

Counting the Cost

by J.C. Ryle

Being a true Christian requires counting the cost, which includes giving up self-righteousness, sin, love of ease, and the world's favor, but it is worth any cost to have the soul saved.

Scripture: Matthew 5:10-12, Matthew 16:24, Luke 14:28, John 15:18-19, Romans 12:1, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:8, 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Hebrews 12:1-2, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Counting The Cost", "Sacrifice in Christianity"

Description

J.C. Ryle emphasizes the importance of counting the cost of true Christianity, urging believers to recognize the sacrifices required to follow Christ. He explains that being a genuine Christian involves relinquishing self-righteousness, sins, love of ease, and the favor of the world. Ryle warns against a superficial faith that demands little and encourages a deep commitment to spiritual growth and self-denial. He concludes by reminding readers of the immense cost Christ paid for salvation and encourages perseverance in faith despite challenges. Ultimately, he asserts that the rewards of following Christ far outweigh the sacrifices made.

Transcript

"Which of you, intending to build a house,
does not sit down first and count the cost?"

Luke 14:28

The text which heads this page is one of great importance. Few are the people who are not often obliged to ask themselves, "What does it cost?" There is one subject on which it is especially important to count the cost. That subject is the salvation of our souls. What does it cost to be a true Christian?

Let there be no mistake about my meaning. I am not examining what it costs to save a Christian's soul. I know well that it costs nothing less than the blood of the Son of God to provide an atonement and to redeem man from hell. We "are bought with a price." The point I want to consider is another one altogether. It is what a man must be ready to give up if he wishes to be saved. It is the amount of sacrifice a man must submit to if he intends to serve Christ.

I grant freely that it costs little to be a mere outward Christian. A man who only attends a place of worship on Sunday and is tolerably moral during the week has gone as far as thousands around him ever go in

religion. All this is cheap and easy work; it entails no self-denial or self-sacrifice. If this is saving Christianity that will take us to heaven when we die, we must alter the description of the way of life and write, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to heaven!"

Let me try to show precisely and particularly what it costs to be a true Christian. Let us suppose that a man is disposed to take service with Christ and feels drawn and inclined to follow him. Let us suppose that some affliction, some sudden death, or an awakening sermon has stirred his conscience and made him feel the value of his soul and desire to be a true Christian. No doubt there is everything to encourage him. His sins may be freely forgiven, however many and great. His heart may be completely changed, however cold and hard. Christ and the Holy Spirit, mercy and grace, are all ready for him. But still he should count the cost. Let us see particularly, one by one, the things that his religion will cost him.

First, it will cost him his self-righteousness. He must cast away all pride, high thoughts, and conceit of his own goodness. He must be content to go to heaven as a poor sinner saved only by free grace and owing all to the merit and righteousness of another. He must be willing to give up all trust in his own morality, respectability, praying, Bible-reading, church-going, and sacrament-receiving, and trust in nothing but Jesus Christ.

Second, it will cost a man his sins. He must be willing to give up every habit and practice which is wrong in God's sight. He must set his face against it, quarrel with it, break off from it, fight with it, crucify it, and labor to keep it under, whatever the world around him may say or think. He must count all sins as his deadly enemies and hate every false way. They may struggle hard with him every day and sometimes almost get the mastery over him, but he must never give way to them. He must keep up a perpetual war with his sins.

Third, it will cost a man his love of ease. He must take pains and trouble if he means to run a successful race toward heaven. He must daily watch and stand on his guard, like a soldier on enemy's ground. He must take heed to his behavior every hour of the day, in every company, and in every place whether public or private, among strangers as well as at home. He must be careful over his time, tongue, temper, thoughts, imaginations, motives, and his conduct in every relation of life. He must be diligent about his prayers, Bible reading, and his use of Sundays with all their means of grace. This sounds hard, for there is nothing we naturally dislike so much as "trouble" about our religion. We hate trouble. We secretly wish we could have a "vicarious" Christianity and could be good by proxy and have everything done for us. Anything that requires exertion and labor is entirely against the grain of our hearts.

In the last place, it will cost a man the favor of the world. He must be content to be thought ill of by man if he pleases God. He must count it no strange thing to be mocked, ridiculed, slandered, persecuted, and even hated. He must not be surprised to find his opinions and practices in religion despised and held up to scorn. He must submit to be thought by many a fool, an enthusiast, a fanatic, and to have his words perverted and his actions misrepresented.

I grant that it costs much to be a true Christian. But who in his sound senses can doubt that it is worth any cost to have the soul saved? When the ship is in danger of sinking, the crew think nothing of casting overboard the precious cargo. When a limb is mortified, a man will submit to any severe operation, even amputation, to save his life. Surely a Christian should be willing to give up anything which stands between him and heaven.

In conclusion, let every reader think seriously whether his religion costs him anything at present. Very likely it costs you nothing. Very probably it neither costs you trouble, time, thought, care, pains, self-denial,

conflict, nor working of any kind. Now mark what I say: such a religion as this will never save your soul.

If you want stirring motives for serving God, think what it cost to provide a salvation for your soul. Think how the Son of God left heaven and became man, suffered on the cross, and lay in the grave to pay your debt to God and work out for you a complete redemption. Think of all this and learn that it is no light matter to possess an immortal soul.

If any reader feels that he has counted the cost and taken up the cross, I bid him persevere and press on. The time is very short. A few more years of watching and praying, a few more tossings on the sea of this world, a few more deaths and changes, a few more winters and summers and all will be over. We shall have fought our last battle and shall need to fight no more. The presence and company of Christ will make amends for all we suffer here below. Then we shall marvel that we made so much of our cross and thought so little of our crown.

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