

Has Jesus Committed Himself to You

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being a radical disciple of Jesus, highlighting the need to prioritize Christ above all relationships, to die to self and not get offended, and to surrender all possessions to the Lord. It stresses the significance of seeking first the kingdom of God, being detached from earthly possessions, and living a life fully committed to Christ, even if it means facing challenges and persecution.

Scripture: John 2:23, Luke 14:26, Luke 14:27, Luke 14:33, Galatians 6:14, Ephesians 2:6, Proverbs 6:6, 2 Corinthians 12:14

Topics: "Radical Discipleship", "Prioritizing Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Brothers and sisters, there's a word that came to my heart today from John chapter 2. It's something that I thought about many times but it came afresh to me today. It says here in John chapter 2 and verse 23 to 25, when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast, many believed in his name. Now that was a, this is the beginning of his ministry and there were many who believed in his name.

It's even today we see it's very difficult for a Jew to become a Christian. So when a Jewish person believed in Christ, seeing the miracles which he was doing, it's really wonderful. But the interesting thing is that Jesus was not so excited about these people believing in him.

Because it says in verse 24, and this is a, we have to be careful because many of us also believe in Jesus in the same way these Jews believed. But we need to think of verse 24 and 25 in connection with ourselves. But Jesus on his part was not entrusting himself to them.

They entrusted themselves to him, verse 23, which means they believed in him. But he did not believe in them. So he did not entrust himself to them.

That can happen today. You believe in Jesus and entrust yourself to him. He doesn't believe in you and he doesn't entrust himself to you because he knew all men.

And he did not need anyone to testify concerning man. He did not need someone saying, Lord, this is a good brother. This is a good sister.

Please trust him. They know so much of the Bible. No, he did not need anyone to testify concerning him.

Oh, this brother is an elder in a church or in a synagogue or whatever it was in those days. He did not need anyone. I want to say brothers and sisters, even today, Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.

He does not need anyone to testify to him concerning you or me. He doesn't need a recommendation about you from some elder brother or any such thing because Jesus himself knows what is in every man. So why do we seek commendation from men? Why do we seek the approval of men? Paul said he never sought the approval of men.

He says in Galatians chapter one and verse four, oh sorry, verse 10, Galatians chapter one, verse 10, Paul understood this, that some who believe in Jesus, Jesus did not commit himself to them. And he was concerned that Jesus should commit himself to him because he said, Lord, how can I do your, how can I serve you? How can I live on this earth if you don't commit yourself to me? And Jesus did not need any man to recommend Paul to him. It says here, am I now seeking the favor of men or of God? If you want to follow Jesus, brothers and sisters, say that to yourself.

Am I seeking to the favor of men or of God? Am I striving to please somebody? Stop striving. Seek only to please the Lord. If I was still trying to please men, I cannot be a non-servant of Christ.

If I seek to please men, I cannot be a servant of Christ. Those are very strong words. Many, many years ago, the time when we started CFC, 45 years ago, I got those words written in a small plank of wood and I had it in my sitting room for 25 years and more.

I saw it every day in front of me. If I seek to please men, I cannot be the servant of Christ. That's the way, anyway, I started my ministry in CFC and I was very thankful that that reminder every day, I don't have it in front of my, in my sitting room today because I don't need it.

It's been so deeply imprinted in my mind, but in the beginning, you know, we need something that God speaks to us. We need to keep on reminding ourselves of it. The Lord told the Israelites to write the verses of the law on the walls of your house and the doors so that it'll remind you.

Today, people put pictures. I used to have verses to remind me again and again of the most important things in life and I was very thankful for that. In the early days, we had a verse in every room to remind us because I want the Lord to commit himself to me and I hope that is your desire also, not that you've committed yourself to the Lord, but that the Lord will commit himself to you and if you want the Lord to commit himself to you, you need to be reminded frequently of the things that he has said.

Very important and if you turn now to Matthew's gospel in chapter 10, here's another very strong statement of his, which is another thing that we thought about much in the early days when CFC and the Lord began, when planted CFC in those early days. Matthew 10, 34, he said, don't think I came to bring peace on the earth. You know, at Christmas time, people sing the song, the angel sang, peace on earth and goodwill towards men.

But if you read the full words that the angel said that time, it is peace on earth and goodwill towards men, Luke 2, 14, with whom he is pleased. Peace among men with whom he is pleased. Luke 2, 14, that's how it is in the NASB or people of his good pleasure.

So it's not peace among everybody. It's peace among those with whom God is pleased. That's what the angel is saying.

So here it says, don't think I came to bring peace on the earth. He came to bring peace among those with whom he is pleased, but not on the whole earth. And he says, I did not come to bring peace.

I came to bring a sword and he defines what that sword is. It's not a sword with which we fight for our rights, like the world uses their swords. It's not a sword with which we try to overcome people in any way.

There are people in Christendom who are fighting with each other to overcome one denomination, trying to overcome another, and one preacher trying to overcome another, and a lot of criticism and all that. We're not in that category. We refuse to fight, or I refuse to fight even over doctrines.

I say, if you don't believe what I say, just forget it. Believe whatever you like. But I'm not going to argue with anyone over doctrine.

I've had many people come to my house and argue with me over doctrine, and after a while I say, yeah, let's forget it. It's not because I see you're not interested in knowing the truth. You just wanted to argue.

So, but we do, where is the sword to be used? I came to set a man against his father. The same Lord who said in Mark 7, you must honor your father and mother, says here, I came to bring a sword, a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and the man's enemies will be those in his own family, members of his own family. What does he mean? He who loves, verse 37, Matthew 10, 37, he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

That's what he means, that the Lord has come to bring a sword that prevents a man from loving his father or mother more than Christ. If you're a God-fearing person, you grow up respecting your parents, and that's right, and you love father and mother, and even in non-Christian cultures, I know non-Christians respect their parents a lot. They love father and mother, and then Christ comes in, and he says, I've come in between.

He always comes between us and our loved ones, and if you don't let him come there, you can't be his disciple. He who loves father or mother more than me, he is not worthy of me. See, this explains why Jesus did not commit himself to certain people, as we read in John 2, 24 and 25, because he knew what was in man.

He knew that some of these people, they loved their parents more than they loved me. They loved their, and like it says here, he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and the same applies to any family member. He knew that a lot of those people who believed in him, they loved their family members more than they loved Jesus.

They believed in Christ, of course. They loved seeing his miracles, and people want to go to heaven. A lot of people accept Christ because they want to go to heaven when they die.

That's about it. That's not true conversion. No, it's a hating of sin more than a wanting to go to heaven that makes a person have a proper relationship with Christ, a hating of the self-life that has produced all the sin in our life.

If there's no hater of that, it's a very selfish type of Christianity, and the Lord saw that a lot of those people in John chapter 2 we read, they believed in him. You know, they say, Lord, we believe you're the son of God, and we trust you, and we want to follow you, but this he knew what was in man, and he sees what is in us today. If anyone loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

If you love your children more than you love Jesus Christ, Jesus says absolutely you're not worthy of me, and you're certainly not my disciple, and if you don't take up your cross, verse 38, and follow me, you're not worthy of me, and then there's these words that come frequently in all the gospels. Matthew 10 39, he who has found his life will lose it, but he loses his life for my sake will find it. There he's not referring to martyrdom.

He's not referring to our giving up our physical life. The word there in verse 39 is our soul life. There are different words in the original language for soul life and physical life, and he's talking here about your soul life, that if I try to find my soul life, that means I like to preserve myself, my dignity, my respect, and I want self to be preserved.

If you don't, you will lose it, but if you're willing to lose all that, lose your self-life for my sake, not just lose it for any other reason, but for Jesus' sake, you will find it. So the most oft-repeated statement, that is perhaps the most oft-repeated statement of Jesus in the gospels. I think it occurs about six times.

If you find your life, you will lose it. If you seek to find your life, you lose it, and if you are willing to lose your life for his sake, you'll find it. If that is the most oft-repeated statement of Jesus in all the four gospels, all of us should be able to explain that to someone who asks us from our experience how we have lost our soul life in order to find Christ and his life.

Will you be able to explain it to someone how you experienced that in your own life? If not, you haven't taken the words of Jesus seriously. This is the most oft-repeated statement of Jesus in the four gospels. It's not just four times, it's six times if I'm not mistaken.

So we need to understand this very clearly, and if you turn to Luke chapter 14, we can think about it a little more. In Luke 14, we read in a similar sort of statement. In Luke 14, like in John chapter 2 where many people believed in him, here it says in Luke 14, 25, large crowds went along with him.

Today, if a preacher saw a large crowd following him, the first thing he'd do is take an offering or at least say something that will make himself popular with that crowd. Jesus was so different. I tell you, when you read the gospels, you find hardly any preacher who's like Jesus.

I remember as a young man when I read the gospels and I looked around to see preachers who were like Jesus, who couldn't care for the multitudes, who couldn't care for their money, were willing to be unpopular with them, but spoke the truth. I hardly found any. Very, very difficult, even in today's world.

Everybody's after money or popularity, preachers, to build their own name and their own kingdom. But look at Jesus here, and this is what it means for any preacher to follow Jesus. When he saw this great crowd following after him, he turns around and tells them some of the hardest words that he ever spoke to anybody.

He's speaking about discipleship, and he gave three conditions of discipleship there in verse 25, sorry, 26, 27, and 33, strong statements. All of them were, you got to put me above these three, in these three areas of your life, you got to put me first. Now it's very important for us to understand this because these are all, in the concluding statement in verse 26 is he cannot be my disciple.

If you don't fulfill this condition, there's no way of being my disciple. There's no second class disciples. You're a disciple or you're not a disciple.

And if you don't fulfill this, you cannot be my disciple. In verse 27, you don't do this, you cannot be my disciple. And verse 33, if you don't do this, you cannot be my disciple.

Absolutely. There is no second class of disciples. There are no spiritual disciples and carnal disciples.

No, there are disciples and those are not disciples. These three statements are very clear. Now this is important because, let me go back to the two great commissions that Jesus did.

Some of you already know about it because I often speak about it, but there may be others here who have not heard me so often. So let me repeat it. I never mind repeating things for the benefit of young children growing up who are hearing these for the first time in our midst and also for the benefit of people who have come in more newly and who haven't heard it so often.

First of all, in Luke, the first great commission is Mark 16 and verse 15. Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation, to every person. And this is a very simple statement.

We've got to go and preach to everyone in the whole world. And he who believes and is baptized will be saved. This is the elementary gospel.

And he who does not believe, no mention of baptism there, he who does not believe will be condemned. And if you go doing this, these signs will accompany those who have believed. Not every single person who has believed, but the company of those who have believed, these signs will be there.

Now you can't go claiming that if you're not going into all the world and preaching the gospel. A lot of people like to say, Oh Lord, you said we can cast out demons and speak in new tongues and heal the sick and all. Hang on, hang on.

Don't rush into that. To whom did he say that? Perhaps not to you because you're no interest in going to the gospel, going to all the world and preaching the gospel. No, you're seeking your own.

You're probably only interested in making money. You're going to all the world to make money. Here he's talking about those who want to go into all the world to preach the gospel.

I'm not talking about going to foreign countries in the world means that maybe your neighbor or someone living across the street or somebody in your office, that's your, that's part of the world you've got to go into, but your passion in life is to give the gospel to others, to tell people how they need to turn from their sins and believe in Jesus Christ. And to such people, yeah, God will confirm your word with many signs. And we've seen that even in India, you know, those who go into unreached areas, even today, some people say the day of miracles is past.

It's not, God doesn't do many miracles in the midst of communities of people are already born again. And that did not happen even in the early days in, I mean, Paul lived with a thorn in the flesh. Timothy lived

with a stomach ache throughout his life.

They were not healed, but in the acts of the apostles, whenever they went into new places, exactly like it says in Mark 16, miracles took place. And we've seen that happen in India today. You go into a new place where nobody's ever heard the gospel and you go there to preach the gospel to people who don't even know who Jesus Christ is.

And I tell you, it'll happen. The sick will be healed and demons will be cast out. It happens even today.

And they speak in new tongues and they are protected from harm in so many ways. And they lay hands on the sick and they recover. It happens even today for those who go into unreached areas to preach the gospel.

That's one part of the great commission. The second part of the great commission, it's like two sides of a coin or two sides of a currency note. If one side of a coin is not printed or one side of a currency note is not printed, it's fake.

In the same way, the great commission has got two sides. This is one side. In both cases, he said, go into all the world.

The second one is Matthew 28. Here he says in verse 18, this is the other side of the great commission. All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

You go, therefore, now it's very important to understand this clearly. Every word is important. Go and make disciples in the whole world, in every nation.

That's the same as saying the whole world. There it was, Mark 16, go and preach the gospel to all the world. Here it is, go and make disciples in the whole world.

And why should I go? Now, most missionary challenges are, there's a need out there. So you should be going, what are you doing here doing a secular job when there's a need out there for preaching the gospel and you're sitting here making money? Go there and preach the gospel. That's how missionary challenges are made today.

And a lot of people are moved emotionally by this very clever preacher. And they go forward and become missionaries and have short-term missionaries go to Mexico or India or something for three, four weeks, like a holiday for them, or go long-term, but they go on the basis of somebody challenging them to go. And I've seen a lot of these people in India, those who come short-term and long-term, and they are such a disgrace to the name of Christ.

They're not disciples, first of all, young people. They come for fun. They're evangelical tourists.

And even some long-term missionaries, they've never known what it is to be disciples themselves. And they go into all the world. Why? Because they went on the wrong basis.

Here it says, go therefore, verse 19, therefore, like it has been said, whenever you see a therefore in scripture, see what it is there for. What is it there for? Why is the word therefore there? It's based on the previous verse, not there's a need in the whole world, therefore go. No, that's the wrong way to go.

All authority is given to me, Jesus said in heaven and earth, therefore go. In other words, you come under my authority first. Come under my authority in your home, submit every area of your life to me, and then I will send you under my authority.

And when you go under my authority, you'll see amazing results in your ministry. But if you go just because you see a need and you think you're quite qualified, you've got a few, know a few verses in the Bible, et cetera, you'll make a mess of your life like so many other people have made a mess of their life. We got to come under the authority of Christ.

And you don't have to go to a foreign country to make disciples. You can make disciples in your office. You can make disciples among your relatives.

You can make disciples among your friends, but you have to come under the authority of Jesus Christ first. And every one of you is listening to me. If you are really born again, if you're really made Jesus savior, you must make him Lord of your life and come under his authority.

And then this is your responsibility. It's not the responsibility of a few full-time workers and preachers to make disciples. No, every single one of us is called to make disciples who has come under the authority of Jesus Christ.

All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth. Therefore, why Lord should I go? Because all authority is given to me in heaven and earth. The Lord says, and you come under my authority, therefore go.

Where should I go, Lord? Come under my authority and I will tell you exactly where to go. He may never call you to full-time Christian service. There are very, very few who are called to full-time Christian service.

Maybe one in 10,000 believers. Yeah. One in 10,000 believers, I think are called to full-time Christian ministry.

There are hundreds who go out who are never called. I've seen a lot of people like that in every country on earth. There are people like that, but those who go under the authority of the Lord, the Lord backs them up and go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them.

You have to baptize them as disciples in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The trinity is very important. Very, very important.

And then that doesn't conclude there. Does he say now, and these signs will follow those who make disciples? No. No mention of signs or tongues or demons casting out or healing the sick or being unheard by poisonous things.

None of these things here. That was in Mark 16. You go to unreached areas and there are all types of dangers there, and the word has to be preached to people who have never heard about Jesus.

They don't even know who Jesus is. There has to be some confirmation. You've got to understand that, certainly.

Like I've often said, you go into some village in India where they never heard about Jesus. You go and say, I want to tell you about Jesus. They say, who is he? You never heard of him.

And you say, well, you know, 2,000 years ago, a little baby was born. You say, how does that affect me? They say, well, he was born to a virgin. And they immediately think you're off your head when you'd say a baby was born of a virgin.

They say, that never happens. And this is the Son of God. It's a story to them.

And he grew up and he did miracles. And then he said, if you believe in me, you'll be saved. And they killed him and he was dying for your sins.

And this guy who's never heard says, how in the world could he have died for my sins 2,000 years ago? And then he rose up from the dead. Three days later, you tell him, and he's absolutely sure you're crazy. You say, go and tell that story to somebody else.

Then you say, wait, hang on, hang on. This Jesus is alive. Bring someone who is sick here.

Bring any demon possessed person here and I'll show you what power there is in the name of Jesus. And the sick are healed. The demons are cast out.

And that person believes this is exactly how the gospel has gone. It's going even today in India. And so I was gone in the early days that hasn't changed, but here now we are talking about making disciples.

These people are converted, need to become disciples. They need to love Jesus more than their father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children, property, everything else. And then what do you do with them after that? Here is the, there it was the word signs following the spoken word here.

What happens after they become disciples? You've got to teach them to obey every single thing I commanded you. See, that's why we took 10 studies on the Sermon on the Mount. I mean, that's not everything Jesus commanded, but that's a major part of what Jesus commanded.

And it says here, if you become a disciple, then you have to learn and understand and obey all that Jesus commanded. Teach, not teach them to understand. No, I'm not interested in teaching people to understand the scripture.

That is so Bible schools, they waste people's time. I want to lead people to obey. It says, teach them to do, which is a lot different from teach them to understand or teach them to study the Bible.

And you can't teach them to do if you've not done it yourself. I mean, how can a person who's never been a carpenter in his life teach other people carpentry? How can a person who's never handled a computer teach somebody computers? No, teach them to do because you've done it yourself. What? Every single thing that I've commanded begin with the Sermon on the Mount, if you like.

There are many other things after that as well. And if you do this, here's a promise. I will be with you always.

Now that's another word I've seen hanging up in many houses. No, I'm with you always. I said to whom did Jesus say that? Not to every Tom, Dick and Harry.

He said that to those who had a passion to go and make disciples and to teach them everything that Jesus commanded. He says, if you've got a passion to make disciples and teach them everything I commanded, I promise you, I'll be with you always. Christians are experts at claiming a promise without fulfilling the

condition.

And that's why so many promises are not fulfilled. They wonder, Hey, God doesn't seem to answer my prayer. He doesn't seem to keep his word.

Of course he doesn't keep his word if you don't fulfill the conditions. Without the conditions fulfilled, how can he, even the initial step of salvation, repent and believe and you'll be forgiven. What if a person doesn't repent and doesn't believe? Can he be forgiven? No.

What if a person has no interest in making disciples and no interest in teaching them everything that Jesus commanded? Like it says here, can he believe that Jesus is with him always? Well, not according to this promise. It's very important to always look for the conditions. So if you turn now to Luke 14, that's why we emphasize discipleship because he told us to make disciples.

And in the gospels, the conditions of discipleship are most clearly explained in Luke 14, 26 to 35. That's why we go to that passage. In the early days when we, when the Lord planted CFC in the early days, there were two things we spent many, many months teaching.

One was the conditions of discipleship mentioned here because it's so new because they never heard it in any other church where these folks came from. We emphasized it again and again and again through all the years we have gone through it again and again and again and again, because new people have come into the church who've never heard it before. We're not there in the beginning.

And children have grown up to become adults who never heard it because it was preached. And we took studies on that when they were little babies. Now they're grown up.

They need to hear it. So we need to repeat this again and again and again. And they also need to hear the Sermon on the Mount.

So those are the two things we emphasized a lot in the early days, Luke 14 and Matthew 5, 6, and 7. And because of that, we had a good foundation and we sought to build on that foundation. Now turn back to Luke 14. In the middle of this section on discipleship, which is verse 26 to 35, the three conditions mentioned in verse 26, 27, and 33, right in the middle, Jesus introduces a parable.

He says, here's an example of a man who laid a foundation and he did not complete the building. Because in the beginning, it says here, if you want to build a tower, we're not building a one-story building here. The Christian life is not a one-story building.

That's the first thing you need to know. It's not, I want to go to heaven when I die. That's not true Christianity.

That's all right for a dying thief because he can't do anything else. He's hanging on the cross and his life is going to be gone in a few moments. There's nothing else he can do.

Lord, remember you when you come into the kingdom of the Lord. He says, okay, you'll be with me in paradise. Fine.

That's what we tell dying people. But if you want to be a disciple, if you're not a dying thief, you're a living thief. And that's what we are when we come to the Lord.

Then we have to take seriously what he said here. We're building a tower or in today's language, a skyscraper. We're building a hundred story building.

That's the Christian life. According to verse 28, the tower was the biggest thing in those days. Today we'd say a skyscraper, a hundred stories, not just a foundation.

Your Christian life should be a hundred stories high. You want to fulfill God's will, but it costs a lot of money. If you're only going to build one story, it doesn't cost much at all, but a hundred stories, you better know right at the beginning what you're going to build, because that is the foundation on which you're building.

And it says here, a person doesn't calculate it. He doesn't think in the beginning of how much it's going to cost in order to build this building. So what happens? He starts building and then he realizes, Hey, this is going to cost so much, much more than I thought.

And so he says, it's going to cost too much. So I give up. So then people laugh at that.

Hey, what's this? This man years ago, he laid a foundation here. 25 years ago, he built a foundation and he hasn't built anything laying off on it. It's like many Christians who accepted Christ 25 years ago.

And what is accomplished in the 25 years? They're not become like Christ. They've not done anything for the Lord. They're not grown in the Lord, just a foundation.

I'm going to heaven when I die. And it says people laugh at them and they ridicule him. And then the Lord uses another example.

Also, there are two parables here, all in relation to discipleship. So from the first parable, what we learned is discipleship means building the skyscraper, not just saying I accepted the Lord and got baptized. I don't think I would want a single person like that in a church where I'm an elder, not even one person who just wants to say, I want to go to heaven when I die.

I say, brother, go and find some other church. Don't waste your time here. Or like you've often heard me say, I want to go to a place where they have a good Sunday school.

I want my children to grow up in the midst of other good children and get good influences. Brother, go to some other church. There are many other churches with good Sunday schools with well-behaved children.

We're building a tower here. We're building a tower. We want to be wholehearted disciples and we're trying to obey every single thing that Jesus commanded.

That is a tower. So the second illustration here is, again, related to discipleship, a king, when he goes out to meet another king in battle. Now this is Jesus.

He's the king. And the other king, Satan is a king of his kingdom. He's got millions of demons who obey him implicitly more than Jesus' disciples obey him implicitly.

The devil's got demons who jump when he tells them to jump and go when he tells them to go. And here is Jesus with his group of people who are not so obedient, facing the devil and his demons. And he sits down and thinks, do I have enough people to conquer this huge army of the devil with all his millions? Now I've got only 10,000 and he's got 20,000.

Maybe I've got only a hundred and he's got 20,000. And then he says, no, I can't defeat him. So while the man is far away, he sends a delegation and says, let's have peace.

Let's not fight with each other. Can you imagine Jesus ever making peace with the devil? This is ridiculous. So what does he mean here? Remember that section is about discipleship.

If you have 10,000 so-called believers who are not disciples, 10,000 believers who are not disciples, and the devil comes against the millions, I would say to such believers, go and seek peace with him. You'll never win. But if you've got 10, not 10,000, 10 disciples, let 20,000 or a hundred thousand or a million come against you.

We don't make peace. We'll conquer him and Satan will be crushed under our feet. That's the point.

That if you're not disciples, you'll be like this useless 10,000 people. And Jesus is not going to be a king of such people who's going to seek peace with the devil. So keeping that in mind that the Lord is seeking for those who are wholehearted, radical, you know, who are willing to lose their life in battle so that the devil is defeated.

That's how those early Christians were. They never cared for their life. They've never cared to make money.

They never cared for honor. Many of those Jewish people were thrown out of their homes. It says, you know, it's a beautiful description of this in Hebrews and chapter 10.

It says here in Hebrews 10 and verse 32, you know, Hebrews were the book of Hebrews written to Jewish Christians. And he writes to those Jewish Christians who suffered a lot when they became Christians. They were thrown out just like today, people from non-Christian religions.

And some non-Christian religions persecute Christians more than others. And they experienced it in those days. And he says, remember these to these Jews, remember these people who were the former days when after you were enlightened, after they were born again, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, the sufferings very often from his own family.

Like we said, Jesus said, he brought a sword to come between father and son and father-in-law and son-in-law and mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and mother and daughter, a sword that came right between them. And they had a great conflict of sufferings and they were made a public spectacle. Sometimes they were dragged through the streets, made fun of, that happens even today in India.

People are made fun of. I know one brother from one of our village churches and he accepted Christ and all his parents were non-Christians, his family and everybody. The father was so upset with him.

I mean, some religions they'd kill him, but in this case, they didn't kill him. They say, you go and stand out there in the sun. They made him stand in the sun the whole day till you renounce it.

Of course, he wouldn't renounce Christ and he was still following the Lord. But there are things like that, that people have faced. They were made a public spectacle.

Everybody goes by and laughs at that person through reproaches, Hebrews 10, 33 and tribulations. And thus you became a sharer with other people who are being treated like that in other countries. This is how it was in those early days.

And then some who were imprisoned for their faith, you showed sympathy with those prisoners, verse 34. And not only that, because of this, you lost all your property. The many, many Christians who lost their right to their father's inheritance got zero because they became Christians and whatever they had was taken from them.

And they were persecuted and their house and property was all taken from them in reading verse 34. And what did they do? They accepted it joyfully. Imagine that.

They say, you come and take my home. You robbed me of all my money. Well, praise the Lord, because I know I have a better position and a lasting one in eternity.

This is how those early Christians were. That's what, those are the type of people whom Jesus selected to be disciples. 10 people like that can handle a million of the devil's demons.

But if they're half-hearted disciples, then 10,000 or 20,000 or 100,000 can't accomplish God's purposes. So coming back to Luke chapter 14, basically what the Lord is speaking is about taking up the cross in three areas. First of all, Luke 14, 26, the cross between you and your loved ones, all your family members, including your wife and your children, and your father and mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, and brothers and sisters, wife, children, everybody, Luke 14, 26.

They must come across when Jesus says hate, it is hate in relation to, by comparison with your love for Christ. That means when you compare your love for Christ, your love for them is almost like hatred. You often use the example of your love for your parents and relatives and friends and everything is like a star.

Stars got light, but when the sun comes up, the stars disappear. It's like that. That's what he means by the word hate there.

That means the love of Christ is so bright like the sun that it's almost as though your love for your loved ones don't even exist because love for Christ occupies your whole heart and mind. You still love them, but now it is through Christ. It's always Christ is there between, and you wouldn't do what your dad says if it's going to displease Christ.

A person who becomes a disciple like that from the beginning, he's going to be extremely useful in God's hands. Sometimes your father is a believer, but he may not be a wholehearted believer. He may be a wishy-washy believer like these Babylonian denominations are full of them.

I'm not here to judge them. Maybe they are born again, maybe they will get to heaven, but they're not interested in discipleship. You are his child or his daughter or his son, and then you listen to him.

Well, you're not going to be a disciple if you listen to him. You have to take a stand there even against a so-called born again father or mother if they are not permitting you to be a radical disciple of Jesus Christ. It's very clear.

You can't allow your wife to come between you and Christ. You must not allow your wife to drag you back from following after the Lord. Remember how Job's wife was very upset when she lost her children and property.

She was more occupied with that, and Job said, no, I'm not going to commit suicide like you're saying. I'm not going to curse God and commit suicide. He was under the old covenant, and he didn't do that.

He didn't have the Holy Spirit, so he went through ups and downs, but God saw his heart, and it says at the end God gave him double of what he had in the beginning. So, here are the people who throughout the ages have been people like that who put Christ, God above their own relatives, and that's very, very important. Otherwise, you'll never build a skyscraper.

Somewhere along the way, it'll finish. I met lots and lots of Christians like this. They start building.

They first come to CFC Church, and they hear the message of the new covenant and say, this is wonderful. I'm overcoming sin in my life. I got a little victory over my anger, and I got a little victory over getting upset, and things like that.

Praise the Lord, and then comes along something that dad says or their mom says and then they begin to compromise, and they're no longer disciples. I've seen that happen. They built half of the first floor of their building or the ground floor as it's called in some countries, and didn't even finish the ground floor, the very first story because some dad or mom or wife or son or something asked for something, and they compromised, and then it's like that for the next 25 years.

That's how their building is. They never build the wonderful skyscraper God wanted them to build, and one day Christ will come again, and they stand empty-handed before him. Don't let that happen to you, my brother, sister.

Don't end up with the regrets in eternity because you tried to please some human being here on this earth. You've got to be radical. Jesus only wants radical disciples.

Yeah. Don't let your love for any human being be more than your love for Christ. Christ must be supreme.

He must have possession of every part of your life, every area of your life, and the second condition of discipleship is in verse 27. It's included a little in verse 26 where he says you've got to hate your own life as well at the end of verse 26, and he carries on and explain that which means taking up the cross is hating your own life, my self-life. My self-life gets offended when somebody doesn't do things the way I want him to do, when somebody does not please me.

That can happen with your relatives. It can happen within the church. A lot of people get offended because somebody didn't do things the way I wanted it to be done.

He didn't please me, then that's the time to die. What does it mean to take up the cross? It means to die. I'm crucified with Christ.

I've crucified the flesh with its affections unless and God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, Galatians 6, 14, whereby the world is crucified to me and I am to the world, or as the living Bible puts it, I have as little interest in this world as a dead man has. Yeah, that's quite a place to come to. We should aim for that.

It doesn't mean I don't live. I do live unto Christ. It is no longer I, period, full stop.

No, it's no longer I, that's one side, but Christ. Christ lives in me. The self is gone.

It's no longer self, but the throne is not empty. The throne which is occupied by self is now occupied by Christ. There is a life that comes forth.

It's not a laid back doing nothing. No, it's doing something positive, whereas in the previous life, it was all negative, negative things as far as kingdom of God is concerned. And so we see here, this is what the cross means.

That means I often think of this, you know, in the early days, I decided that one of the things I'm going to get really overcome is this mission of getting offended. I've often said this for many, many years, getting offended is one of the first things you've got to get victory over. Overcoming anger, overcoming dirty thoughts, overcoming the love of money.

These are all powerful things that take time to overcome because there's inbuilt desire in us for sex and for our rights and for money, et cetera. But when it comes to getting offended, that's because of pride. There's absolutely no other reason than pride for getting offended.

And I discovered long ago that I said, that's the first thing, that's a kindergarten lesson I need to learn in the Christian life. I want to say to all of you, here's the kindergarten lesson for your self-love to be dethroned. Refuse to get offended.

And what I would say to myself is if somebody did something that hurt me or offended me, I just ask myself, are dead men hurt by anything? Is a dead man disturbed by anything? No, I'm not going to be disturbed. I died. I died with Christ and I refuse to be offended.

I refuse to complain here. I refuse to say anything. I'm going to die.

I'm going to be a dead man. I've died with Christ. My life is hid with Christ in God and hid with Christ in God.

There's no such thing as getting offended. There's no such thing as retaining a hurt what somebody did to me. Oh, I remember what he did to me.

Forget it. Dear brothers, if you want to be a radical Christian, if you want to be a disciple of Jesus, take these things seriously. Otherwise I have to tell you, you will not build the skyscraper Jesus wants you to build.

Die. Die to yourself. Be like a dead person.

When people insult you, people hurt you. When people don't give you your rights, you say, what rights does a dead man have? What respect does a dead man deserve? Sometimes we think that because we've been in the church for so long, people should respect us. I say, rubbish.

I don't expect respect from any person in any church in the whole world, not even from CFC churches. Not at all. I say, I'm dying.

My life is hid with Christ in God. And I refuse to come down to the level here. It says, God, when Jesus died, I died with him.

When Jesus was buried, I was buried with him. Have you understood the gospel? This is the gospel we preach in CFC. And when Jesus was raised up from the dead, because God knew me from the foundation of the world, I was raised up with him.

And here's the wonderful thing in Ephesians chapter two, when Christ ascended up to heaven, believe it or not, I ascended with him. My name was there because God knew me from the foundation of the world. And when I understood that truth myself, a few years ago as a Christian, then what happened 2000 years ago became a reality in my life, that I could have my place with Christ in heaven.

If you then be risen with Christ, it says, seek those things which are above, that Christ sits at the right hand of God. And don't let your mind be upon the things of this earth. We are not to be, you know, in a way, if you understand it as a picture language, is not me sitting up and looking up to heaven.

But for me from heaven, looking down to earth, that's where I am seated. It's not standing at ground level and seeing everything on earth so big. No, it's going up to the moon, let's say, and seeing everything so small.

And then he goes to further up to heaven, and even the entire planet earth is like a speck of sand or smaller. Imagine everything on earth, the whole earth being a speck of sand. And what are those valuable things that mean so much to you on this earth? Somebody's approval and your dignity and your position and the way somebody insulted you or somebody robbed you of some money in your bank or cheated you or your father-in-law did not give you your share of your wife's inheritance or all this garbage.

You'll be finished with it if self has taken its place, crucified with Christ. You cannot be a disciple. Jesus said, go and make disciples in all nations.

And this is what it means to be a disciple. Otherwise, you'll only be a foundation. And Jesus will not say, oh, with you, we can't go battle against the devil.

Sorry. Sorry, not selected for the army. I want those 10 people.

That's all I need. I don't need this 10,000. No, with these people, you got to seek peace with the devil.

Sorry, we don't want it. And then the third condition of discipleship is verse 33. If you don't give up all your possessions, and you've often heard me explain how that is, possessions are what you possess.

Yes, these are all my earthly possessions. This is possession. I hold on to it.

You know how little children from birth, they come with a fist like this. You put your little finger into a little child's hand and it grips it immediately. We are born as grabbers.

This is possession. To give up my possession doesn't mean I have to sell it. I have to open my palm and say, Lord, it's no longer mine.

It's yours. I don't give it to the devil. I don't give it to the world.

I don't give it to another man. Jesus didn't ask me to give up my possessions to another human being. I can help human beings from my possessions.

That's another thing. But I have to give my possessions up to the Lord. He's my master.

And I say, Lord, I don't possess them anymore. Once upon a time, I did possess them because I was master of my own life. But now I have made you Lord of my life, and you don't only own my life, you own my possessions as well.

So that means I have it in an open palm. It's yours. You tell me what I should do with it.

You tell me to give some of it to somebody, I'll give it. You tell me to keep it or invest it or support yourself with it, care for your family, etc. Lay up something for your children, like it says in 2 Corinthians 12, 14.

Sure, I'll do whatever you say, but it is not mine. I will not lay this up as a treasure for myself. Lay not up for yourself treasures on earth.

That's the meaning of it. I don't possess it. I have it, but I don't possess it.

That house is in my name. That car is in my name, but I don't possess it. It's for the Lord.

Everything is for the Lord. This is discipleship. It's not unrealistic.

It's very realistic, and it's possible for every single believer to be a disciple if he wants to. Now I'll tell you something, you won't be the loser. If you give up anything to the Lord, I guarantee he'll give you a hundred times back.

Not necessarily in terms of earthly wealth, but something far better than earthly wealth. He'll take care of all your needs. Seek first the kingdom of God.

You know, why do we possess so much? Why do we possess so much? Hey boy, if I lose this, how will I live? How will my family live? How will my children live? And you keep on possessing it and one day something or the other happens and the stock market crashes and it's all gone in any case. Then what happens? You try to hold on to it and you couldn't hold on to it. Circumstances and other things happen in the world and you lost it.

The best thing is to give it up to God. Seek God's kingdom first, and I'll tell you whichever stock market crashes and whichever, whatever happens in the world, there's maybe an atom bomb fell somewhere and blew up so many things. You're a child of God.

He will provide everything that you need and your family. Seek the kingdom of God first and His righteousness and all the things that you need on earth will be added to you instead of being worried about what shall I eat and what shall I wear and what shall my children eat and what shall I wear? How shall I educate them? All these are legitimate worries. They should not be worries.

They're concerns. Yes, that we should be concerned about these things. We must be wise in providing and wise in saving also for the future.

Go to the ant. It says in Proverbs 6 and see how the ant prepares for winter by saving up in summer. That's the scripture.

Scripture says you've got to do that. Second Corinthians 12, 14 says the same thing. You've got to lay up.

That's okay, but we don't possess. It's very important to have a very detached attitude to money if you want to be a disciple of Jesus. I'll tell you that this is one of the biggest problems I've seen in India with people who started out very well in CFC.

They were very poor. They came. They became disciples and then God prospered them and they got more and more and more and more and more and you know what happened? Their mind and their heart

got into their money and they drifted away from the Lord and left the church.

Some are sitting in the church where they've drifted away from the Lord because something on earth has become more important for them. Be very careful, dear brother, sister. Life is short.

We don't get another opportunity to show our love for Christ except the one life God's given you and if you have wasted it, you're not going to get another opportunity when you stand before the Lord and if you wasted it upon up until today, say, Lord, I've had enough of living for myself. I'm going to live for you. Don't give up your job.

Earn your living like the apostle Paul. Great example. Paul was not an apostle.

He was a businessman supporting himself and doing the work of an apostle but he supported himself. Be like that. Great example.

That's what I've sought to do all these 45 years in CFC and all the other brothers in all our churches. That's what we've taught all the more than 100 elders we have to support themselves and serve the Lord and be a disciple of Jesus. I don't know how many of them in their inner life.

I don't know their life but I certainly want to be one whom Jesus can commit himself to. Let me close with John chapter 2 again. Remind you of what he read in the beginning.

Many believed in his name. John chapter 2 verse 23. But Jesus did not commit himself to them.

He did not entrust himself to them because he knew what was in man. I say, Lord Jesus, please, you know what is in me. Show me what I haven't given up.

Please show me where I'm not willing to die to myself. Show me if there's any human being I love more than you. I'll get rid of it immediately, Lord.

Show it to me. Show it to me. Anything I possess which I'm hanging on to, any person's opinion I value more than yours and any area of myself that's hurt, that gets offended.

Lord, I want to die. I want to have as little interest in this world as a dead man has and I want to be alive to you all the time. I want to be a responsible Christian who takes care of my family, takes care of any church God entrusts to me and all that but I'm not going to live for myself now.

Please help me, Lord, that I don't end my life with just a foundation. I want you to entrust yourself to me. If that doesn't happen, I'd say my life has been wasted.

Do you feel like that, dear brother, sister, that your life on earth as a Christian was an absolute waste? If you gave yourself to Christ but Christ did not give himself to you, like it says here, because he knew what was in you, I pray there'll be a repentance in our lives today. Let's bow our heads for a few moments and think about what we heard. Heavenly Father, please help us each one to take what we have heard seriously, that we can not just respond to what I said, that's unimportant, but what you spoke through the Holy Spirit in the midst of what I said, whatever that they heard of that, that is the most important thing.

I pray that they would respond to that. I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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