

The Cost of Declaring His Glory

by Helen Roseveare

The cost of declaring God's glory is a spiritual sacrifice that involves surrendering one's heart, soul, and body to God, but it leads to a greater privilege of sharing in the fellowship of His sufferings.

Duration: 24:27

Scripture: Psalm 22:1, Isaiah 11:1, Isaiah 49:2, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:29, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 3:10

Topics: "Suffering For Christ", "Gospel Surrender"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of facing persecution and suffering for their faith. They describe a brutal attack on their home by cruel men during a rebellion. The speaker recounts being physically assaulted, with their glasses broken and teeth shattered. Despite the intense pain and fear, the speaker reflects on the privilege of being identified with Jesus and the realization that their sufferings are actually the sufferings of Christ. The sermon emphasizes the importance of fully surrendering to God and being willing to endure any cost for the sake of the gospel.

Transcript

The cost of declaring His glory to the nations. What is cost? It's an entirely relative term that can only be understood in reference to the value set upon the object obtained. If I say that I've just been out and spent a thousand dollars, and you thought I'd gone out to buy a pair of fur gloves, you'd consider it a rather high cost.

But if in actual fact I'd gone out and bought a new sports car, you'd consider it considerably cheaper. And yet the same money involved. As you have perhaps watched me destroying what was a beautiful imitation of a branch of forsythia, ruthlessly pulling off the brilliant blossoms, destroying its ability to reproduce, pulling off its glossy leaves, destroying its ability to breathe and feed, snapping off all the side branches, cutting off the knots, smoothing the rough places, destroying its shape and form, and then even stripping off its very bark, its protection against rain and sun, destroying even that which gives it personality and power to live.

What a pointless waste, you may have thought. At what a cost, had it been a real branch of forsythia, at what a cost in mid-winter. But wait a moment.

As the stripping and the whittling and the sandpapering processes are completed, what results from the rough though beautiful branch? The arrow. Somewhat perhaps here, Goliath, but never mind, that's what

the back rows can see it. Yes.

And when one sees the polished shaft fit to carry the arrowhead direct to its target, a perfect balanced tool in the hand of an expert archer to achieve a destined goal. Does the cost now seem quite so high? Was it really a pointless waste? God says that he will make of his branch, Isaiah 11.1, a polished shaft, Isaiah 49.2, and he longs to make you and me more like unto Jesus, conformable to the image of his son. Am I willing for the stripping and whittling and sandpapering through circumstances, companions, or committees, to make me into that perfect arrow to achieve his wonderful purposes in and through my life? For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

During my 30 years as a Christian, 20 of them spent in Central Africa, I have known something of the pressure of the hand of the master archer, whittling away on my life, my character, my habits, my attitudes. And there's certainly been times when I felt like crying out to him, stop, I just can't stick anymore. And yet, he graciously whittles on.

Perhaps you think I'm being facetious. Not really. Seven months after I was converted, in July of 1945, I stood at the great missionary gathering at the Keswick Convention in North England, along with several hundred others, to declare publicly that I would go anywhere he sent me, whatever the cost.

Afterwards, I went up into the mountains and had it out with God. Okay, God, today I mean it. Go ahead, make me more like Jesus, whatever the cost.

But please, knowing myself fairly well, guess, when I feel I can't stand anymore and cry out, stop, would you ignore the stop and remember that today I said, go? Well, I guess he's graciously taken me at my word through the years. The first and great commandment says that I should love the Lord my God with all my heart. He so loved that he gave.

Cost. I should love the Lord my God with all my heart, which will involve a spiritual cost. With all my soul, involving an intellectual, emotional and volitional cost.

And with all my might, involving a physical cost. The first of these, that it will cost me all my heart. We were well taught in missionary training college to count the cost.

Involving such things as leaving home and loved ones, possibility of remaining single, leaving my job and therefore the security of a settled salary or future pension. Accepting that God is responsible, not only for myself, but also, should one marry, for the husband or wife, the children, their education, their safety. One would also leave the comparative safety and security of our home system of justice.

There would be problems of communications, not merely language, but of cultural expression, which could well lead to loneliness. There may well be long hours of thankless toil at a job for which one doesn't really feel trained, such as a doctor building a hospital, leading to overtiredness and sore hands. Often there is a load of responsibility dumped on one that almost crushes and leaves little time for the essential waiting on God alone to receive the needed daily strengthening.

After building a 100 bed hospital and maternity complex, developing a training school for national paramedical workers, caring for a growing number of regional clinics and health centres, the day came when on a medical ward round in the hospital I got mad with a patient and let rip. The fluency in Swahili rarely surpassed. As we left the ward and were crossing the courtyard to the men's ward, my African

assistant quietly put his hand on my arm and rebuked me.

Doctor, he said, I don't think Jesus would have spoken like that. I'm sure he wouldn't. But it wasn't easy to take from a student from the forest land.

We returned to the ward. I apologised and John, my assistant, preached the gospel. This was really merely a symptom of my state of heart.

Shortly afterwards my African colleagues made it possible for me to go away for a 10-day break. I went to our local pastor's home, an African pastor, basically that I might sort myself out with God. Eventually, after three miserable days, Pastor Ndugu came to my help.

Helen, he said quietly and patiently, why can't you forget for one minute that you are white? It was the first of many appalling shocks as he opened up to me something of my heart condition, including this race prejudice. Subconsciously, I had not really believed that an African could be as good a Christian as I was or could know Jesus just as I did. Slowly, Pastor Ndugu led me back to the cross, to a new level of identification, for a new cleansing from this racial pride and many other subtle forms of pride that he made me recognise and face up to, and for a new filling with Calvary love.

When I returned to our hospital village the following Monday, I was met by a group of my African team. And before I could begin to try and explain, one burst out, hallelujah! I hadn't said a thing. I looked at him astonished.

Oh doctor, he said, you don't need to say anything. He said, your face tells us we've been praying for you for four years. And I'd gone out to them as their missionary.

The first major cost was to my pride. But from then on, I entered into a new heart identity, not only with our Lord Jesus, but also with my African friends and co-workers. Secondly, God had to teach me that his service would cost me all my soul, mind, emotions and will.

During my first five years in Africa, I had a growing desire to be married, have a husband and home and children. I urgently wanted someone to carry the burden of responsibility, to share with, to whom to pass the buck when things went wrong. Yeah, there's still the other side to women's lib.

I came home on my first furlough, determined to get what I wanted. A Christian surgeon, called to missionary service with weck, in Congo, willing to be my husband. Well, such don't grow on trees.

God kept on saying to me, pass the buck to me, I can carry it. Lean on me, I can support you. Love me and let me be a husband to you.

But I hid out and argued back. That wasn't the sort of spiritualized husband I was looking for. I wanted a husband with two arms.

And I told God that he just didn't understand. After two bitter years of struggle, I gave in, at least outwardly, and went back to Africa, single, to do the job that God gave me, to obey him. But with a chip on my shoulder.

I was almost bitter against him. I was not satisfied emotionally. And I felt God had offered me second best.

For four years he wooed me, to accept him in a new sense of emotional unity. But I kicked against his way. I did what I should.

I said what I should say. I taught in church and in schools. I was a good missionary, so far as others could tell.

But on this level of emotional involvement, I held myself aloof from God. But he wouldn't let me go. So the rebellion came.

I was taken captive by rebel soldiers. They stole my possessions. They stole my privacy.

And eventually they stole even my purity. And through the brutal, heartbreaking experience of rape, God met with me, with outstretched arms of love. It was an unbelievable experience.

And he was so utterly there. He was so totally understanding. His comfort was so complete.

And suddenly I knew, I really knew, that his love was unutterably sufficient. He did love me. He did understand.

He understood not only my desperate misery, but also now my awakened desires, my mixed up horror of emotional trauma. I knew now that Philippians 4.19, my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus, was true on all levels. Not just on a hyper-spiritual shelf, where I'd tried to relegate it.

But I found that this new exquisite joy was going to cost me my prerogative to choose my own way. To exercise my own will. It was almost though he demanded in exchange a total acknowledgement of no rights to myself.

It would indeed cost me my soul. When I returned to Zaire after the destruction of the rebellion, six missions were led to unite their efforts to create one medical centre with a training college for national medical auxiliary workers. And I was invited to join the team to develop this latter part of the work, the training college.

In other words, to be architect and builder, medical director and lecturer. A few years later, as more staff joined us, national and foreigner, I found myself becoming more and more a glorified office boy, keeping the accounts, doing all the behind-scene administration. And I didn't like it.

Wasn't I a surgeon? The college principal? A senior, quote, missionary? Surely God, I grumbled, any old bod could be doing this job. So, I suspect that what he answered was, yes, that's why I've put you there. It was an African staff member who reminded me when I expressed my frustrated dissatisfaction.

We can't all be the last link in the chain. And I had to learn from them teamwork. As a result, as a result of accurate office work and the resultant government liaison, the college was ultimately recognized.

And today, 100 officially diplomed graduates from our training school are reaching over 8,000 patients daily with a good medical service and also with the clear preaching of the gospel. I was one of a group. All rights to self, what I want to do, whom I want to love, where and how I wish to serve, have to go.

Cost number two, if I am to be fully identified with him and to love him with all my soul. Thirdly, the living sacrifice of the body. Romans 12, 1 and 2, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, which indeed is our

spiritual worship.

Being physically identified with our Lord, loving him with all my might. I well remember the night I was converted. Dr. Graham Scroggie was at the house party, giving the Bible studies.

And he wrote in the flyleaf of my Bible, Philippians 3.10, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings been made conformable unto his death. Tonight, he said, you've entered into the first part of that verse, that I may know him. My prayer for you is that in the years to come, you will learn more and more the power of his resurrection as you go out to serve him.

Then very quietly, looking straight at me, he said, maybe one day God will give you the privilege to know something of the fellowship of his sufferings. That night, as I went up to bed, I tried to thank God for the amazing joy that flooded my whole being, the sense of newness, the sense of belonging. Then I added, somewhat incoherently perhaps, please God, if you can possibly agree to it, would you give me the privilege of serving you as a missionary? Perhaps almost under my breath, adding, whatever the cost.

At that time, I probably viewed the cost as giving up those things I most enjoyed, lovely clothes, a good home with decent furniture, the use of flush toilets rather than the garden pit at the bottom of the path, commoner with missionaries. But I think this made no difference to the prayer that I offered. However little, I understood what the involvement would be.

When I eventually reached Africa, I was completely happy in a mud and thatch home. I hardly even noticed that the pit down the garden path was less convenient than the old-fashioned flush toilet of my youth. But other trials came, most noticeably for me, periods of ill health.

In 1954, I had malaria and hepatitis pretty badly. In 57, I had meningitis, complicating about a flu. In 61, a severe attack of cerebral malaria nearly ended my time of service in Africa.

In 71, an attack of tick typhus fever made me extremely miserable and low. And each illness brought with it the normal post-infectious depression period, during which questions and doubts crowded into my mind. When one is ill in missionary service, so many others become involved.

Someone has to care for you on top of their own workload. Someone else has to carry your workload on top of theirs. Why did I keep getting ill? Was I just becoming a burden to the team? Would it be better if I went home? Each time, I guess God offered to explain to me the why, but I wasn't listening.

I was too busy complaining and asking questions. At last, he did get through to me. Each one of us, in the natural, likes to be needed.

It feeds our ego to know we're needed. And for the years, I had been the only doctor to over half a million panel patients. I was always needed.

I had no difficulty to know I was needed, so I was always on the giving end. And the African was always on the receiving end, saying thank you. And it becomes very demoralising to be always that side.

But I had not seen that the roles had to be reversed if the Africans were to know the fulfilment and the joy of being needed. When I was ill, only then did I obviously, unequivocally need them. They nursed me.

They cared for me. They fed me. They washed me.

And I said thank you. And they had the tremendous joy, for once, of knowing that they too were needed and had a role to fulfil. But their joy cost me my physical health.

Then during the rebellion, on the 9th, 28th, 29th October 1964, cruel men broke into my home around midnight. It was a wicked and savage night. I tried to escape from them.

What a hope. Six soldiers, armed and with powerful flashlights, surrounded the house and moved in on me as on a trapped animal. I lay numbed and terrified in the mud beneath a meagre hedge.

Pulled roughly to my feet, I was struck across the face. My glasses went. My nose was gashed and bleeding.

A second blow fell me to the ground, where the leader's boot crushed cruelly into my face and then my ribs. My back teeth were broken. My whole body was bruised.

I was driven back to the veranda of my home, jeered at, cursed, insulted. My benumbed brain was only able to keep me one step ahead of them, one inch out of reach of each succeeding lunge. I wasn't praying.

I was beyond praying. Someone back home was praying earnestly for me. If I'd prayed any prayer, it would have been, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And suddenly, there was God.

I didn't see a vision. I didn't hear a voice. I just knew with every ounce of my being that God was actually, vitally there.

God in all his majesty and power. He stretched his arms out to me. He surrounded me with his love.

And he seemed to whisper to me, 20 years ago, you asked me for the privilege of being a missionary. This is it. Don't you want it? Fantastic.

The privilege of being identified with our saviour. As I was driven down the short corridor of my home, it was as though he clearly said to me, these are not your sufferings. They're not beating you.

These are my sufferings. All I ask of you is the loan of your body. And an enormous relief swept through me.

One word became unbelievably clear. That word was privilege. He didn't take away pain or cruelty or humiliation.

No. It was all there. But now it was altogether different.

It was with him, for him, in him. He was actually offering me the inestimable privilege of sharing in some little way at the edge of the fellowship of his sufferings. In the weeks of imprisonment that followed and in the subsequent years of continued service, looking back, one has tried to count the cost.

But I find it all swallowed up in privilege. The cost suddenly seems very small and transient in the greatness and permanence of the privilege. Can you? Will you believe it and enter into it? You know, as the branch, to become the arrow, had to lose its leaves and its flowers, so I, perhaps, the pleasant home and the fixed salary and the married joys, nothing wrong in leaves and flowers, essential to the life of the branch, but a hindrance, a weight to the balanced arrow.

So also the side branches, the roughnesses, the knots, my temperament, my sensitivities. My habits, the sin that does so easily beset us of bad temper, being hurt, throwing my weight about, and even to the bark, the final individuality of the branch, my personality, my right to be myself, that I may be crucified with Christ, that Christ may live wholly in me, so will we be able to run the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus, who has paid the cost and offers us only the privilege.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/8/SID8952.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/helen-roseveare/the-cost-of-declaring-his-glory/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net