

The Surpassing Worth of Christ

A sermon delivered Sunday Morning, March 16, 2003
at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.
by S. Michael Durham
© 2003 Real Truth Matters

Luke 14:25-35

And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, 26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. 34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

There are many extreme and different views on how we should serve the Lord. Some view Christianity as a difficult faith. Living for Jesus becomes a heavy burden that weights the heart and encumbers the soul. Many Christians display this because they seem so unhappy in their service to Christ. There are others that never seem to have a problem or a care. They walk with a spring in their step and a song in their soul. Watching them, you come away thinking Christianity is a breeze. One says being a Christian is very difficult, while another says it's easy to be a Christian.

And what about the various types of people who claim to be a Christian? You have ACLU card-carrying liberals like Phil Donahue who believe they are Christians. Secular humanists who believe in gay rights and abortion claim the banner of Christianity, as well as southern fundamentalists who oppose gay rights, abortion and Mickey Mouse. Wild fanatics who court and play with venomous snakes and drink strychnine argue that the Bible supports their practice or form of Christianity.

What is a person to believe about the Christian faith? Who is right and who is wrong? Who do you believe and who do you distrust? Which brand of Christianity should you accept and which should you reject? If we trust whatever has been taught us, who is to say we are right? How do we know what we have learned is truth? Is there not the possibility that our teachers were taught by teachers who were sincere but wrong? Eternal life in the very end will not be decided by sincerity alone, but sincerity in and with the truth. It behooves us to make sure of the truth.

But Pilate's question is ours today, "What is truth?" Because of the multiplicity of ideas about what Christianity is, we cannot anymore just say, "Believe the Bible" or "Believe in Jesus". Everyone, with his or her different nuance of what Christianity is, swears some type of allegiance to the Bible. They would insist the Bible proves their form of following Jesus. What then is the truth about the Christian religion?

I bid our attention be directed to the "Author and Finisher of our faith," Jesus Christ, who is God Almighty. It seems to me if we are to know the true understanding of what it means to be a Christian (which by the way is a term meaning Christ-like) it is only wise to go to Christ and let Him tell us in His own words. In the end, the judge of whether or not we were Christian is going to be Christ. Therefore, in one sense of the word, it matters little what I tell you, or your father told you, what your church says, or what any religious leader might preach.

If you would know what the Christ in the word "Christianity" says, turn in your Bible to Luke 14:25-35.

And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, 26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. 34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear (Luke 14:25-35).

THE ATTRACTION OF CHRIST v. 25

The text begins in verse twenty-five with the great crowds of people who were at this time following Jesus. Luke lets us see the attraction of Christ. Why should there not have been a great attraction to this Man of Galilee? The testimony of His generation was "they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:22). They marveled at His teaching. But Jesus was an enigma, a perplexing figure to them as well. They had never seen one whom even the devils trembled before, "for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him." Even His closest disciples found Christ so amazing that at times they were greatly afraid of what they could not understand about Him. "They being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him" (Luke 8:25). There was something so different about the Lord, something so refreshing, that people were attracted to Him.

You wouldn't think so, but the worst of sinners were attracted to this unconventional rabbi from Nazareth. It was undoubtedly His love for them. All they had known from the religious establishment was sanctimonious condemnation. But Jesus, a religious man, actually came to them, ate with them, and engaged them on a personal level. It was as if He really cared for them; He did, and they could sense it. Oh, the magnetic attraction of love—God's love!

Dear friend, have you never sensed the Savior's love for you? Are you not aware that He loves you with a perfect love? Has your heart not felt His affectionate embrace? Is there one here who has never experienced your soul's melting as Christ poured out His hot love into your heart? Have you not looked into His eyes and read their story of compassion for you? Could eyes be any more tender in their gaze as His? Look into them and you will find an infinite ocean of love. Or are you blind to God's love for you and is your heart dead that it cannot feel it? I tell you, if you were not so blind and so cold you would know why men and women were attracted to Him. You too would gladly attach yourself to Him. How hard your heart must be! How dead your senses are that not even the truth of God's love for you affects you. Should I linger here and try to convince you of His great love wherewith He loves you? If my tongue could exude a river of adjectives describing His boundless love, your soul would remain dry and parched. You need a new heart that can feel God's love. Your old heart is "dead in trespasses and sins." May God who is merciful give you a new heart.

There were also a great many that followed Him just for the thrill of seeing a miracle performed, and others were attracted to Him for selfish gain. On one occasion He feed 5000 men, not counting women and children, from just a few loaves of bread and fish. It was a miracle of multiplication. They sought after Him for what He could do for them. It was almost carnival-like until He told them they would have to eat His flesh and drink His blood if they truly wanted to be His disciples. At this they withdrew from Him and rejected Him. Our Lord had great attraction. But not all that was attracted to Him was wheat. Much was waste. A good number of those who followed our Lord were false in their hearts. They had no love for Him and certainly were not willing to forsake all for Him. As a result, the Lord Jesus works His winnowing fork and removes the chaff from the wheat, the genuine from the spurious, the true from the false.

THE WINNOWING OF CHRIST vs. 26-27

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26-27).

Luke now lets us see the winnowing of Christ in verses twenty-six and twenty-seven. The word "winnowing" is an agriculture word meaning to separate the wheat from the undesirable chaff. John the Baptist said about our Lord that He was the axe laid at the root. It was as much the work of Christ to separate and divide as it was to gather the sheep into one fold. "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12). Our Lord said that He had brought not only peace but also division.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matthew 10:34-36).

In verses twenty-six and twenty-seven of Luke fourteen, the sword is sharp, and it cuts. The axe is laid to the root, and it divides. Christ aims at that part of man that is the deepest level of feeling and attachment. He can go no deeper. With this word Jesus lays down the gauntlet and dares anybody to pick it up, knowing full well that many would refuse, and very few would hazard it. God always requires a person's all. He exposes the deepest recesses of your heart's affections and demands them for His own. Sir, Christ would have all of you or He will not have you at all. You will not negotiate a deal. There is no détente. The question is, will you surrender? The condition of your surrender is, all.

Look at what is expected of the true follower of Christ. He says unless a person is willing to hate the closest thing to him or her, the most valuable and precious things dear to their heart, and even themselves, that person cannot be a disciple.

These words of Jesus have bewildered many. Does He really mean hate your parents, spouse, and children? Are we the moment we are converted and place our faith in Christ, to renounce our families and cut off all ties with them? Not at all hardly. Unfortunately, family members may do so with us, but Jesus is not telling us to do this. As always we should allow plain and clear texts of Scripture to interpret difficult and unclear portions of Scripture. We have a parallel passage in Matthew chapter ten and verse thirty-seven that interprets our text in question. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). Here the Lord makes a similar point as in Luke fourteen and verse twenty-six, but instead of using the word "hate," He uses the words "loveth ... more than me." Christ is not preaching a doctrine of hate, but rather, is talking about a difference in the amount and type of love one has for Him compared to a man's family and even his own self. We see this use of the word "hate" in Genesis chapter twenty-nine and verse thirty.

And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years. And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren. (Genesis 29:30-31)

Jacob did love Leah as verse thirty states. He did not love her as much as he did Rachel, and thus verse thirty-one uses the word "hate" to show that Leah was loved less than Rachel. It is a term to show degrees or variance of love.

We know that husbands are to love their wives, according to Ephesians chapter five and verse twenty-five, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). If Jesus Christ has commanded a believer to love his or her enemies, then certainly we can safely imply that he or she is to love and consider dear their relatives as well as their own life.

But is Jesus simply saying to you and me, that we are to love these others and our own lives, less than we love Him? I think He is saying much more than that.

We can be certain that the word “hate” speaks of intensity of love, that we are to love all things to a lesser degree than we do Christ Jesus. But to what degree less are we to love other things? Are we to love our families a little less than we love the lovely Lord Jesus? Is it ok to love Jesus just a little more than we do these others? The word “hate” in the Bible is not used only to discuss various intensities of love. It is also used in the traditional sense of the word; it is used to mean a detestable dislike. For example, Jesus uses this word in speaking about our enemies abhorring or loathing us. “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake” (Matthew 10:22). He commands us “Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you” (Luke 6:27). Certainly Jesus was not stating the world loves us. The word “hate” means what we normally think of when using it to mean an extreme dislike.

For that reason, I believe the Lord intentionally used this word to describe how unrivaled, unequaled, incomparable, and surpassing our love is to be for Christ. In other words, the Master is saying to us today that to be His disciple we are to so love Jesus that our love for our parents, spouses and children is like hate when compared to the how much and the way we love Him. A follower of Christ is to be in love with the Lord to the degree that the love of a husband or wife seems minimal compared to our love for Jesus. It is not that we do not love our relations, it is that we love Christ so much more. In fact, our love for our father and mother and wife and children is a demonstration of our love to God. Our love to others is a means of loving God Himself. We are to be madly in love with the King who is our delight.

I am a very blessed man. I have been given the love of a woman who cares deeply for me and whom I can say is my best friend on my journey on the King’s highway. I have been given children who love me and respect me. But I can never let my affection for them strip me of my love for my Lord. If a disciple is asked to choose between one of these dear ones and the Dearest One, there is no decision. The love a disciple has for Christ is to be so strong that love for all others is comparatively minimal. I did not say we are to love our families minimally, but our love for them appears minimal when it is compared to our love for Christ.

It is this type of love that separates the true from the false. This is the winnowing fork that separates the wheat from the chaff. No matter how well a false professor may act and imitate the Christian life, he will not be able to betray his heart and its true love. If asked to choose between his flesh and Christ, Christ will lose. We can imitate love of Christ, but we cannot betray our true love if Christ is not it. Jesus said neither you nor I would be able to serve two masters. We will love one, and we will hate the other.

Don’t present your great faith as testimony of your allegiance to God. Do not demonstrate your mighty works as proof of discipleship. Rather present your heart’s affections, and all will know whom you serve and follow. The Word of God declares that many will present testimony of faith and will offer up many laudable works as evidence of their salvation, but in the end the Judge, who knows the secrets of men’s hearts, will declare them false.

You may act religious. You may stand and make long prayers, but this proves nothing. For our Lord spoke to a people who did these things, and He showed that their hearts condemned them. He said that their hearts were far from Him. Where is your heart? If you should find one thing that draws from your heart more affection, more value, more interest, more concern, then you are not following Christ. I did not say you are not a disciple of the Lord, for even disciples can stumble, as Peter and the other disciples did the night Jesus was arrested. But I issue a caution that if your heart can pursue some other love than Christ without grief or pain, then I must repeat our Lord's warning, "he cannot be my disciple."

When Jesus said in Luke 14:26 "he cannot be my disciple" He was not just saying the person is not qualified, but also He was describing a characteristic of a disciple. These folks had been following Him, so in the strictest sense they could be called disciples. Therefore, Jesus is distinguishing between one who appears to be a disciple and a true disciple. Compare this to John 6:66, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."

The disciple of Christ is one whose loyalties remain with the Lord. If men don't notice him, he is not bothered, but if they do not notice His Master, he is deeply distressed. The Lord Jesus is enshrined within the heart of the disciple that Christ is the one show-cased. Would you have men know your Jesus, or would you be more satisfied that they hail you as a holy man or woman? Do you parade your good works so that men might glorify you rather than God? A disciple is known and described as one whose love for the Lord Jesus exceeds all other loves.

Finally, the Lord deals with the value of discipleship. I have entitled this portion of the message:

THE VALUE OF CHRIST vs. 28-33

Now and again, I am asked if I would characterize the Christian life as being difficult or easy. I always answer the same—it's both. It is both easy and difficult. Christ has stated that His yoke is "easy" and His "burden light." He does not place on the disciple a weight that he or she cannot bear. Oh no, it is far better than that. The weight He gives does not even take us to the brink of what we can carry; rather Jesus said it was light. It is not only doable but it is not difficult. The yoke of the Lord is easy about the neck. It does not chafe or abrade the neck wearing it.

The Christian life is like the poem that states there was only one set of footprints in the sand, and they belonged to the Lord who was carrying the believer through the very difficult time. In Ezekiel chapter thirty-six and verses twenty-six and twenty-seven, God established a promise that would literally carry us.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

Beloved, how can we chafe under this kind of yoke? Only by working contrary to it. Let the servant set out to please the Lord in the fashion he thinks best, and you will see how quickly the yoke will become hard. How then can we toil and not come to exhaustion? By trusting this promise of the Lord, that He has placed within us the desire to do His will and the means to do it. As you work within His will, you find the needed strength to do it. What a blessed labor; what a restful work!

Thus, in one sense the Christian life is easy, but in another sense the Bible testifies to its hardness. The Apostle Paul says to his trainee, Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12). Paul describes the life of a believer as a "fight." Such imagery cannot be misconstrued as easy. To follow Christ in faith is a war with consecutive battles. Difficulty does not arise once, vanish away and never return again. Again writing to Timothy Paul describes Christianity in war-like terminology. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3). The Bible promises that we will "through much tribulation enter the kingdom" (Acts 14:22).

So the answer to the question as to whether living the Christian life is easy or hard is that, in one sense, it is easy, and, in another sense, it is difficult. It is not difficult to love such a God and desire to serve Him. On the other hand, it is not easy as we fight the battles of faith.

It appears in our text that our Lord is referring to the difficult aspect of being a disciple. But is He? What then does this idea of counting the cost mean? Let us first look at two wrong interpretations.

Wrong Interpretations

It has been preached that if you do not sit down and first consider what following Christ will cost you, you just start to follow Christ and then decide it is not worth it, you will be considered a laughing stock. But this is not what Jesus is meaning. Besides, your wicked friends and family would consider turning your back on Christ and His church as wise not foolish. While you were trying to follow Christ, they then considered you foolish.

Another wrong interpretation states, "Christianity is so hard because of all the things you must give up. This is what Jesus meant when he said counting the cost." NOTE, Jesus did not tell us what we had to give up. There is no list of do's and don'ts. Our Lord taught one simple truth, "I am more valuable than anything else I have created, or the world and the devil would offer."

Correct Interpretation

Rather Christ is saying that without first counting the cost, you will not remain a follower of Christ. There has to be a true apprehension of who Christ is, and when a person truly understands Christ's worth, he will follow. He would be foolish to not do so. Jesus encourages "counting the cost" so that we might see just how valuable He is. This is not about counting the cost and saying,

“Oh, I don’t think I can follow this Christ. It will cost me too much.” If you truly value life as it should be, Christ must be considered worth more than anything else. If you truly count the cost, the cost is by far worth it. If you truly count the cost, there is no cost.

This is the point of the second parable. The king will not fight against an invading army twice the size of his army. He lays down the sword and surrenders because he has counted the strength ‘value’ of the invading king. Jesus is the invading king. Jesus is not advocating neutrality concerning Him. In other words, it’s ok if you don’t choose to follow Him, or it’s ok if you do. This is far from our Lord’s mind. He is showing His surpassing worth to anything you and I possess, including our very immortal existence. He is worth the losing of all things for. So Christ is encouraging us to count the cost that we might understand how valuable His is.

A disciple understands the worth of Christ. He correctly ascertains the value of Christ. That is why counting the cost is effective to following Christ. A fair appraisal of Christ will also elicit allegiance. It is the man or woman who has not taken an accurate assessment of Christ who refuses to follow Christ. The Apostle Paul knew exactly whatever time, effort or sacrifice was invested in being a disciple was worth it. He understood to some measure the worth of the Savior.

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death (Philippians 3:7-10).

This is the testimony of a man who had counted the costs and found Christ more than worth it. How could Christ not be far more valuable than all things? All things are from Him and exist only by Him. He must exceed their value. How would you even begin to put a price tag on Christ? You cannot measure infinity, otherwise it would not be so.

A worthy question is, did Paul really suffer loss in order to gain Christ? Are there things we must lose in order to have Christ? Stop and think about it. How do you lose if what you gain is far more valuable than what you are giving up? If I ask you to give me your old Chevy pickup with all its dents and scratches and I’ll give you a brand new Chevy pickup, are you losing? If I ask you to give me your home with its leaky roof and its cracked plaster, and I’ll give you a brand new 3000 square foot home nestled on beautiful acreage, are you losing? If I ask you for that wrinkled and creased dollar bill in your pocket, and I’ll give you a million brand new crisp dollar bills, are you losing?

I know some of you are thinking, “You really know how to ask stupid questions!” You’re right, they are completely absurd and idiotic, but so is holding onto anything in this world or our lives rather than gaining Christ! You do not lose when you suffer the loss of all things in order to gain the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus. They are rubbish compared to Christ.

How do I explain the infinite worth of Christ? I have nothing to compare it to. It exceeds anything that I know of. It exceeds my very own life and existence. When Christ said to the young rich ruler, “go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me” (Matthew 19:21), He was not asking that young man to lose but rather to gain. And Christ is not asking any of us to lose. He is asking us to gain.

How shallow is our existence compared to what it could be. How tight fisted we are with paltry and puny things. We cling to our money and wish, work, and worry about having more. We make ourselves sick worrying about how to keep what we have when Christ says to us,

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:19-21).

If I should loosen the grip of my hand on these things and value Christ as He is to be treasured, I should find myself much richer than when these things were within my grasp. Count the cost, sir! And if your total should find anything more valuable than Christ, then may I suggest to you that Satan is your accountant. Fire him and relieve yourself of his services. There is nothing surpassing the worth of knowing Christ!

THE COST OF NOT VALUING CHRIST vs.29, 31-32, 34-5

Let us finally take a few moments, and not as many as we should, and look at the cost of not valuing Christ.

Mocking

The first expenditure in not valuing Christ as He should be is the ridicule of others. Jesus said, the man that does not count up the cost accurately will be mocked.

Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish [it], all that behold [it] begin to mock him (Luke 14:29).

Those who mock represent the true disciples. As we said earlier, it is not the world that will mock him because they would consider it coming to his or her senses to forsake Christ. These who mock this person who does not realize the value of Christ are those who do realize Christ's value. Jesus is not suggesting in the least that we should ridicule a man or woman who does not persevere, rather He is showing us that the church will consider such a person as extremely foolish.

How foolish do some of you appear today who perhaps have not turned your back on Christ in a very public way, but privately, within your hearts, you have deserted Him. You are fools. You

come here and worship with us, but God does not own your heart. Your joy is other things so far below the value of Christ. You are a Christian in name only. The only reason you do not turn your back on Christ publically is because there is no persecution of believers. But if there were, you would turn tail and run as fast as you could.

But there is a group that is more foolish than these, and it is those who have tasted and seen that the Lord is very good. It is all those who are saved and for whatever reason have valued someone or something else more than Christ. This is not something we laugh at; we weep over it. How could you who know the surpassing worth of Christ go back and feast upon the husks of swine? How is it that you push back from the table of God's setting and prefer the crumbs of the devil's children? Are you not the most foolish of all?

What is that keeps you heart from loving Jesus more than anything else? Is it your wife or husband? What you see today will be gone very shortly. You will one day bury your treasure in the ground, and what will you have then? Their bodies will lie cold in some hole in the ground. What treasure will you have then? Last week in Iasi, Romania, I spoke to the widow of Marcel. If you remember, Brother Marcel was a man in First Baptist Church in Iasi who was killed a week after our conference there last year. The conference last year had such an impact on his life. "It changed him," his widow told me. "The last week of his life was the happiest I had ever seen him," she said. But she confided in me a confession. With tears pouring out of her eyes she said that not until the evening when I preached did she really see that she had loved Marcel more than Christ. As she looked over the past year, she testified that she could, see how Christ was becoming the treasure He should have been. I tried to console her the best my feeble tongue could, but she was plagued with a sorrow over the lost years. She had to lose her treasure in order to discover the Real Treasure.

How foolish for any of us who know Christ to demote His eternal value for some temporal thing. Surely we are to be ridiculed as well as pitied.

Defeated

The second cost of any who do not rightly assess Christ's value is that they are in the end defeated.

Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace (Luke 14:31-32).

Cast Out

The third suffering of loss for the person who does not accurately value the surpassing worth of Christ is to be cast out.

Salt [is] good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; [but] men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear (Luke 14:34-35).

Often this passage has been used to describe the final end of the unbeliever. Truly such an application can be made, and it is part of what the Lord had in mind. But I don't think this is all of what our Lord meant. Notice who does the casting out. It is men that cast out the valueless salt, not angels or Christ but men. The thought is provoking. Here our Lord said that men and women who do not count the cost correctly will be like salt that has lost its taste and is no longer profitable and will be removed by other men who are able to discern value. This can be none other than a picture of church discipline where the erring ones are removed from the church because they have demonstrated that Christ means little to them.

And whatever the church has bound on earth shall be bound in heaven. Therefore, there will be a Day of Reckoning where all accounts will be settled.

Although many men run after Christ even as they did in the day of our Lord's sojourn on earth, many will not endure. They will appear for awhile to be fruitful, but in the end it will be shown that their fruit was evil. There is an attraction to Christ. How could there not be. He is the pearl of great price, the treasure of treasures. Yet Christ separates His followers with one word, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). Does He truly have your heart as His treasure? Is your heart so madly in love with Him that it shows in all that you do? Have you accurately appraised the Lord Jesus and found Him worth more than the all you now own? And can you say as Paul the apostle, that "for his sake you have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that you may gain Christ"? This is Christianity, and it is what Christianity is all about!

Some of you have this hour felt the sharp blade of Christ cut deep into your heart, and it has separated you from Christ. Will you now gladly give up all that you may gain? Why will you die, and why will you die so alone, with nothing? All of us must die. This building holds nothing today but future corpses. All of us will not be here in a few short years. Will you die losing everything, having had so much in this life, or will you lose everything now so that you will die with what at death will be the greatest wealth, knowing the surpassing worth of Christ? I tell you again to know Christ is not losing anything, it is gain. He far exceeds the worth of ten million worlds. He, dear ma'am, will make you to know love as you have never known it. He is the husband that will never leave you. He is the father that will never abuse you. He is the lover that remains faithful. Be rich in this world and die poor, or be poor in this world and die rich. It is yours to add and to find the sum. May God grant you grace and help to rightly account. Amen.