

Cost of Discipleship - Part 6

by Paris Reidhead

The cost of discipleship is surrendering all to follow Jesus, embracing His sovereignty, and letting go of human relationships and personal possessions.

Duration: 24:34

Topics: "Cost Of Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Stephen from the Bible. Stephen was a follower of Jesus who was stoned to death for his faith. The preacher emphasizes the importance of loving God with all our hearts, minds, and souls, as revealed in the law. He contrasts this with the story of the rich young ruler who was unwilling to give up his possessions to follow Jesus. The preacher highlights the need to not only believe in Jesus but also to obey his words and live a life that pleases God.

Transcript

Elsie went on after a while, went back, and then it was some months, years, and she was called again. Father was ill, and so she tended him. And again in the night hours when they were alone, he'd say, was it, is it really that Jesus is the Messiah? Is he really the one that Israel's been waiting for? Did your mother really see him and talk to him like she said she did? And he too trusted in Christ.

Now there was a moment in Elsie Clore's life when she had to see Jesus Christ as God, and she had to be willing to let her father and her mother think that she hated them. She didn't hate them. They were the ones that called it hatred.

They were the ones that said you must hate us, or you couldn't do this to us. What the Lord Jesus said was that when you come to me, you must understand that I am God, and that my lordship and my sovereignty transcends all human relationships. Then he didn't stop there.

The man had said I can't come, I've married a wife, I have a family, I have commitments, they're involved with me. The Lord Jesus said no, when you come to me, my sovereignty transcends all human relationships. Then the next thing he did to this multitude, and he's preaching the gospel to sinners, and he is saying that whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot get into kindergarten and start learning about me, because when you come to me, my sovereignty and my lordship transcends the right to all career ambitions and plans.

When you come to me, he said, you're coming to God, and you don't bargain with God, and you don't argue with God, and you don't wheedle with God. God sets the terms. He said when you come to me, it's just as though you deliberately put your hand down on a Roman gibbet and let them drive nails through your hands and through your feet.

You relinquish the right to decide where you will go when you come to me, because my sovereignty transcends the right to all career plans and ambitions. You say, my, that's a hard saying. My, that's hard.

I thought all Jesus said was believe on him. Oh, he did, but that's what believing on him is, convinced that he's God. You recognize that he has a right to choose what you will be and what you will do, and you have no--you release to him the right for your all career choices from that time on.

It's as though you were nailed to a cross. You have no right to say I will go or I will stay. What did the man say? I can't come because I have business commitments.

I'm in the drayage business. He says, I run oxen. And the Lord Jesus said, when you come to me, my sovereignty transcends all the previous commitments that you've ever made.

You can't bargain, and you can't wheedle, and you come on these terms. Now, this is just Christ preaching to the multitude, telling them that they can't even begin to learn about him until they understand who he is. Then he didn't just stop there.

He then said, a little later, he was intending to build a tower, and he decided on the plan. He was the architect of it. He'd drawn the blueprints of it, and he decided the kind of material that was going into it, and he wasn't going to let anybody con him into taking substitutes.

It was his tower, and he'd pay him the price for it. It poured out light, and therefore he had a right to say that it was going to be marble in that tower, and it wasn't going to be some marbled tar paper. It was either real or it wasn't going in.

He then said, I'm going to battle. I've got a foe. He's got far out numbers, me.

But I know the kind of people I'm enrolling under my banner, and I'm prepared to go against him with ten thousand, though he's got many times that, because I know the kind of people I'm putting into my ranks. Then he proceeded to say, so likewise whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot get into kindergarten and start learning about me. Now, this is not a deeper life message.

This is a confrontation with sinners. This is Christ telling them what the conditions for matriculation in learning about him are. So, do you love God? Do you love him with all your heart and soul and mind? He said, he that heareth my words, and doeth them, he it is that loveth me.

And this is his words, that because he is God, because he is sovereign, his lordship transcends the right to all personal possessions, be they talent or time or money. You name it. It's theirs.

You see, it's this way. When you have once said, my Jesus, to the Son of God, you can never properly say, my, about anything else again. You can't say, my family.

You can't say, my business. You can't say, my savings. You can't say, my talent.

You can't say, my job. You can't say, my gift. You can't say, my, in a proprietary use of the word, if you've once said, my Jesus, I love you.

So, said he, likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciples. What's he saying? When you come to me, you must understand that I am God. And that means, therefore, that my sovereignty transcends the right to all personal possessions.

Now, how does it apply? We have two instances. One is a rich young ruler who came to him and said, good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life? The Lord Jesus looked at him and he says he loved him, because he was obviously a very upright and sincere young man. And his argument went, the Lord's discussion went with him something like this.

I spoke to Moses on the mount. My finger inscribed those tables of the law. I, Moses recognized me.

Moses knew who he was talking to when I spoke to him. And he came down and gave that law. Have you received it? That's my word.

Have you taken it? And the young man, quite superficially, said, oh yes, I've taken Moses' law. All these things I have done from my youth up. I've observed the law.

And he had, I'm sure, in the outward form. But he had never come to grips with the main issue, what the law does, which is to reveal that we do not love God with all of our hearts and minds and souls. So now he's confronting the lawgiver, the very one who spoke to Moses, the very one who inscribed that decalogue on the tablets of stone, is talking to the rich young ruler.

And he says, well, if you're of the same order as Moses, then you'll recognize me the way Moses did. Sell all you have, so likewise whosoever be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath. Sell all you have.

Give it to the poor. Come, follow me. He that heareth my word, and doeth them.

He it is that loveth me. This is the lawgiver speaking. This is God speaking.

And God is saying to this young man just a further implication of what he said to Moses on that mountain. Love God with all of your heart. Seek to please him.

And loving him means that you hear his words and you do them. And the young man went away, and the Lord Jesus said, come on back, come on back. All you really have to do is just believe.

I've been hoping I'd get somebody on this, but it's pretty hard, you know. So you just accept me and believe, and then six years later at a summer Bible conference, we're going to take care of this other man. Is that what he said? Uh-uh.

He let him go, and he watched him go, and he sorrowed. Why? Because he said, I do not speak of myself. I only speak as I receive commandment of the Father.

And he couldn't change the words to increase the results. He couldn't not to be fair to his father. So he had to watch him go, and he sorrowed as he went.

Because he said, he that heareth my words and doeth them, he it is that loves me. And this young man heard his words, but he wasn't willing to meet his words. Now what we probably would have done, would

have found a way to have gotten that young man into the church.

But he would have been just as he was when he went away, just as he was. So R.G. Lee, down in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in 1950, speaking to the Southern Baptist Convention of that state, said, During forty years that I have served this fellowship, and have spoken in scores and hundreds of churches to tens of thousands of people, I've had to conclude that probably no more than one out of ten of our people know anything experientially about the new birth. And the pastors that were there, and he said, brethren, if I am in error, the fact is it's probably less than one out of ten.

I don't know whether R.G. Lee was right. I only know that we are living in a day when men seem to want to change the word of the Lord Jesus Christ so that it's more palatable and more acceptable. But the Son of God couldn't do it.

He couldn't change that word to that rich young ruler. He had to watch him go sorrowing. But he had to watch him go because he said, I do not speak of myself.

I speak as I receive commandment of my Father. And he didn't dare change the word. When he watched that company to whom he had said, except you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you.

Go, his disciples said, this is a hard saying. And he said, I know it is. But all that the Father has given to me shall come unto me.

I've just got to preach what my Father gave me to preach. So this is what is, this is the great call of Christ. It's the call to the person of the Son of God on his terms, on his terms.

There's another, another man, it isn't all that bleak. There's another man who's convinced that Jesus Christ is an imposter, who's satisfied that Jesus Christ has deceived his people, his beloved people Israel, and who has committed himself to the very difficult task of eradicating the memory of the man Jesus Christ from the mind of the Jews. And he is doing everything he can to stamp out this sect that worships a man who was condemned and executed as a criminal for being an imposter.

And he's done pretty well at it. One day he happens to get caught up with a group when a young tailor, who hasn't had an education at all in rabbinical teachings in any sophisticated way, just a tailor, a chap by the name of Stephen, stands up in the front of some of his persecutors and tormentors and he speaks with the eloquence of Demosthenes as he puts into a few eloquent words the whole history of Israel in her rebellion against God. And this man becomes enraged and declares to himself that even though they didn't dare to crucify Christ or kill him, that he is prepared to brook the anger of Rome and to execute a man according to Roman law or to Jewish law, but not Roman law.

Roman law said he had to be tried by Roman authorities, but he said, let's stone him. And so they lead Stephen out through the gate that now bears his name, St. Stephen's Gate, where there's rocks aplenty still as there was then. And he says, give me your coats, boys.

And so they pile their jackets, their outer garments over his arms and he said, now go to it, let the rascal taste your stone. And he watches as one picks up a jagged boulder and throws it and still another and then another and then another and blood begets a thirst for blood. And this young man falls crumpled to the ground.

And they lay by a moment, rearming themselves, getting more stones. And then the young man shakes himself from the stones that lie on his body. And he begins to arise.

And instead of in weakness, cringing and cowardice, he says, I see Jesus standing in the right hand of the throne on high. Sure, the Lord Jesus was standing. This was the first martyr for the faith.

And then he said, Father, don't hold this to their tribe. And he dies. And this man gives out the coats across his arm.

And though no one sees it, in the granite facade of his mind is a hairline crack that goes from the place to which the man pointed right down to the very soul of Saul of Tarsus. A crack, a little break. Man wouldn't have seen it.

But he was there. And ten days later, nearing Damascus on the lower road, with a company of people armed as he is with the necessary documents to locate Christians in Damascus and exterminate them, a great light shines about them. And the people around him think it's thunder.

And just as Stephen had been driven to the ground by rocks, Saul of Tarsus is driven to the ground by light. And a voice speaks to him, and he hears the words, and the words are, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And this good Pharisee who believed in the existence of angels and angelic visitation, in contrast to the Sadducees who didn't, responded as a Pharisee would. And he said, Lord, one to be revered, who art thou? Who's speaking to me? Who are you? And the voice said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecust.

Saul of Tarsus has met the Son of God. He is convinced that Jesus Christ is alive from the dead. Now, there's only two things you can do with God when God becomes flesh and dwells among you.

One, you can receive him. And the second, you can endeavor to exterminate him. And they tried the second, and it hasn't worked.

So what is Saul of Tarsus going to do? He's going to do what any wise man will do. His heart has been overwhelmed by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Saul of Tarsus had family, father and mother and brothers and sisters and uncles and aunts.

They were influential in Judaism. He had family and prestige and authority with that family. And he didn't say to the Son of God, now look, I've got all of this great family around me, and I can't break with this family.

I've got to carry them with me. I've got to, I've got to protect their interests. Let me go to my family.

No, he didn't say that. He knew that his family would think he'd lost his mind. He knew that his family would think that he hated them.

He knew that his family would do everything they could to kill him. But even though he may never have heard Christ say, if any man hate not his father and mother, he can't be my disciple, instantly his response was, Lord, in respect to my family, what do you want me to do? What do you want me to do? The Lordship of Christ transcended the right to his family. Then he had a career.

He was well on the way to becoming the chief priest. He could have been the head of the Sanhedrin. He had a great future.

And he could have said, now, Lord, I'm glad to know that you're alive, all right, that's fine, but you know, if you'll just let me be a secret disciple for you, then I can be very influential in the Sanhedrin and among the priests. And so if you don't mind, I'd just like... Is that what he said? Oh, no. Because you see, meeting Jesus Christ interrupted all of the career plans that he'd made.

And his response was, Lord, in respect to my life, my future, what do you want me to do? He also had possession. He had his own income. He had inheritance.

He had wealthy family members who would have bequeathed their wealth to him. He was free to study and free to pursue a career that was expensive. And so he had to look at that.

He had to just take the balance and see what it was going to cost him in terms of dollars and cents. And he could have said, now, Lord, you know I've come from a very rich family, but it's going to create so much difficulty if I publicly declare for you. So if you don't mind, I'd just like to be a secret believer, and then I'll give you a tithe, I'll slip it out on the side, and you know, it'll really help your cause.

That's not what he did. In respect to his talent, in respect to his career, in respect to his future, in respect to his money, he said, Lord, what will thou have me to do? Now that's who we're talking about. That's who we're talking.

That's the kind of response. Jesus Christ is God. And because he is God, his sovereignty transcends the right to all human relationships, all career ambitions, and all personal possessions.

He that heareth my words, and doeth them, he it is that loveth me. I tell you, this is a hard thing you've said. Now, if you've come to Jesus Christ savingly, maybe you've never heard it, but you can say in your heart, yes, that's precisely what I meant when I said, I love you, Lord Jesus.

You didn't need to know what I'm talking about to, in order to have done it. I know people that have never seen Luke 14, didn't even have it in their language, and yet when they bowed before Jesus Christ, this was how they received him, because the Father had taught them and the Spirit had brought them to this kind of a commitment to the whole lovely Son. So if you're here tonight and you've been born of God, even though you may never have heard it, your heart says, yes, that's what it means to me to believe on Jesus Christ.

That's what it means to me. And if you're here tonight and that isn't what it means to you, then there's one thing for you to do, and that's to seek him on his terms, to come to him on these terms, his terms, his way. Because he said, he that heareth my word, and doeth them, he it is that loveth me.

So we've only seen one little aspect of this call. This is a call to the person of the Son of God that touches every area of our life. Have you answered that call? Have you come to Jesus Christ on his term? If you haven't, then tonight is the night of all nights for you, because you're brought face to face with your own heart, and you're brought face to face with the word of God.

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