

The Cost

by J.C. Ryle

The sermon emphasizes the importance of counting the cost of being a true Christian, which includes giving up self-righteousness, sins, love of ease, and favor of the world.

Scripture: Job 20:5, Ezekiel 18:31, Matthew 5:11-12, Mark 8:36, Luke 12:5, Luke 14:28, John 14:27, 1 Corinthians 6:20, 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, 1 Timothy 2:6

Topics: "Counting The Cost", "Discipleship"

Description

J.C. Ryle emphasizes the importance of counting the cost of true Christianity, urging believers to consider the sacrifices required to follow Christ. He warns that many who initially embrace faith may fall away due to a lack of understanding of the challenges ahead, such as renouncing self-righteousness, sin, and the favor of the world. Ryle illustrates that while the cost of discipleship is significant, the eternal rewards far outweigh the temporary sacrifices. He encourages listeners to persevere in their faith, reminding them that true Christianity is a journey filled with trials but ultimately leads to eternal life. The sermon serves as a call to serious reflection on the commitment required to be a follower of Christ.

Transcript

"Which of you, intending to build a tower, does not down first sit down 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?"

In buying property, in building houses, in furnishing rooms, in forming plans, in changing dwellings, in educating children, it is wise and prudent to look forward and consider. Many would save themselves much sorrow and trouble if they would only remember the question: "What does it cost?"

But there is one subject on which it is specially important to count the cost. That subject is the salvation of our souls. What does it cost to be a true Christian? What does it cost to be a really holy man? This, after all, is the grand question. For want of thought about this, thousands, after seeming to begin well, turn away from the road to heaven, and are lost forever in hell.

We are living in strange times. Events are hurrying on with singular rapidity. We never know "what a day may bring forth"; how much less do we know what may happen in a year! We live in a day of great religious profession. Scores of professing Christians in every part of the land are expressing a desire for

more holiness and a higher degree of spiritual life. Yet nothing is more common than to see people receiving the Word with joy, and then after two or three years falling away and going back to their sins. They had not considered what it costs to be a really consistent believer and holy Christian. Surely these are times when we ought often to sit down and count the cost and to consider the state of our souls. We must mind what we are about. If we desire to be truly holy, it is a good sign. We may thank God for putting the desire into our hearts. But still the cost ought to be counted. No doubt Christ's way to eternal life is a way of pleasantness. But it is folly to shut our eyes to the fact that His way is narrow, and the cross comes before the crown.

1. THE COST OF BEING 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. The price paid for our redemption was nothing less than the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary. We "are bought with a price." "Christ gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Tim. 2:6). But all this is wide of the question. 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. It is in this sense that I raise the question: "What does it cost?" And I believe firmly that it is a most important one.

I grant freely that it costs little to be a mere outward Christian. A man has only got to attend a place of worship twice on Sunday and to be tolerably moral during the week, and he 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 and 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!"

But it does cost something to be a real Christian, according to the standard of the Bible. There are enemies to be overcome, battles to be fought, sacrifices to be made, an Egypt to be forsaken, a wilderness to be passed through, a cross to be carried, a race to be run. Conversion is not putting a man in an armchair and taking him easily to heaven. It is the beginning of a mighty conflict, in which it costs much to win the victory. Hence arises the unspeakable importance of "counting the cost."

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 or 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.

1. True Christianity will cost one his self-righteousness. He must cast away all pride and 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 really feel as well as say the Prayer Book words, that he has "erred and gone astray like a lost sheep," that he has "left undone the things he ought to have done, and that there is no health in him." He must be willing to give up all trust in his own morality, respectability, praying, Bible reading, church-going, and sacrament receiving, and to trust in nothing but Jesus Christ.

2. True Christianity 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 do this honestly and fairly. There must be no separate truce with any special sin which he loves. He must count all sins as his deadly enemies and hate every false way. Whether little or great, whether open or secret, all his sins must be thoroughly renounced. 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. It is written, "Cast away from you all your transgressions." "Break off your sins . . . and iniquities." "Cease to do evil" (Ezek. 18:31; Dan. 4:27; Isa. 1:16).

This sounds hard. I do not wonder. Our sins are often as dear to us as our children: we love them, hug them, cleave to them and delight in them. To part with them is as hard as cutting off a right hand or plucking out a right eye. But it must be done. The parting must come. "Though wickedness be sweet in the sinner's mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not," yet it must be given up, if he wishes to be saved (Job 20:12, 13). He and sin must quarrel if he and God are to be friends. Christ is willing to receive any sinners. But He will not receive them if they will stick to their sins.

3. Also, Christianity 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, in public as well as in private, among strangers as well as at home. He must be careful over his time, his tongue, his temper, his thoughts, his imagination, his motives, his conduct in every relation of life. He must be diligent about his prayers, his Bible reading, and his use of Sundays, with all their means of grace. In attending to these things, he may come far short of perfection; but there is none of those who he can safely neglect. "The soul of the sluggard desires, and has nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (Prov. 13:4).

This also sounds hard. 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. But the soul can have "no gains without pains."

4. Lastly, true Christianity 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 and a fanatic, to have his words perverted and his actions misrepresented. In fact, he must not marvel if some call him mad. The Master says, "Remember the word that I said unto you, 'The servant is not greater than his Lord.' If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20).

I dare say this also sounds hard. We naturally dislike unjust dealing and false charges and think it very hard to be accused without cause. We should not be flesh and blood if we did not wish to have the good opinion of our neighbors. It is always unpleasant to be spoken against and forsaken and lied about and to stand alone. But there is no help for it. The cup which our Master drank must be drunk by His disciples. They must be "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3). Let us set down that item last in our account. To be a Christian, it will cost a man the favor of the world.

Considering the weight of this great cost, bold indeed must that man be who would dare to say that we may keep our self-righteousness, our sins, our laziness and our love of the world, and yet be saved!

Moreover, I grant it costs much to be a true Christian. But what sane man or woman 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, and even to amputation, to save life. Surely a Christian should be willing to give up anything which stands between him and heaven. A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing! A cheap Christianity, without a cross, will prove in the end a useless Christianity, without a crown.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF COUNTING THE COST

I might easily settle this question by laying down the principle that no duty enjoined by Christ can ever be neglected without damage. I might show how many shut their eyes throughout life to the nature of saving religion and refuse to consider what it really costs to be a Christian. I might describe how at last, when life is ebbing away, they wake up and make a few spasmodic efforts to turn to God. I might tell you how they find to their amazement that repentance and conversion are no such easy matters as they had supposed, and that it costs "a great sum" to be a true Christian. They discover that habits of pride and sinful indulgence and love of ease and worldliness are not so easily laid aside as they had dreamed. And so, after a faint struggle, they give up in despair, and leave the world hopeless, graceless and unfit to meet God! They had flattered themselves all their days that religion would be easy work when they once took it up seriously. But they open their eyes too late and discover for the first time that they are ruined because they never counted the cost.

But there is a certain group of people to whom especially I wish to address myself in handling this part of my subject. It is a large class, an increasing class, and a class which in these days is in peculiar danger. Let me in a few plain words try to describe this class. It deserves our best attention.

The people I speak of are not thoughtless about religion; they think a good deal about it. They are not ignorant of religion; they know the outlines of it pretty well. But their great defect is that they are not "rooted and grounded" in their faith. Too often they have picked up their knowledge second-hand, from being in religious families, or from being trained in religious ways, but have never worked it out by their own inward experience. Too often they have hastily taken up a profession of religion under the pressure of circumstances, from sentimental feelings, from animal excitement or from a vague desire to do like others around them, but without any solid work of grace in their hearts. People like these are in a position of immense danger. They are precisely those, if Bible examples are worth anything, who need to be exhorted to count the cost.

For want of counting the cost, myriads of the children of Israel perished miserably in the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan. They left Egypt full of zeal and fervor as if nothing could stop them. But when they found dangers and difficulties in the way, their courage soon cooled down. They had never reckoned on trouble. They had thought the promised land would be all before them in a few days. And so when enemies, privations, hunger and thirst began to try them, they murmured against Moses and God and would sincerely have gone back to Egypt. In a word, they had not counted the cost and so lost everything and died in their sins.

For want of counting the cost, many of our Lord Jesus Christ's hearers went back after a time and "walked no more with Him" (John 6:66). When they first saw His miracles and heard His preaching, they thought

"the kingdom of God would immediately appear." They cast in their lot with His apostles and followed Him without thinking of the consequences. But when they found that there were hard doctrines to be believed and hard work to be done and hard treatment to be borne, their faith gave way entirely and proved to be nothing at all. In a word, they had not counted the cost, and so made shipwreck of their profession.

For want of counting the cost, King Herod returned to his old sins and destroyed his soul. He liked to hear John the Baptist preach. He observed and honored him as a just and holy man. He even "did many things" which were right and good. But when he found that he must give up his darling Herodias, his religion entirely broke down. He had not reckoned on this. He had not counted the cost (Mark 6:20).

For want of counting the cost, Demas forsook the company of Paul, forsook the gospel, forsook Christ, forsook heaven. For a long time he journeyed with the great apostle of the Gentiles and was actually a "fellow-laborer." But when he found he could not have the friendship of this world as well as the friendship of God, he gave up his Christianity and cleaved to the world. "Demas has forsaken me," says Paul, "having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10). He had not "counted the cost."

For want of counting the cost, the hearers of powerful evangelical preachers often come to miserable ends. They are stirred and excited into professing what they have not really experienced. They receive the Word with a "joy" so extravagant that it almost startles old Christians. They run for a time with such zeal and fervor that they seem likely to outstrip all others. They talk and work for spiritual objects with such enthusiasm that they make older believers feel ashamed. But when the novelty and freshness of their feelings is gone, a change comes over them. They prove to have been nothing more than stony-ground hearers. The description the great Master gives in the parable of the sower is exactly exemplified: "Temptation or persecution arises because of the Word, and they are offended" (Matt. 13:21). Little by little their zeal melts away and their love becomes cold. By and by their seats are empty in the assembly of God's people, and they are heard of no more among Christians. And why? They had never counted the cost.

For lack of counting the cost, hundreds of professed converts, under religious revivals, go back to the world after a time and bring disgrace on religion. They begin with a sadly mistaken notion of what is true Christianity. They fancy it consists in nothing more than a so-called "coming to Christ" and having strong inward feelings of joy and peace. And so when they find, after a time, that there is a cross to be carried, that our hearts are deceitful, and that there is a busy devil always near us, they cool down in disgust and return to their old sins. And why? Because they had really never known what Bible Christianity is. They had never learned that we must count the cost.

For want of counting the cost, the children of religious parents often turn out ill and bring disgrace on Christianity. Familiar from their earliest years with the form and theory of the gospel, taught even from infancy to repeat great leading texts, accustomed every week to be instructed in the gospel, or to instruct others in Sunday schools, they often grow up professing a religion without knowing why or without ever having thought seriously about it. And then when the realities of grown-up life begin to press upon them, they often astound everyone by dropping all their religion and plunging right into the world. And why? They had never thoroughly understood the sacrifices which Christianity entails. They had never been taught to count the cost.

These are solemn and painful truths. But they are truths. They all help to show the immense importance of the subject I am now considering. They all point out the absolute necessity of pressing the subject of this

message on all who profess a desire for holiness and of crying aloud in all the churches, "Count the cost."

I am bold to say that it would be well if the duty of counting the cost were more frequently taught than it is. Impatient hurry is the order of the day with many religionists. Instantaneous conversions, and immediate sensible peace, are the only results they seem to care for from the gospel. Compared with these, all other things are thrown into the shade. To produce them is the grand end and object, apparently, of all their labors. I say without hesitation that such a naked, one-sided mode of teaching Christianity is mischievous in the extreme.

Let no one mistake my meaning. I thoroughly approve of offering men a full, free, present, immediate salvation in Christ Jesus. I thoroughly approve of urging on man the possibility and the duty of immediate instantaneous conversion. In these matters I give place to no one. But I do say that these truths ought not to be set before men nakedly, singly and alone. They ought to be told honestly what it is they are taking up if they profess a desire to come out from the world and serve Christ. They ought not to be pressed into the ranks of Christ's army without being told what the warfare entails. In a word, they should be told honestly to count the cost.

Does anyone ask what our Lord Jesus Christ's practice was in this matter? Let him read what Luke records. He tells us that, on a certain occasion, "There went great multitudes with Him: and He turned, and said unto them, 'If any come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple'" (Luke 14:25-27). I must plainly say that I cannot reconcile this passage with the proceedings of many modern religious teachers. And yet, to my mind, the doctrine of it is as clear as the sun at noonday. It shows us that we ought not to hurry men into professing discipleship without warning them plainly to count the cost.

Does anyone ask what the practice of the eminent and best preachers of the gospel has been in days gone by? I am bold to say that they have all with one mouth borne testimony to the wisdom of our Lord's dealing with the multitudes to which I have just referred. Luther and Latimer and Baxter and Wesley and Whitefield, and Berridge and Rowland Hill were all keenly alive to the deceitfulness of man's heart. They knew full well that all is not gold that glitters, that conviction is not conversion, that feeling is not faith, that sentiment is not grace, that all blossoms do not come to fruit. "Be not deceived," was their constant cry. "Consider well what you do. Do not run before you are called. Count the cost."

If we desire to do good, let us never be ashamed of walking in the steps of our Lord Jesus Christ. Work hard if you will, and have the opportunity, for the souls of others. Press them to consider their ways. Compel them with holy violence to come in, to lay down their arms and to yield themselves to God. Offer them salvation, ready, free, full, immediate salvation. Press Christ and all His benefits on their acceptance. But in all your work tell the truth, and the whole truth. Be ashamed to use the vulgar arts of a recruiting sergeant. Do not speak only of the uniform, the pay and the glory; speak also of the enemies, the battle, the armor, the watching, the marching and the drill. Do not present only one side of Christianity. Do not keep back the cross of self-denial that must be carried, when you speak of the cross on which Christ died for our redemption. Explain fully what Christianity entails. Entreat men to repent and come to Christ; but bid them at the same time to count the cost.

3. SOME HINTS

Sorry indeed should I be if I did not say something on this branch of my subject. I have no wish to discourage anyone or to keep anyone back from Christ's service. It is my heart's desire to encourage everyone to go forward and take up the cross. Let us count the cost by all means, and count it carefully. But let us remember that, if we count rightly and look on all sides, there is nothing that need make us afraid.

Let me mention some things which should always enter into our calculations in counting the cost of true Christianity. Set down honestly and fairly what you will have to give up and go through if you become Christ's disciple. Leave nothing out. Put it all down. But then set down side by side the following sums which I am going to give you. Do this fairly and correctly, and I am not afraid for the result.

a. Count up and compare the profit and the loss, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. You may possibly lose something in this world, but you will gain the salvation of your immortal soul. It is written: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36.)

b. Count up and compare the praise and the blame, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. You may possibly be blamed by man, but you will have the praise of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Your blame will come from the lips of a few erring, blind, fallible men and women. Your praise will come from the King of kings and Judge of all the earth. It is only those whom He blesses who are really blessed. It is written: "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:11, 12).

c. Count up and compare the friends and the enemies, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. On the one side of you is the enmity of the devil and the wicked. On the other, you have the favor and friendship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Your enemies, at most, can only bruise your heel. They may rage loudly and compass sea and land to work your ruin, but they cannot destroy you. Your Friend is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. None shall ever pluck His sheep out of His hand. It is written: "Be not afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear Him, which after He has killed has power to cast into hell; yes, I say unto you, fear Him" (Luke 12:5).

d. Count up and compare the life that now is and the life to come, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. The time present, no doubt, is not a time of ease. It is a time of watching and praying, fighting and struggling, believing and working. But it is only for a few years. The time future is the season of rest and refreshing. Sin shall be cast out. Satan shall be bound. And, best of all, it shall be a rest forever. It is written: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17, 18).

e. Count up and compare the pleasures of sin and the happiness of God's service, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. The pleasures that the worldly man gets by his ways are hollow, unreal and unsatisfying. They are like the fire of thorns, flashing and crackling for a few minutes, and then quenched forever. The happiness that Christ gives to His people is something solid, lasting and substantial. It is not dependent on health or circumstances. It never leaves a man, even in death. It ends in a crown of glory that fades not away. It is written: "The joy of the hypocrite [is] but for a moment." "As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool" (Job 20:5; Eccl. 7:6). But it is also written:

"Peace I leave with you, My peace give I unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

f. Count up and compare the trouble that true Christianity entails and the troubles that are in store for the wicked beyond the grave. Grant for a moment that Bible reading and praying and repenting and believing and holy living require pains and self-denial. It is all nothing compared to that wrath to come which is stored up for the impenitent and unbelieving. A single day in hell will be worse than a whole life spent in carrying the cross. The "worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched" are things which it passes man's power to conceive fully or describe. It is written: "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented" (Luke 16:25).

g. Count up and compare the number of those who turn from sin and the world and serve Christ, and the number of those who forsake Christ and return to the world. On the one side you will find thousands; on the other you will find none. Multitudes are every year turning out of the broad way and entering the narrow. None who really enter the narrow way grow tired of it and return to the broad. The footsteps in the downward road are often to be seen turning out of it. The footsteps in the road to heaven are all one way. It is written: "The way of the wicked is . . . darkness." "The way of transgressors is hard" (Prov. 4:19; 13:15). But it is also written: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).

Such sums as these, no doubt, are often not done correctly. Not a few, I am well aware, are ever "halting between two opinions." They cannot make up their minds that it is worthwhile to serve Christ. The losses and gains, the advantages and disadvantages, the sorrows and the joys, the helps and the hindrances appear to them so nearly balanced that they cannot decide for God. They cannot do this great sum correctly. They cannot make the result so clear as it ought to be. They do not count right.

But why do they err so greatly? They lack faith. Paul advises us on how to come to a right conclusion about our souls in Hebrews 11, revealing a powerful principle that operates in the business of counting the cost. It is the same principle Noah understood, and that I will now make clear.

How was it that Noah persevered in building the ark? He stood alone amid a world of sinners and unbelievers. He had to endure scorn, ridicule and mockery. What was it that nerved his arm, and made him patiently work on and face it all? It was faith. He believed in a wrath to come. He believed that there was no safety, excepting in the ark that he was preparing. Believing, he held the world's opinion very cheap. He counted the cost by faith and had no doubt that to build the ark was gain.

How was it that Moses forsook the pleasures of Pharaoh's house and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter? How was it that he cast in his lot with a despised people like the Hebrews and risked everything in this world in carrying out the great work of their deliverance from bondage? To the eye of sense he was losing everything and gaining nothing. What was it that moved him? It was faith. He believed that the "recompense of reward" was far better than all the honors of Egypt. He counted the cost by faith, as "seeing Him that is invisible," and was persuaded that to forsake Egypt and go forth into the wilderness was gain.

How was it that Saul the Pharisee could ever make up his mind to become a Christian? The cost and sacrifices of the change were fearfully great. He gave up all his brilliant prospects among his own people. He brought on himself, instead of man's favor, man's hatred, man's enmity and man's persecution, even

unto death. What was it that enabled him to face it all? It was faith. He believed that Jesus, who met him on the way to Damascus, could give him a hundredfold more than he gave up, and in the world to come everlasting life. By faith he counted the cost and saw clearly on which side the balance lay. He believed firmly that to carry the cross of Christ was gain.

Let us mark well these things. That faith which made Noah, Moses and Paul do what they did, that faith is the great secret of coming to a right conclusion about our souls. That same faith must be our helper and ready-reckoner when we sit down to count the cost of being a true Christian. That same faith is to be had for the asking. "He gives more grace" (James 4:6). Armed with that faith, we shall set things down at their true value. Filled with that faith, we shall neither add to the cross nor subtract from the crown. Our conclusions will be all correct. Our sum total will be without error.

1. Now, let us make the serious inquiry: "What does your Christianity cost you?" Very likely it costs you nothing. Very probably it neither costs you trouble, nor time, nor thought, nor care, nor pains, nor reading, nor praying, nor self-denial, nor conflict, nor working, nor labor of any kind. Now mark what I say. Such a religion as this will never save your soul. It will never give you peace while you live, nor hope while you die. It will not support you in the day of affliction, nor cheer you in the hour of death. A religion which costs nothing is worth nothing. Awake before it is too late. Awake and repent. Awake and be converted. Awake and believe. Awake and pray. Rest not until you can give a satisfactory answer to my question: "What does it cost?"

2. Think, if you want stirring motives for serving God, 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. It is worthwhile to take some trouble about one's soul.

Ah, lazy man or woman, is it really come to this, that you will miss heaven for lack of trouble? Are you really determined to make shipwreck forever, from mere dislike to exertion? Away with the cowardly, unworthy thought. Arise and play the man. Say to yourself, "Whatever it may cost, I will, at any rate, strive to enter in at the strait gate." Look at the cross of Christ and take fresh courage. Look forward to death, judgment and eternity, and be in earnest. It may cost much to be a Christian, but you may be sure it pays.

3. If any reader of this message really feels that he has counted the cost and taken up the cross, I bid him persevere and press on. I dare say you often feel your heart faint and are sorely tempted to give up in despair. Your enemies seem so many, your besetting sins so strong, your friends so few, the way so steep and narrow, you hardly know what to do. But still I say, 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. When we see as we have been seen and look back on the journey of life, we shall wonder at our own faintness of heart. We shall marvel that we made so much of our cross, and thought so little of our crown. We shall marvel that in "counting the cost" we could ever doubt on which side the balance of profit lay. Let us take courage. We are not far from home. It may cost much to be a true Christian and a consistent holy man; but it pays.

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