

What It Costs Not to Be a Christian?

by R.A. Torrey

Not to be a Christian means sacrificing peace, joy, hope, God's favour, Christ's acknowledgment, and eternal life.

Scripture: Psalm 119:59, Isaiah 53:6, Matthew 10:32-33, John 3:14-16, John 3:36, Romans 5:1, Romans 10:10, Titus 1:2, 1 Peter 1:8

Topics: "Cost Of Discipleship", "The Importance of Faith"

Description

R.A. Torrey emphasizes the grave costs of living without Christ, urging listeners to reflect on the sacrifices made by rejecting faith. He outlines that a Christless life leads to the loss of peace, joy, hope, true manhood and womanhood, God's favor, and ultimately eternal life. Torrey challenges the audience to consider whether they are willing to pay such a high price for a life devoid of Christ, encouraging them to make a decisive choice for faith. He stresses that true Christianity requires a commitment that may involve sacrifices but offers immeasurable rewards in return.

Transcript

"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." -- Psalms cxix. 59.

A good many years ago I was talking to a young society lady in the city of New Haven in America, and suddenly she stopped me and said, "Don't talk that way; it makes me think, and I hate to think." The world is full of people who hate to think, and because they hate to think they go into things blindfolded, and come out with blighted hope and broken hearts and blasted lives. It is so in business. How many a business man there is in this city to-night who a few years ago had a business proposition made to him, and instead of sitting down, as any long-headed business man would do, and thinking it all over, and figuring it an out as to how much money he would have to put into that investment before he realized, how many years it would be before there was any adequate return, and what interest on his money there would be, just because it promised well on the surface he accepted the proposition without sufficient thought regarding it, he just put his money into that project and left it there, and that man's life ever since has been a wretched drag for a bare existence. Simply because he hated to think! It is the same way in social life. How many a young woman has met at some social

gathering a handsome, attractive young man, a young fellow of pleasant manners, who knows how to do a thousand and one little acts that mean so little and yet so easily gain the hearts of women, a young fellow who is a fine waltzer, and popular and attractive in all his ways; and one night that young man makes a

proposal of marriage to her, and instead of sitting down, as any sensible girl would do, and asking herself whether that man has the mental and moral qualities that fit him to be a companion for life, just because he is handsome, because he is attractive and popular, because he is a beautiful waltzer, that young woman accepts his proposal of marriage and marries him; and after a few months she wakes up one day to find that she has married a fool, or, what is worse, a rascal. And all that woman's future life is wretched beyond description, just because she hated to think. But there is no place where that mistake is made so often and where it is so fatal as in the matter of being, or not being a Christian. Men and women go into a Christless life, or, being in a Christless life, drift on in it, without even once sitting down to give the question thirty minutes' honest consideration, What it Costs to Live and Die without Jesus Christ. Now I am going to ask you to do some thinking to-night, some hard, serious, honest thinking. What I am going to ask you to think about is this: what it costs not to be a Christian, what it costs to live and die without Jesus Christ. And if when I get through you think you are willing to pay the price of a Christless life, I have nothing more to say. But if, when you have thought it all out, you come to the conclusion that it costs too much to live and die without Christ, I am going to ask you to do the only intelligent thing there is to do in the circumstances, that is, to stand up here to-night and declare your purpose to accept Jesus Christ right now.

What does it cost not to be a Christian? First of all, what is it to be a Christian? By a Christian, I understand, any man, woman, or child, that comes to God as a lost sinner, takes Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, surrenders to Him as their Lord and Master, confesses Him as such publicly before the world, and strives to live to please Him in everything day by day. Let me repeat that definition. A Christian is any man, woman or child that comes to God as a lost sinner, takes Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, surrenders to Him as their Lord and Master, confesses Him as such publicly before the world, and strives to live to please him in everything day by day.

What does it cost not to do it?

1. In the first place not to be a Christian costs the sacrifice of peace.-A Christian has peace: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ."-Romans, v. 1. And having peace with God we have peace in our hearts, but no man out of Christ has peace. "There is no peace for the wicked, saith my God." One night in Chicago, after a meeting like this, when the congregation had gone out, I went and sat down in a scat by the side of a gentleman about thirty-five years of age, and I said, "My friend, why are you not a Christian?" "Oh," he said, with a shrug of his shoulders, "I am very well satisfied as I am." I said, "You haven't peace." He said, "How do you know that?" I said, "Because God says so; 'There is no peace for the wicked, saith my God. '" The man dropped his head, and said, "You are right, sir, I haven't peace." And there is not a man or woman in this audience to-night out of Christ that has peace. Money won't give you peace; the pleasures of this life won't give you peace; no number of good earthly friends will give you peace; not to be a Christian costs the sacrifice of peace.

2. In the second place, not to be a Christian costs the sacrifice of the highest, deepest, purest, holiest, most overflowing joy that can be known right here on earth. -As we read, in the Scripture lesson to-night, in 1 Peter i. 8: "Though now ye see Him not, yet believing in Him ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." That was Peter's testimony. That is the experience of every true Christian. A real living faith in Jesus Christ gives a man joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Nobody out of Christ has joy unspeakable and full of glory. "Oh," but you say, "I know many a Christian that has not joy unspeakable and full of glory." A real Christian? You know there are two kinds-professing Christians and real Christians. Now I will admit that there are a great many people in the world that call

themselves Christians, who have just enough religion to make themselves miserable. They are holding to the world with one hand, generally the right hand, and to Jesus Christ with the other.

Of course they have not joy unspeakable and full of glory. But show me a Christian who has dropped the world with both hands, and laid hold of Jesus Christ with both hands, and I will show you a man or woman that has joy unspeakable and full of glory, every time. But nobody out of Christ has joy unspeakable and full of glory. How Satan deceived me along that line for many years when I was a mere lad! I went one day up to the third story of our home, where we had a great store-room where we put away the old books out of the library, and as a boy I loved to go and sit on the floor of that room, and get the books around me and look through them, and one day I came across the covenant of the church of my mother, and commenced to read it, and I said to myself, "I wonder if I cannot be a Christian?"

I can say "Yes" to that, and can say "Yes" to that, and that, and after a time I came to a place where it said something to this effect, "If I became a Christian I was to be willing to do anything God said, and go anywhere He said." I shut up the book and said, "No, just as likely as not I'll have to be a preacher if I say 'Yes, to that, and then life won't be worth living.'" And I threw that book away and deliberately refused to take Jesus Christ, and deliberately refused to think about it any more.

Then I said to myself, "I am going in for all the pleasure I can get"; and I had a good opportunity to get it. My father was well off in this world's goods; and as a boy of fifteen I was sent off to the university and matriculated for a degree, and my father sent me up all the money I wanted. Now, if you put a boy into a university, who learns easily and has no trouble to keep up with his class, a boy with a rich father, who does not ask him how he spends his money - I have often thought it would have been a good thing for me if he had- if anybody can have a good time, he can, and I went in for a good time.

Did I find it? You know whether I did or not. I did not. And I went deeper, deeper, deeper, deeper into dissipation and sin to find joy to satisfy my unsatisfied heart. I did not find it, and one awful night, a mere boy still, with all hope gone, with life desolate and bare, life so barren that there was just one step between me and hell, in fact, that very night I started to take that awful step, to take my life by my own hand. I sprang out of bed and drew open a drawer to take out the instrument that would end my life.

For some reason or other I could not find it. God did not let me find it, and I dropped upon my knees, and said, "O God, if you will take this awful burden from my heart, I will preach the Gospel;" and God not only removed the burden, I found a joy I had never dreamed of in this world, and all the years since it has gone on increasing, with the exception of a short time when I fell under the blighting power of skepticism and agnosticism; all the rest of the time all these years the joy has grown brighter, brighter, brighter every year. Young men and women, if you want the deepest, sweetest, purest, most overflowing joy there is to be known on earth, come to Jesus Christ.

3. In the third place, not to be a Christian costs the sacrifice of hope. A Christian has hope.- As we read in Titus i. 2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised." Oh, how magnificent that hope is, hope of eternal life! How sure it is, resting on the Word of God, who cannot lie. The world has no hope like that. The world holds out no hope that has any foundation. Hope for the future is more important than present possession. "Oh," some one says, "I do not believe that; give me the present and I will let the future take care-of itself."

Yes, you do believe it. There is not a man or woman here to-night that does not believe that hope for the future is more important than present possession. A man says, "I do not believe it." Yes, you do; I will

prove it to you in five minutes. Suppose you had your choice to-night between being a millionaire and having all that money can buy for to-night, with no hope for to-morrow, but with the rising of to-morrow's sun and the opening of to-morrow's banks to be proved to be an embezzler, and all your money swept away, and you cast into prison to spend the rest of your life there; or to be absolutely penniless to-night, but with the absolute certainty that with the rising of to-morrow's sun and the opening of to-morrow's banks you were to be a millionaire all the rest of your life, which would you choose?

"Oh!" you say, "that's very easy; I would choose to be penniless to-night, with the certainty that to-morrow and all the rest of my life I was to be a millionaire." So would I, but that only shows that you believe that hope for the future is more important than present possession; and I would rather be the poorest child of God in the world to-night, with the absolute certainty that with the dawning of eternity I was to be for all eternity an heir of God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ, than to be the richest man on earth to-night out of Christ, with no outlook for all eternity but to be cast into God's eternal prison-house of hell.

A man out of Christ has no hope, even from the life that now is, that is at all sure. You say, "That is too strong; a man out of Christ may have no hope for the future, but if he is rich he has for the present life." You are mistaken. Come with me to New York City. We walk up Fifth Avenue; we stop before one of the most elegant mansions there; we go up the steps and are ushered through the hall down to the library at the end of the hall. You and I stand there on the threshold and look into the library.

In it there are two men deep in earnest conversation. This is not an imaginary case, but an actual one. One of these men is worth one hundred and ninety-six millions of dollars, by an actual inventory of his property taken a few days after the time of which I am speaking. The other man is one of America's greatest financiers. You and I stand there and look in, and you say, "Well, I would like to be in that man's shoes. One hundred and ninety-six million dollars! I do not know anything about his religious convictions, I do not know anything about his eternal prospects, but he is well fixed for many years to come so far as this life is concerned."

You are mistaken. While you and I are looking in, that man falls out of his chair on his face on the floor, and when Quincey Garrett picks Wm. H. Vanderbilt from the floor he is a corpse. For all his one hundred and ninety-six millions he had no hope for five minutes. Friends, we all of us here to-night are like men standing on the seashore looking out over the boundless ocean of eternity, and as we look out, there comes towards some of us -those of us who have a living faith in Jesus Christ- gallant vessels laden with gold and silver and precious stones, with every sail set, waited swiftly towards us by the breezes of the divine favour.

But toward the rest of us -those out of Christ- as we look out over the boundless ocean of eternity, there come no vessels, but dismantled wrecks, with, no cargoes but the livid corpses of lost opportunities, over which are hovering the vultures of eternal despair, driven madly towards us by the fast-rising blasts of the indignation of a holy and an outraged God. That is what it costs not to be a Christian.

4. In the next place, not to be a Christian costs the sacrifice of the highest manhood and the highest womanhood.-Have you ever thought of it, that we have all fallen away from God's ideal of manhood and womanhood through sin? Paul puts it in his tremendous way, "We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God;" all fallen short of God's ideal of manhood; and the only way back to it is by the acceptance of those regenerating and transforming powers that there are in Jesus Christ; or, to put it into ordinary language, by regeneration through Christ. And the best that any man or woman can attain to out of Christ

is to be a mere caricature of manhood or womanhood as God created men and women to be. Is there a man in this audience to-night so lost to all that is noble, to all that is good, to all that is truly manly, that he is willing to be a mere caricature of manhood as God created man to be? Is there a woman here to-night so lost to all that is true, to all that is womanly, that she is willing to be a mere caricature of womanhood as God created woman to be? That is what it costs not to be a Christian; and, men and women, if there were no other argument but that, I would come to Christ to-night.

5. In the next place, not to be a Christian costs the sacrifice of God's favour.-We have all sacrificed God's favour through sin. The only way back to God's favour is by the acceptance of the Sin-bearer whom God has provided. How plain the Bible makes that. Turn to John iii. 36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "Oh," but some man says, "I do not know that I care about that. The favour of God? God is not real to me. He is so far away. If I have the favour of my neighbour, the favour of my employers, the favour of my friends in the club, the favour of my constituents in politics, I do not know that I care whether I have the favour of this far-away being that you call God or not." Wait a moment; when you go out of this place to-night, look up at the stars over your head, and say to yourself, "The great God that made those stars, the great God that made those wonderful worlds of light, about which the astronomers are telling such wonderful things in these days, the God that holds them in the hollow of His hand as they go whirling through space with such incredible momentum, that God loves me, but He is displeased with me." When you get home to-night and lie down to sleep, and cannot -for I trust, in the kind mercy of God, some of you will not sleep when you get home to-night through thinking of what you have heard here- when you get home and cannot sleep, and all the rest of the house is asleep, and you lie there alone, alone with God, looking up into the face of God, and God looking down not into your face only but also into your heart, say to yourself, "The great God into whose face I am now looking up, and who is looking down not into my face only but also into my heart, that God loves me, but He is displeased with me." Men and women, if I had to face that thought tonight, if there were any way to find peace with God -and thank God there is!- I would not rest till I had found it.

6. In the next place, not to be a Christian costs the sacrifice of Christ's acknowledgment in the world to come. How plain the Word of God is about that. Turn to Jesus' own words in Matthew x. 32,33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in Heaven; but whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven." You will often hear men say this: "If a man believes in Christ in the secrecy of his heart, even if he never confesses Him or says anything about it, God yet knows what is in his heart, and will accept him on the ground of the faith which he never confesses." I challenge any man to show me one line in this book that countenances such a statement. That Word says as plainly as day, in Romans x. 10., "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.- That Word says as plainly as day, and the Master Himself said it, in Mark viii. 38, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." That word says as plainly as day, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in Heaven, but whosoever denieth me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven." You say, "Does not faith save?" Yes, and faith confesses; and the faith that does not lead to confession is no faith and the faith that does not lead to confession will not lead to salvation. I can imagine that great day, when the Lord Jesus summons all His own before the bar of God. There we stand in bright and glorious array, the Lord Jesus Christ at our head, and He turns to His Father and says, "Father, all

these are Mine; they confessed me upon earth before men, and I now confess them before Thee My Father in Heaven." But look, away over on the outskirts of that crowd is a man who hung upon the outskirts of the Church of Christ on earth. His sympathies were with the Church, his associations were with the Church, but he was a coward, and had not the courage of his convictions. He was afraid of his business partner, of his associates in politics or in society, and he never came out and confessed Christ openly before men. But he thinks that because he hung upon the outskirts of the Church of Christ on earth, that he can hang upon the outskirts up there. The Lord Jesus Christ now turns to him -I do not believe it will be so much in anger as in unutterable pity-and with a sad wave of His hand He says, "Depart, depart; you did not confess Me upon earth before men; I cannot confess thee before My Father which is in Heaven." Men and women, that is what it costs not to be a Christian. Not to be an open, confessed, out-and-out follower of Jesus Christ.

7. Once more, not to be a Christian costs the sacrifice of eternal life, and means to perish for ever. How plain the Word of God is about that. Take the words of Jesus Christ Himself in John iii. 14,15, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." How plain it is. Believe-have everlasting life; not believe-perish. John iii. 16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." How plain it is; believe-have everlasting life; not believe-perish. Once more, John iii. 36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." How plain it is; believe-have everlasting life - not believe shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Do you ask me what eternal life means? I cannot tell you. I can tell you what its beginnings are, for, thank God, I have them in my own heart to-night. But what eternal life means in all its fulness, in its eternal outworking, no human language can describe, and no human fancy can conceive. I will tell you what to do. Take that moment of your life whose joy was purest, deepest, highest, holiest, divinest, multiply it by intensity, and carry it out to all eternity, and you will have some faint conception of what eternal life means. Do you ask me what it means to perish? I cannot tell you. You and I sometimes see the beginnings of it in the man or woman who has gone down through sin, in the depravity of their lives, in the corruption of their characters, in their wretchedness and despair. But what it means to perish in all the eternal outworkings of a depraved character, what it means to perish in that endless vista that lies ahead of us, no human language can describe, no human fancy can conceive. But I will tell you what to do. Take that moment in your own life whose degradation was deepest, whose corruption was completest, whose despair was the most blank and the most utter, and whose agony was the most appalling, multiply it by infinity, and carry it out to all eternity, and you have some faint conception of what it means to perish. And that is what it costs not to be a Christian.

Men and women, I put to you then this question: Are you willing to pay the price of a Christless life? If you are, I have nothing more to say. If not, I ask you to stand right up and profess your acceptance of Christ like men and women. Now I will admit that you may gain something by not becoming Christians. I will admit that it will cost you something to become real Christians. It will in all probability cost you the loss of friends that you hold very dear. I never knew a man to step out of the world without losing friends. It will cost you the loss of money, for real Christianity touches a man's pocketbook. I am willing to admit that. You cannot do some things in business if you become a Christian that add to your income and which you do to-day. I will admit that. I want you to know this. I do not want you to come out under false pretenses. It will cost you very likely the loss of pleasures of which you are very fond, and not for one day only, but for

weeks and months and years to come. When I gave my heart to Christ I had to give up everything I was most addicted to in the days gone by, the things without which, it seemed to me, life would not be worth living. I want you to know this to-night. We want real conversion here. But I also want to ask you a question: Are you willing, for the sake of a few godless companions that you are better off without, are you willing, for the sake of a few hundred or a few thousand or a hundred thousand, if need be, of pounds sterling, are you willing, for the sake of foolish, godless pleasures that are unworthy of a thinking being anyhow, and unworthy of your brain and your feet and hands, that men and women ought to be ashamed of even if they are not

Christians, like the dance, the card table, the theatre, that intelligent people ought to be ashamed of even if they are not Christians" are you willing, for the sake of such things as these, to sacrifice peace and joy and hope and manhood and womanhood and God's favour and Christ's acknowledgment and eternal life, and perish for ever? Are you willing to make so great a sacrifice for so paltry gain? One night in New York City, at the close of a sermon by Dr. MacArthur, a gentleman came to him and said, "Dr. MacArthur, I want to ask you a question; if I become a Christian must I give up my money?" Dr. MacArthur was a wise man, and answered, "If you become a Christian, and Jesus Christ asks you for your money, you must be willing to give it up, every penny of it." The man said, "Dr. MacArthur, I will take a week to think about that." Dr. MacArthur knew it was no good pressing the man just then, and he said, "Very well." The man came back after a week, and said, "Dr. MacArthur, I have settled it; I will hold on to my money till death, and if Christ and Heaven must go, they must go." That was an awful decision, but it was an intelligent one. Are you ready to say that to-night? "I will hold on to my money till death; I will hold on to godless companions till death; I will hold on to my godless pleasures till death; and if Christ and Heaven must go, and peace and joy and hope and manhood and go, and peace and joy and hope and manhood and womanhood and God's favour and Christ's acknowledgment and eternal life must go, and eternal ruin come, let them go and let it come." Are you ready to say that, men and women? That is what you do say, practically, if you go out of this place to-night without Jesus Christ.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ra-torrey/what-it-costs-not-to-be-a-christian/>

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