three conditions are not met, you cannot actually, really, authentically be My disciple, because such incompetence exhibits a powerlessness which is altogether foreign to true disciples. They are called, regenerated, and functionally indwelt and pragmatically enabled to be My austere and severe disciples through the ability that My Holy Spirit provides them.

—Jesus Christ, 35 A.D

The “Of Mine” Disciples

Another ramification in this Greek sentence is the phrase *a disciple of Mine* (ADT). English usually will smooth this terminology with the simple possessive, *My disciple*, but the literal Greek puts it in language that seems to make this meaningfully personal. Notice that it is a *disciple of Mine*, not plural but singular, not impersonal but personal. A *disciple of Mine* is a *disciple who is of Myself, Jesus*, that is, each disciple is the outgrowth of Jesus’ authority, offspring, and ability. There is a personal ownership and origination idea involved in true discipleship. Every true disciple is the personal possession of Jesus Christ, because each is the product of His personal choice, generation, and genius.

I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. John 15:5, 16

In each of the three strict requirements of the text, there is this *Of Mine*, or very personal, aspect of true discipleship. First, in *verse 26* it is the exceedingly personal relations with Jesus which take priority over the most intimately individual relations between man and wife, and the personal relations within families—between family members, parents and

children, brothers and sisters. No human relation is so personal as that relationship Christ Jesus establishes with each of His singular, personal, individual disciples; and none other has His priority. Second, in *verse 27* it is “a” personal cross that is to be taken up after Jesus, or close behind Jesus. Each disciple has one type of ministry to fulfill, which relies upon one individual relationship to maintain with the Holy Indwelling Christ that will enable one’s service to be perseveringly accomplished throughout one’s life. Third, in *verse 33* this individual relationship is contrasted with the earthy, material, the physical, the touchable; but it is Jesus Christ Who is heavenly, intangible, spiritual, the “Untouchable One” to the five senses, Who is the possession which exceeds, excels, predominates in the true disciple. While the many physical needs of a body are exceedingly personal and strongly driven, still they pale into an almost insignificant second place in favor of the Spiritual Presence of Jesus within that body. Amidst all the human relationships, amidst all other disciples’ ministries, amidst all the material order, there is the relation with Jesus which is exclusively with one disciple, each disciple, a special disciple, an *Of Mine* Disciple.

Furthermore, this “Of Mine” concept is most meaningful in another way. The original is a simple genitive case of the personal pronoun, εγώ, or “I.” The genitive refers to kind, class, sort, and helps to distinguish the relation of the personal pronoun, *I*, with the word it matches, *disciple*. Therefore, we have the meaning of the Greek genitive case defining a relation between Christ and His disciple. Together with the basic meaning of the genitive case, we would have something like this: *He possesses no power to exist as a disciple of My kind, class, sort, or type.* Jesus is claiming most emphatically that there is a certain species of disciple which is of His type, kind, class, or sort; and that this is the discipleship which is demanded in *verses 26, 27, and 33*. In each case the discipleship required is the kind which is “My type of disciple.” Only a disciple who acknowledges proper priorities,

who bears a personal cross, and repudiates material possessions as Jesus did is of the Jesus kind, of the Jesus sort, of the Jesus class of disciple. No other kind of disciple fits into that species which alone agrees with, and thereby appropriates support from, Him, thus meeting with His approval, and thus able, powerful, and mighty to fulfill authentic discipleship.

Christ would stress for His own disciple that the ability to build for Him, and the ability to engage in spiritual warfare for Him depends not upon one's personal ability, but upon His. Only the self-emptied, self-destructed, and self-disinterested disciple has the ability of the Holy Spirit in Kingdom work. The lazy, self-indulgent, and worldly disciple finds all his resources to be powerless to lay a brick on the edifice of God or to shoot an arrow at the enemies of Jesus. Christ, by the Holy Spirit, is building and battling, and He uses only those intense and alert disciples who subscribe wholeheartedly to the severity of His terms of discipleship. Only then is He able to fill them with His own competent and effectual ability.

Savorless Disciples

Therefore, salt is good; but if the salt should become insipid [lit. foolhardy], with what will it be seasoned?

It is not even suitable for the soil nor even for manure; they cast it outside.

Luke 14:34-35 ADT

A powerless disciple is a savorless disciple. Surely the words which ended the preceding verse, *He cannot be my disciple*, appropriately introduce this parabolic teaching on unsalty disciples. Christ likens undedicated disciples to savorless, insipid, tasteless, salt. That is salt which lacks taste or flavor, and is, hence, figuratively applied to disciples who are lifeless, dull, and not sharp. They have no real tang or zest; they are not excited about nor interested in the Kingdom work of King Jesus. Since all Christians have become *the salt of the earth* by infusion of His qualities through the indwelling Holy Spirit, obviously, those disciples lacking a zeal and fervor for those qualities are saltless because they

are Christless. They are dull in Kingdom enthusiasm. The Greek word really means, *foolhardy*, when applied to persons. It is as if Jesus personified savorless salt negatively, as He personified elsewhere true and good salt positively,

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.
[Added emph.] *Matthew 5:13*

Only His severe terms of discipleship will produce “salty” disciples. The tang and zest of energetic builders and battlers will have a preserving sharpness in the Kingdom on earth. But what of the savorless and undedicated disciple? He is suitable for nothing, not even for the manure pile, which would at least produce growth in vegetable life. His only use is similar to use made of insipid salt in those days of Jesus’ sojourn; they cast it out in the roadway. It was good only to be walked on by both the good and the evil, indiscriminately. And that will be the lot of insipid disciples; they are fit neither for heaven’s work nor for the Devil’s craft, but are only suited to be walked upon by both camps. Christ must have sternly disciplined servants who fill up with the power of His Indwelling Presence, and by His agency, put to death the enemies of His Kingdom. They hold a steady hand to aim the arrows accurately at the target, and their expertise maintains a true and plumb wall to adorn His Structure. That is the salty disciple, and is true or authentic discipleship.

A Hearing Ear

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Luke 14:35b

Who are these who have *hearing ears*? They are the enlightened souls who have been brought to Jesus and are regenerated. The Holy Servant went out and compelled them to come to Christ’s Kingdom Banquet in glory, *14:23*. Meanwhile, they are the ones who are *of God*, because they do indeed *hear* the words of Jesus in the inner soul when effectually called by God, so that they comply with the Words’ instruction always,

Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word

He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
John 8:43,47; 10:27

Jesus is in effect saying,

You enlightened men. You who have been given ears to hear what the masses of mankind will never know. You, My children, My sons, Hear! Hear! Hear! These instructions are for you. Oh, My dear sheep, you who so much need leadership from your Shepherd, let these words come down into your souls. You must become one of My dedicated disciples by subscribing to the severity of My terms of discipleship. Become a vital member of My "Elite Three Hundred Brigade" by following My demands. I require priority over all human relationships, over all self-interest, and over all material possessions. If you really "hear," then you will be used in building My Kingdom in this world; and you will be a warrior who will be brilliantly decorated with the honors of My ultimate victory.

—Jesus Christ, 35 A. D.

Amen!

In *Luke 14:25-35*, Christ essentially teaches that just such a spiritual enabling as related in the Parable of the Great Supper (*Luke 14:15-24*) is necessary for true discipleship, because it is a severe and harsh and exact discipleship. This certain severity and austerity is another of the characteristic virtues required in His disciples, and is to be added to the mercy, humility, and graciousness already presented in *verses 1-14*. In fact, this severe discipleship can only be realized in those who have indeed been divinely and spiritually called, and then empowered by the same Spirit Who originally called. The actual terms of God's spiritual

calling and its severe conditions, which are impossible for and repulsive to the natural realm, are definitely the guarantee of success for Christ's disciples. He has carefully planned His building and battling resources, and will only call upon a certain kind of disciple for the work of His Kingdom. He will succeed where Jerusalem and Israel failed because He will enlist only dedicated disciples, who are called into a holy vocation by the Spirit, Who calls only those whom He empowers to answer that calling.

That is Authentic Christian Discipleship. Amen!