

The Cost to Serve

Matthew 10: 34-39

Jesus had revealed much to the disciples regarding what they could expect as they answered the call to proclaim the Good News. He warned that the task would not be easy, many would reject them, and they would face opposition along the way. However, in the midst of their adversity, they were expected to remain committed to the task at hand.

As Jesus begins to conclude His instruction for the disciples, He shares what they likely considered the most difficult aspect of their commission. Not only would they face opposition and adversity, their service unto the Lord would require personal sacrifice – it would come at a cost.

I am thankful for the free gift of God's grace that brings salvation. Were it not offered freely to those who are underserving, none would have the opportunity for salvation. With our salvation comes an abundance of blessing from the Lord, both in this life and the one to come. However, little is said today about the sacrifice required to serve the Lord. Like the disciples, we must learn that serving the Lord comes at a cost. We must be willing to seek His will, desiring to fulfill the calling we have received, above all else. Our loyalty must be to Christ alone if we are to be all He desires of us.

As we finish the series on "The Disciples Directive," I want to examine the [realities](#) of service Jesus revealed in these verses. Let's consider: [The Cost to Serve](#).

I. Conflict with the World (34-36) – As He had previously done, Jesus was very straight-forward with the disciples, revealing exactly what they could expect as they served Him. Here Jesus warned of conflict with the world. We too might as well prepare to deal with conflict as we strive to serve the Lord in the midst of a fallen, sinful world. Notice:

A. The Reality (34) – **Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.** These are words the disciples likely had not expected to hear based on the ministry of Jesus they had witnessed up to this point. He was a man of great compassion and love, healing the sick, caring for the poor and disadvantaged, coming as Savior and Redeemer of the world. Yet Jesus proclaimed He had not come for peace, but to bring a sword. There will be perfect peace when the Lord comes again, establishing His kingdom, but even then, He will rule and reign with a rod of iron.

- This does not imply that Jesus advocated unnecessary violence or wickedness on the part of men, but that He well understood the condition of the world. Since the fall of Adam, the world

has been under the curse of sin; Satan and those who follow him have stood in opposition to all that was pure and holy. Jesus was aware of the conflict between good and evil that had existed on earth for thousands of years. He would never condone or approve of the sinful acts of mankind for the sake of peace. He had come to offer Himself the atoning sacrifice for sin, to rise triumphant in victory over Satan and all that sin had lost. He had come to wage war with the forces of evil, committed to defeating sin and the eternal consequence it has on men.

B. The Resistance (35-36) – *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.* ^[36] *And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.* Jesus reveals that those who commit to follow Him will face rejection, often by those closest to them. Some would be rejected by their own families, but even then, they were obligated to continue to follow the Lord.

- I am not one who enjoys conflict or division. I like for things to run smoothly and everyone to be happy. However, I realize such an environment is not always possible. At the end of the day, we as individuals must have peace with the Lord. We must be confident that we have followed the Lord to the best of our ability. Sadly, for that to be a reality, we may have to face division from some whom we once enjoyed fellowship.
- I am in no encouraging discord or seeking to create problems. I merely want us to see that we can't agree with everything the world presents and please the Lord. We can't go along with everything others approve or practice for the sake of cooperation.
- I have no problem fellowshiping with anyone who stands for truth. We may not agree on everything, but as long as they stand upon the Word, the fundamentals of the faith, I will stand with them. I do refuse though to embrace error, turning a deaf ear and blind eye to those who purposely ignore the truth.

II. Communion with the Lord (37-39) – Following the warning about conflict with the world, Jesus then revealed what is expected of disciples to enjoy communion with Him. Consider:

A. The Devotion (37) – *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.* The disciples likely could deal with the conflict they faced from the world, knowing the unbelievers would be reluctant to embrace their faith. Now Jesus declared that they must love Him more than they love their fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters. This statement really put their relationship with Christ into perspective. No doubt these men loved their families, but Jesus declared their love for Him must exceed their love

for any other. He does not imply that these men should refrain from loving or providing for their families, but that their devotion to Him must now be priority in their lives.

▪ This statement is easily understood, and not difficult to communicate, but it is often difficult to actually put into practice. No doubt, the majority of believers would claim to love Jesus supremely, above all others, but do we really possess that type of love and devotion for Him? Is our relationship with Christ and commitment to serving Him the focus of our existence? Does everything else in our lives fall beneath our commitment to Christ? These are tough questions, but ones a sincere believer must ponder and answer. If we are to serve the Lord, in a way that pleases Him, accomplishing all He desires of us, we must love Him supremely.

B. The Denial (38) – *And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* The commitment to follow Christ, having communion with Him, goes beyond our love for Christ exceeding our love for others – it also requires denial of ourselves. Not only must we love Christ more than others, we must also love Him more than we love ourselves. This denial actually involves two separate and significant aspects. First there is:

➤ **The Sacrifice** – *And he that taketh not his cross...is not worthy of me.* We are reminded of the responsibility to bear our cross. Jesus doesn't speak of a few sacrifices, or inconveniences along the way. This requires much more than simply bearing a burden or two as we walk with the Lord. We must be willing to die to the desires of the flesh daily as we serve the Lord. If we are unwilling to deny the flesh, and its desires, we cannot love the Lord as He demands and deserves. Bearing one's cross is essential in discipleship!

➤ **The Submission** – *And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* While it isn't likely that one would bear their cross without following the Lord, it is possible. Jesus declares that we must seek after Him if we are to be His disciple. *Eph.6:6-7 – Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; [7] With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.* Our lives are void and empty apart from Christ. This principle does not change following salvation. We are positioned in Christ, but to enjoy victory and communion, we must follow Him consistently!

C. The Discernment (39) – *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.* Finally, Jesus declared what appears to be a paradox, and yet His words reveal profound truth. Those who find their lives spiritually in Christ, coming to faith in Him, must be willing to lose the physical lives they knew prior to Him. Through salvation, the old man of sin dies,

along with his desires, pursuits, and commitments. Jesus declared those who find spiritual life in Him must be willing to die to the desires and pursuits of the flesh. On the other hand, those who are willing to make such a sacrifice, losing the life they know in the flesh, abandoning the old man for a new walk with Christ, are promised eternal, spiritual life in Christ.

- Also, those who deny the flesh, dying out to the old man, are promised abundant life in Christ. One doesn't have to wait for heaven in order to have abundant life in Christ. He emphasized the fact that a life lived in Him will far exceed anything the world has to offer. These men had been expected to abandon much in order to follow Christ, and He assured them their sacrifice would not be in vain. They would enjoy His blessing and guidance as they served Him among men, and they were promised eternal life as well.
- There can be no doubt that the world offers much that appeals to the flesh. However, the abundance of this world will never compare to a life lived in submission to Christ, walking daily with Him. I am thankful I found life so I could lose the old life, and I am thankful I lost the old life in order to find abundant life in Christ!

Conclusion: I am sure you will agree that walking with the Lord in committed service to Him is not easy. It requires much sacrifice and devotion, even being willing to deny ourselves the pleasures and desires of the flesh. It may even cost a relationship or two along the way, but serving the Lord is always worthwhile – both in this life and in the one to come.

Are you walking with the Lord in committed service to Him? Have you responded to His offer of salvation? Are there areas in your life that need attention in order to be all He desires you to be? If there are needs, especially salvation, come to Christ today. He alone can provide what you need.