

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 14: 25-33

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. We continue to read Luke chapter 14, and today we'll read verses 25 to 33.

This passage records what happened after Jesus had been invited by a ruler of the Pharisees to eat at his house, and after He came out from that house.

Verse 25: "Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,"

This was in the later period of Jesus' earthly ministry. No matter where He went, many crowds kept following Him. And His message became more and more serious, more and more piercing to the heart. When He came out from the Pharisee's house, a large crowd was waiting for Him at the door. Jesus was heading toward Jerusalem, and these people followed Him forward. Then Jesus "turned and said to them."

The next passage is very difficult. In our natural human emotions, it is not easy to understand, and sometimes we are not very willing to accept it. To some who were willing to follow the Lord, the Lord seemed to deliberately tell them how difficult it is to follow Him, so that those who desired to follow Him would count the cost well and know how they should follow. So the following passage speaks about the conditions for being a disciple, and it mentions three conditions. Let us first read the passage, and then we will come back and speak about it slowly.

Verses 26–27: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

The first condition is: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” The second condition is in verse 27: “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

Verses 28–32: “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.”

After speaking about the second condition, that one must bear his own cross to follow the Lord, He then gave two examples: one is the example of building, and one is the example of warfare. Today we will not read these two examples in detail for the time being. Tomorrow we will come back to look at what exactly these two examples are saying.

Verse 33 : “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”

This Greek word translated “so likewise” is usually translated in English as “therefore,” but actually a better translation is “so.” So the third condition is a

conclusion after the first and second conditions. And what is that conclusion? “Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”

So let us go back again and look at the three conditions. The first is in verse 26: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” The second, in verse 27: “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” And the third, in verse 33: “Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.” In all three of these conditions, Jesus added the same sentence: “he cannot be My disciple.”

Every one of us receives grace and is saved entirely on the basis of God’s love, on the basis of the grace of Jesus Christ. We do not need to do anything; we only need to receive, and then we obtain new birth, receive grace, and are saved. But when you are willing to rise up and follow the Lord, the Lord very seriously tells you that following Him as a disciple has conditions. And these conditions, in the eyes of our natural man, seem great and difficult, almost impossible to achieve.

Today, when we preach the gospel in the church, too often we place excessive emphasis on love and grace. Of course, in receiving grace and being saved, there is absolutely nothing we can do; it is entirely love, entirely grace. But after we are saved, when we begin to walk the path of following the Lord, we must very seriously consider these conditions that Jesus spoke of.

Some churches place one-sided emphasis on love and grace, and even strongly emphasize the blessings Christians can receive. We know that in the Bible, the blessings God gives His children are actually not in time, but in eternity; in eternity we have hope. But if we overemphasize God’s blessings, especially today, blessings in this present time, it will cause us to mistakenly think that every child who belongs to God can receive earthly prosperity. If we do business, with God’s blessing we will succeed; if our body receives God’s blessing, all sicknesses will be healed; even if we go out to labor for God and go out to preach the gospel for God, then there will certainly be many people saved. Actually these things are all outward. Jesus never gave such promises.

Instead, Jesus said that if you want to follow Him, first, if you do not love Him more than your own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and even your own life, then you are not worthy to be His disciple. In the original text, the expression translated “love Me more than father and mother” — “love Me more than” — is actually the word “hate.” So in the original language, it reads in a very shocking way: it says that if one does not hate his own father, hate his own wife, hate his own children, hate his own brothers and sisters, he cannot be the Lord’s disciple.

Of course, we know that what Jesus was saying is not that we should take an attitude of hostility toward our relatives. No, it is not that. Rather, when you follow the Lord, what the Lord requires of you is your loyalty. In matters where you must be loyal to the Lord, many times your love for your relatives becomes a hindrance to your loyalty to the Lord. At such times, you must learn to hate this natural affection of yours, so that you may continue to be faithful to the Lord’s leading upon you. Therefore, the Chinese Union Version translates it as “love Me more than father and mother,” and of course this translation is very good.

In our human relationships, the love of parents for children, the love between husband and wife, and the love between brothers and sisters are all very beautiful and very precious. But we must know that even such love is relative, and it is also conditional. Only God’s love for us is agape love, a love that is completely unconditional and asks for nothing in return.

What Jesus means here is that we must hate the love that comes out of our natural emotions. If we truly come to follow the Lord, truly experience God’s love for us — that unconditional love which asks for nothing in return — and after we are filled with God’s love, then use this love that asks for nothing in return and is without condition to love our relatives, this is what is meant here by “love Me more than father and mother.”

When we learn to use God’s love and to consider things in the light of eternity, we will discover that on the road of following the Lord, being loyal to the Lord and loving our relatives are not in conflict at all. Then He added another phrase: we must hate our own life. The word “life” in the original language is soul. God’s

requirement for those who are His disciples has always been that you deny yourself.

To learn to deny the self, we come to the second condition: “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” There are two main words here: one is the cross, and the other is one’s own cross. Many times we think that suffering is bearing the cross, but actually it is not. Many times your suffering is self-inflicted. If you do not care for your body, do not pay attention to exercise, do not pay attention to health, then naturally you will become sick. This is a bodily law; this is not the cross.

The cross is even more a matter of the reason you suffer and the purpose of your suffering. If today, for the sake of God’s kingdom and for the sake of God’s will, you suffer innocently, and throughout the whole process of suffering, you continually have God’s strength supporting you and God’s love filling you, so that in your heart there is no sense of bitterness, this is what is called the cross.

And for every person who belongs to Him, God has tailor-made his own cross. The purpose of the cross is positive: through all kinds of circumstances that God arranges for you, the parts of you that do not please God can be removed from you through the cross. It causes you truly to learn how to hate your own soul-life: in all things the Holy Spirit leads you, and the Holy Spirit has authority in you. Only then is it called bearing your own cross.

After these two conditions, the summary brings in the third condition, in verse 33: “Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.” When you have learned to use God’s eternal love, God’s unconditional love, to love those who are closest to you — your parents, your spouse, your children, your brothers and sisters — and you are willing to deny your own soul-life and are willing to bear your own cross, then the next thing is to forsake all.

“To forsake all” speaks entirely of a matter of lordship. We ourselves originally belong to God, and Jesus Christ shed His precious blood on the cross to redeem us back to Him. Therefore, we no longer belong to ourselves, and the ownership of the things we possess must also be transferred. Everything you possess no longer

belongs to you, but belongs to the Lord. This is the true meaning here of forsaking all.

When you use all the riches God has given you, you must have an attitude that it is no longer I myself who am lord, but Jesus Christ who is Lord over me. When the Lord asks you to give, you can give; when the Lord asks you to lay it down, you can lay it down. We manage everything we possess for the Lord, and in this way we will no longer become slaves of our possessions, but transfer the ownership of these possessions into the hands of our Lord.

For a person to receive grace and be saved, the threshold is very low: as long as you sincerely repent and sincerely accept all that Jesus Christ has accomplished for you, you obtain new birth. But when you are willing to rise up and follow the Lord, His conditions are very severe. You must learn to love your relatives with the Lord's divine love, you must learn to bear your own cross to follow the Lord, and you must also learn to forsake all in order to follow. Of course, for every one of us, these are all great and difficult lessons. But we must turn to the Lord: what is impossible with me is possible with God.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for placing such heart-piercing words before us. Although we are often weak, we also have a will that is willing to follow You. Lord, help us, and grant us grace, so that through Your word we may gradually grow in life, and also in our living may testify to our growth. Make us disciples who are faithful to You, taking You as our example in all things. As You walked the path of the cross, also let us learn to bear our own cross. And teach us to forsake all. All the riches You have given us are under Your lordship; let us not become slaves of these things. Bless my life today, that it may be according to Your will. Thank You. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.