

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

COUNTING THE COST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 22ND, 1874, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.”—Luke xiv. 28–30.

THIS passage is peculiar to Luke, and he tells us that at the time when our Lord uttered it great multitudes followed him. It is observable that when our Lord was forsaken by the crowd he was not depressed, and when his ministry became popular he was not elated. He was calm and wise in the midst of the excitement of the thronging multitudes. This passage is sufficient evidence of that fact. On this occasion our Lord spoke with a view to the winnowing of the great heap of nominal discipleship which lay before him, that the chaff might be driven away and only the precious corn might remain. The discourse before us reminds us of Gideon's process of diminishing that vast but motley host of which the Lord said, “The people are too many for me.” After having bidden the faint-hearted go, he next brought down the remaining thousands to the river, and bade them drink; and then only kept for himself those who lapped in a certain peculiar manner, which indicated their zeal, their speed, their energy, and their experience. Our Lord tested his followers that he might have only those remaining who would be fit for the conquest of the world. To carry his precious treasure he would select vessels whom grace had made fit for his use, the rest he could dispense with.

Our Lord Jesus was far too wise to pride himself upon the number of his converts; he cared rather for quality than quantity. He rejoiced over one sinner that repented, but ten thousand sinners who merely professed to have

repented would have given him no joy whatever. His heart longed after the real, he loathed the counterfeit; he panted after the substance, and the shadow could not content him. His fan was in his hand with which to thoroughly purge his floor, and his axe was laid to the root of the trees to hew down the fruitless. He was anxious to leave a living church like good seed-corn in the land, as free as possible from all admixture. Hence in this particular instance one might even think that he was repelling men rather than attracting them to his leadership; but, indeed, he was doing nothing of the kind. He understood right well that men to be truly won must be won by truth, that the truest love is ever honest, and that the best disciple is not he who joins the class of the great Master in a hurry, and then afterwards discovers that the learning is not such as he expected, but one who comes sighing after just such knowledge as the teacher is prepared to give. Moreover, our Lord knew what sometimes we may forget—that there is no heartbreak in the world to the godly worker like that which comes of disappointed hopes, when those who have said, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,” turn back unto perdition, and when the hot breath which shouted “Hosanna!” turns into the cruel, cold-blooded cry, “Crucify him! crucify him!” Nothing is more injurious to a church than a large dilution with half-hearted members, and nothing more dangerous to the persons themselves than to allow them to put on an untrue profession. Therefore did the Master take most care at the time when that care was most needed, that none should follow him under misapprehension, but should be made fully aware of what was meant by being his disciples, so that they should not say afterwards, “We have been misled; we have been beguiled into a service which disappoints us.” Unlike the enlisting sergeant, who sets forth all the glories of military service in glowing colours in order to gain a recruit, the great Captain of our salvation would have his followers take all things into consideration before they cast in their lot with him.

This morning our text may be equally suitable, and its warning may be as necessary and as salutary as when first the Master pronounced it; for great multitudes are just now following Christ, a revival has come and stirred the mass of you. Among the would-be disciples (blessed be God!) are many whom the Lord himself has called, for every one of whom we give most hearty thanks; but with them necessarily, and of course (for when was it ever different?) there are others who are not called of God at all, but who are moved by the natural impulse of imitating others, and stirred by feelings which are none the less fleeting because just now they are intense; and therefore in Christ’s name it is ours to address you even as he did, and warn you in his own words: “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. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come

after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying. This man began to build, and was not able to finish.”

To assist our memories, we will divide our meditation into three parts. The first will be headed in this manner: *true religion is a costly thing*; second shall bear this motto: *Wisdom suggests that before we enter upon it we should estimate the cost*; and the third shall bear this inscription: *Cost what it may, it is worth what it costs*.

I. First, then, it is clear from our text that TRUE RELIGION IS COSTLY. Far be it from us to create any confusion of thought here. The gifts of God’s grace cost us nothing, neither could his salvation be purchased with money, nor with merit, nor by vows and penances. “If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.” The gospel motto is, “without money and without price”; we are “justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” Yet, for all that, if a man will be a Christian it will cost him something. Consider a moment. Here is a blind man sitting by the wayside begging; he asks to have his eyes opened. Will it cost him anything? No, the Saviour would not accept all the gold in the world for the cure, he will freely open his eyes; but when they are opened it will cost that blind man something. Obtaining his sight he will be called upon to discharge the duties of one who has eyes. He will not be allowed after that to sit there and beg, or, if he tries to do so, he will lose the sympathy which is bestowed upon blindness; now that his eyes are opened he must use them, and earn his own bread. It will cost him something, for he will now be conscious of the darkness of the night which he knew nothing of before! and there are sad sights which now he must look upon which never grieved him before, for often what the eye does not see the heart does not rue. A man cannot gain a faculty except at some expense; he that increaseth knowledge or the means of gaining it, increaseth both sorrow and duty. Take another case. A poor man is suddenly made a prince: it will cost him the giving up of his former manners, and will involve him in new duties and cares. A man is set on the road to heaven as a pilgrim: does he pay anything to enter by the wicket-gate? I trow not; free grace admits him to the sacred way. But when that man is put on the road to heaven it will cost him something. It will cost him earnestness to knock at the wicket-gate, and sweat wherewith to climb the Hill Difficulty, it will cost him tears to find his roll again when he has lost it in the arbour of ease, it will cost him great care in going down the Valley of Humiliation, it will cost him resistance unto blood when he stands foot to foot with Apollyon

in conflict, it will cost him many fears when he has to traverse the Valley of the Shadow of Death, it may cost him his life when he comes to Vanity Fair, if like Faithful he is called to bear testimony at the stake. True religion is the gift of God, and there is nothing we can do to purchase it; at the same time if we receive it certain consequences will flow from it, and we ought to consider whether we shall be able to put up with them.

You may be sure that the cost must be great, since our Lord compares it to the building of a tower. The word here used for “tower” has often been employed to signify a turreted house, a villa, or country mansion. “Which of you,” says he to the people, “intending to build for himself a mansion in which to reside at your ease would not first of all count the cost?” The building is to be a costly one. Doddridge is wrong in the supposition that a temporary tower is here intended. That it would cost a considerable sum is clear from the Saviour’s saying that the wise man sits down and counts the cost. He does not merely stand up and pass his hand over his brow, and say, “This tower will cost me so many hundred pounds,” but it is to be an elaborate construction, an almost palatial edifice, and therefore he sits down, like a merchant at his desk, and thoughtfully considers the undertaking; he consults the architect and the mason, and calculates what will be the expense of the outer walls, what of the roof, what of the interior fittings, and the like, and he does not make a rough guess, but counts the cost as men count their gold. It is evidently a matter of consequence with him, and so is true religion—it is no trifle, but an all-important business. He who thinks that a careless, hit-or-miss, headlong venture will suffice for his eternal interests is the reverse of wise.

True godliness is the building up of a character which will endure the day of judgment. It begins in laying deep the foundations in faith and love and a renewed heart; it is carried on by the putting patiently and carefully, and often painfully, stone upon stone the materials of the fair edifice, diligently adding “to your faith courage, and to courage knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.” Our life-work consists in “building up ourselves in our most holy faith.” See ye not that it is a glorious palace to which the Christian character is likened?

But, lest we should still think the expense small, our Lord compares it to a war, and he speaks of the number of troops engaged in that war, showing that it is no petty skirmish of two insignificant tribes; he likens it to a war in which upon one side there is an array of ten thousand, and on the other a host of twenty thousand. Now, warfare is always expensive work; besides the cost for accoutrements and ammunition, there is the cost of human life

and blood, there is the removal of strong arms from work at home, and the direr risks of defeat, captivity, and devastation. The Lord compares religion, then, in its externals, to a battle between the gracious man and the evils rampant in the outside world. The disciple of Jesus has to defend himself against a gigantic foe, and he has within himself a power which, so far as he is concerned, is not sufficient for the contest; the odds are fearful—ten thousand against twenty thousand. Well does the Saviour say in the latter case that it is well to sit down to consult. The king with the smaller army consults, asks his sage senators, takes counsel from experience, calls in good advisers, and debates whether the thing can be done or not. So should we consider the matter of our souls, for religion is a costly thing, and not to be entered on, as the Frenchman said, “with a light heart.” That light heart cost his nation dear, and so it will ourselves if we indulge it.

We might have inferred this, I think, from some other considerations—namely, first from the fact that true religion is a lasting thing. It lasts for life. False religion comes and goes; true regeneration is never repeated, and it is the commencement of a life which will know no end, either in time or in eternity. Now anything which is to last must be expensive. You shall get your glass coloured, if you will, cheaply, but the sun will soon remove all its beauty. If you would obtain a glass which shall retain its colour for centuries every step in the process of its manufacture will be costly, involving much labour and great care. So is it with true religion. You may get it cheap if you will, it will look quite as well as the real thing, and for a little while it will bring you almost all the comfort and respect, which the genuine article would have brought you; but it will not last; soon will its colour fly, and the beauty and the excellence, which were there but in pretence, will soon have gone. You want, dear friend, (I am sure you do), you want a godliness which will last you till you die: well, then, it must cost you something, be you sure of that.

Remember also that true religion will have to bear a strain, for it is certain to be opposed. This tower will not be built without opposition. It is like the wall of Jerusalem, Sanballat and Tobias will be sure to hinder the building. True religion must be able to endure hardness: if it cannot do that it is good for nothing. The old Toledo blade cost the warrior much at first hand, but when he had once procured it he knew that it would cut through joint and marrow in the day of battle, and he was not afraid to dash into the thick of the fray, trusting to its unrivalled temper and keen edge. Could he not find a cheaper sword? I ween [believe] he could have found it easily enough, and with small expense of gold, but then in the moment when his sword smote upon his enemy’s helmet, instead of cleaving through the skull, it snapped in the warrior’s hand and cost him his life. Such is the

cheap religion with which so many take up; there is no self-denial in it, no forsaking of the world, no giving up of carnal amusements—they are just the same as the world; their religion costs them nothing, and at last when they want it, it will fail them, it will snap like the ill-made sword in the day of battle, and leave them defenceless. Oh, if you want that which will endure the conflict you must spend cost upon it. Jesus Christ knew that the persons to whom he spoke would not be able to bear the tests which awaited his disciples; they did not know that he would be crucified, for just then he was popular, and they hoped that he was to be the King of Israel, but the Saviour knew that there would come dark days in which the King of the Jews would be hanged upon a gibbet, and his disciples, even his true ones, would forsake him for the moment and would flee; and therefore he in effect said to them, “You must be prepared for cross-bearing, you must be prepared to follow me amid derision and shame and reproach, and if you are not ready for this your discipleship is a mistake. In their case it did not stand the test, these people were nowhere when the time of trial came.

And remember, dear friends, and I dwell with great emphasis upon this point, we want a religion which will abide the inspection of the great Judge at the last day. Now, there are things in the world which will endure for awhile, but if they are closely looked at, and especially if they are placed under a microscope, they will be seen to have many flaws: now, no microscopical examination can for a moment be compared with the glance of Jehovah, he will read us through and through. Oh, what a withering will there be for fair professions in the day when his fiery eye shall gaze upon them. Never does the grass dry up, under the sirocco, one-half so swiftly as the fair plains of pretended Christianity will wither, beneath the divine glance in the last tremendous day. He will look upon what men call Christendom, and it will almost, if not altogether, vanish; for “when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth?” Will it not, then, be evidently true that “many are called, and but few are chosen”? “Strive to enter in at the strait gate,” is still the voice of Christ to all of us, “for many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able.” If our religion is to be weighed in the balances, and may perchance be found wanting, it is well for us to see to it, and to know that it must be sincere, genuine, and costly, if it is to pass that ordeal.

What, then, is the expense? What is the cost of building this tower or fighting this war? The answer is given by our Saviour, not by me. I should not have dared to invent such tests as he has ordained; it is for me to be the echo of his voice and no more. What does he say? Why, first, that if you would be his, and have his salvation, you must love him beyond every other person in this world. Is not that the meaning of this expression, “If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother”? Dear names! Dear names

“Father and mother”! Lives there a man with soul so dead that he can pronounce either of these words without emotion, and especially the last—“mother”? Men and brethren, this is a dear and tender name to us, it touches a chord which thrills our being; yet far more powerful is the name of Saviour, the name of Jesus. Less loved must father and mother be than Jesus Christ. The Lord demands precedence also of the best beloved “wife.” Here he touches another set of heart-strings. Dear is that word “wife,” partner of our being, comfort of our sorrow, delight of our eyes—“wife!” Yet, wife, thou must not take the chief place, thou must sit at Jesus’ feet, or else thou art an idol, and Jesus will not brook thy rivalry. And “children,” the dear babes that nestle in the bosom, and clamber to the knee and pronounce the parent’s name in accents of music, they must not be our chief love, they must not come in between us and the Saviour, nor for their sakes, to give them pleasure or to promote their worldly advantage, must we grieve our Lord. Many a child is master of his father, many a daughter has been mistress to the mother; but if it be for evil, this must be ended at once. If they tempt us to evil they must be treated as if we hated them; yea, the evil in them must be hated for Christ’s sake. If ye be Christ’s disciples your Lord must be first, then mother, father, wife, children, brethren, and sisters will follow in due rank and order.

I am afraid that many professors are not prepared for this. They would be Christians if their family would approve, but they must consult their brother, father, or wife. They would make a stand against worldly pleasures if others would, but they cannot bear to appear singular, or to oppose the views of relatives. They say, “My father wishes it, and I dare not tell him that it is wrong.” “My mother says that we must not be too strait-laced, and therefore, though my conscience tells me it is wrong, yet will I do it;” or else they say, “My girls are growing up and must have amusement, and my boys must be allowed their pleasures, and therefore I must wink at sin.” Ah, my brethren, this must not be, if you are indeed Christ’s disciples. You must put them all aside, the dearest must go sooner than Jesus be forsaken; for does he not say in the Psalms, “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him”? Mark you, you will best prove your love to your relatives by being decided for the right, since you will be the more likely to win their souls. Love them too much to indulge the wrong in them; love them so truly that you hate that in them which would injure you and ruin them. You must be prepared to suffer from those who are bound to you by the dearest ties; sin must not be tolerated whatever may happen. We cannot yield in the point of sin, our determination is invincible; come hate or come love, we must follow Christ.

The next item of cost is this—self must be hated. I am afraid there are some who would sooner hate father or wife than hate their own life. Yet such is the demand. It means this: that wherein my own pleasure, or my own gain, or my own repute, or even my own life shall come in the way of Christ's glory, I am so little to make any account of myself, that I must even hate myself if self shall stand in the way of Christ. I am to look upon father, mother, brother, sister, and myself also, as foes, so far as they are opposed to the Lord Jesus and his holy will. I am to love them and desire their good as I also desire good for myself, but I am not to desire any good for them or for myself at the cost of sinning, and robbing the Lord Jesus of his glory. As for myself, if I see anything in myself opposed to Jesus I must away with it. I must mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts, denying myself anything and everything which would grieve the Saviour, or would prevent my realising perfect conformity to him.

Next, the Saviour goes on to say that if we would follow him we must bear our cross: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." Sometimes that cross comes in the shape of confessing our faith before gainsayers. "Ah," says the timid heart, "if I do so I shall have all my friends against me." Take up your cross! it is a part of the cost of true discipleship. "I shall scarcely be able to bear myself in the house if I avow my religion." Take up your cross! my brother, or you cannot be Christ's disciple. "Well, but it will involve a change even in my daily life." Make the change, my brother, or you cannot be the Lord's disciple. "But I know there is one very dear whom I have looked upon as likely to be my future companion, and he will leave me if I forsake the ways of the world." Then, heavy as the loss may be, let him go, if it be so that you cannot follow Christ and unite with him; for Jesus you must follow, or be lost for ever. What trying words these are! What detectors of the hypocrisy of many professing Christians! Did they ever separate from the world? No, not they; they fall in with its fashions as the dead fish floats with the current. Have they any cross to bear? Does anybody reproach them with being too rigid, and too puritanical? Oh, no! for theirs is the religion which the world praises, and consequently the religion which God abhors. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him, and he who has the smile of the ungodly must look for the frown of God.

But, more than this, the Saviour, as another item of cost, requires that his disciple should take up his cross, and *come after him*: that is to say, he must act as Christ acted. If we are not prepared to make Christ our example, yea, if it be not our highest ambition to live as he lived, to give ourselves up to act as he did, we cannot be his disciples. Last of all, we must make an unreserved surrender of all to Jesus. Listen to these words: "Whosoever he be

of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” It may yet come to this, that persecution may arise, and you may have actually to give up all. You must be prepared for the event. You may not have to give up anything, but the surrender must be just as real in your heart as if it had to be carried out in act and deed. No man has truly given himself to Christ unless he has also said, “My Lord, I give to thee this day my body, my soul, my powers, my talents, my goods, my house, my children, and all that I have. Henceforth I will hold them at thy will, as a steward under thee. Thine they are—as for me, I have nothing, I have surrendered all to thee.” You cannot be Christ’s disciples at any less expense than this: if you possess a farthing that is your own and not your Master’s, Christ is not your Master. It must be all his, every single jot and tittle, and your life also, or you cannot be his.

These are very searching words, but I would remind you once again that they are none of mine. If in expounding them I have erred, I am grieved that it should be so, but I am persuaded I have not erred on the side of too great severity. I confess I may have spoken too leniently. The words of the text lay the axe to the root, and are sweeping to the last degree. Oh, count ye, then, the cost! and if any of you have taken up a religion which costs you nothing, put it down and flee from it, for it will be your curse and your ruin.

Is there any getting to heaven without this cost? No. But may we not be Christians without these sacrifices? You may be counterfeits, you may be hypocrites, you may be brethren of Judas, but you cannot be real Christians. This cost is unavoidable, it cannot be bated one solitary mite. God grant you may be enabled to submit to it.

II. The second head is this, WISDOM SUGGESTS THAT WE SHOULD COUNT THE COST. You feel you would like to be a Christian. Dear friend, give me thy hand. I am glad thou hast such a liking. But as I grasp thy hand and would fain draw thee towards Christ, I look thee in the face and say, “Dost thou know what thou desirest? Art thou sure thou desirest it? There are men lying on beds of sickness who cry for help, but when they recover and have to go out and battle with the world, the time may come when they will say, “I would as leave be on the bed of sickness again.” I should not like a time to come when any one of you shall say, “I joined the church, but it was a mistake. I did not weigh the matter rightly. I am now in for it, and I am sorry I am, for I ought not to be where I am.” If honest, you ought to give up your profession, if such is the case. If you have no grace, I hope you will have enough of common honesty not to stick to a practical falsehood. I should grieve indeed if that should happen, and therefore this morning, I pray you, count the cost. For mark, if you do not count the cost, you will not

be able to carry out your resolves. It is a great building, it is a great war. No mistake can be greater than the notion that in order to be saved there is only needed a measure of emotion during a few days, and the belief of some one decisive hour. If I preached such doctrines I should be deceiving your souls. Faith and repentance are not the work of a week or two, they are a life-work; as long as the Christian is on earth he must repent; and as for faith, it is not saying "I believe in Jesus, and therefore I am saved," but it is a daily grace, the trust of a lifetime; the Christian continues still to believe and repent until he commences to triumph in eternal glory. Moreover, faith is continually productive of sanctifying results upon the life of the believer, or otherwise he is not possessed of the right faith. He who believes in Jesus Christ is saved; but if there were such a thing as a temporary faith there would be such a thing as a temporary salvation. He who truly repents of sin is a renewed man, but if repentance of sin were only a transient thing, and were soon over, the life which it indicated would be over too. You must not be content with false and fleeting religion. You are beginning to build a tower of which the topstone will never be laid till you are taken up to heaven, and you are commencing a war which will never end till you exchange the sword for the palm branch.

Remember, also, that to fail in this great enterprise will involve terrible defeat, for what says our Lord? He says that not to be able to finish will expose you to ridicule. I beg you to notice the form of that ridicule. "All that pass by will begin to mock him, saying one to another (for that is the force of the expression) this man began to build but was not able to finish." Our Lord does not represent them as saying to the foolish builder, "You began to build and were not able to finish," but as speaking about him as a third person—"This man." Now, half-hearted Christians, half-hearted religious men, may not be scoffed at in the public streets to their faces, but they are common butts of ridicule behind their backs. You false professors are universally despised. Worldlings laughingly say, "Ah, these are pretty specimens of church members!" The world looks upon a worldly church with utter disdain, and for my part little do I regret that such derision is poured upon an object which so well deserves it. To be a mere pretender to Christian discipleship is to become an object of scorn in time and in eternity, and such will be the false professor's fate. Sir, if you mean to be a Christian, resolve that it shall be the right thing, thorough and decided; for then, though men will not go about and praise you to your face, they will honour you, and even those who hate you will know your value; but if you are only half a Christian, and not thorough, they may not come to your face and show their contempt, but as they pass by they will sneer, and will have more respect for a downright worldling than for you, because he is what he says he is, and makes no pretence of being

anything else, but as for you, you began to build and could not finish. What a wretched object is a sham Christian! We have sometimes seen great buildings which have been commenced and deserted by over speculative persons, and the neighbours have called them "Smith's Folly," or "Brown's Folly," or "Robinson's Folly," or the like; these are but fleeting causes of derision; but the pretender, the man who in appearance commenced to be a Christian and then broke down at it, will be pointed at even by the lost in hell. The drunkard will cry, "And you? Have you also come hither? you who were so eloquent about sobriety, and so ready to rebuke the tippler." "Aha!" cries another, "you are the man who lived down our street, and made so much show of your religion; you told me I was very wicked, but what are you? better off than I am?" Behold, I see the openly profane upraise themselves from their racks of remorse to exclaim, "Art thou become like one of us? Thou church-member, art thou in hell? Is the taste of the sacramental wine upon thy lips still? Wherefore, then, dost thou demand a drop of water to cool thy tongue? That sacramental bread which thou didst swallow so readily, does it not even now stick in thy hypocritical throat? Thou liar before God and man, meet and right is it that thou art cast out even as we." Oh, if you must be lost, be lost as anything but hypocrites; if you must perish, perish rather outside the church than in it. Do not ape the Lord of glory! I know of no worse act than to mimic the excellences of the Saviour with pert imitation of his graces. What worse offence can you render to the majesty of his sacred virtue than to travesty his holiness and ape his perfection?

III. The last word shall be this, that COST WHATEVER IT MAY, TRUE RELIGION IS WORTH THE COST. We are like a man with the black pest upon him who knows that he is dying, and yet yonder is a drug which will heal him. "Physician," says he, "you ask so great a price that each drop costs me a diamond; you are demanding more than its weight in choicest pearls, but it does not matter, I must have it. If I do not I am a dead man, and then what will it profit me that I have kept my gold?" It is the case of every one of us here present, we must have Christ or perish for ever, and it will be better for us to cut off our right arm and to pluck out our right eye than that we should be cast into hell fire.

Mark you, brethren, the present blessings of true religion are worth all the cost. What if I have to rend some fond connection? Jesus, thou art better to me than husband, wife, or child. If it must be so that she who lies in my bosom shall count me for her enemy, thou shalt be in my heart, my Saviour, better than a Rachel, or a Rebekah. Yes, if it must be so that the father shall say, "You shall never darken my doors again if you follow Christ," he must say it, for when father and mother forsake me the Lord will take me up. The immediate joy will recompense for the immediate loss, yea, doubtless you

may count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord, and yet remain a gainer.

And again, what recompense comes for all cost in the consolation afforded by true godliness in the article of death? To lie a-dying, why it will give no pain to be able to say then, "I was cast out of my family for Jesus." It will be no sorrow to remember, "I was ridiculed for Christ." It will cause us no pangs to say, "I was counted too precise and too much of a Puritan." No, my brethren, those are not the things which put thorns into death pillows. Oh, no: there we are; how sweet it was to have borne any part of Jesus' cross; a sliver of his cross will be worth a king's ransom on a dying day. Moreover, at the judgment, when the trumpet rings out, and the dead are rising, we shall not say, "I suffered too much for Christ." When to the right his chosen go, and we among them, we shall not look back with regret to the fact that we lost caste in society and position amongst the refined for Jesus' sake. We shall not lament that we attended a despised conventicle, and worshipped among the poor of this world out of love to Jesus, and fidelity to his gospel. Oh, no! I warrant you in that day he shall shine brightest who was most beclouded for his Lord's sake. Midst the bright ones, doubly bright shall be the martyr band of whom the world was not worthy, who were accounted as the offscouring of all things; and while each one of the disciples shall receive a hundredfold for all he may have given up for his Lord's cause, these shall have the fairest portion.

Moreover, let me remind you, beloved, that Christ asks you to give up nothing that will injure you. If you must hate father and mother it is only in this sense, that you will not yield to their wrong requests, nor will you leave Christ for them. If you must give up any pleasure it is because it is not a fitting pleasure for you, it is poisonous sugar of lead, and not true sweetness. Christ will give you greater enjoyments by far.

Moreover, I remember that our Redeemer does not ask any one of us to do what he has not done himself. That thought pierces me to the quick. I wish it might affect you also. Master, dost thou say, give up father? Didst thou not leave thy Father? Dost thou bid me even leave my father's house if it must be for thy sake? Didst thou not leave the glorious mansions of heaven? What if I be called to bear reproach? They called the Master of the house Beelzebub. What if I be cast out? They also cast thee out. When we think of the scourgings, and the shame, and the spitting which the Lord endured, what are our griefs? And if for his sake we should even be condemned to death we know how he hung on the cross, stripped of his all, that he might save us from the wrath to come. O believer, can you follow your Lord whithersoever he goeth? Soldiers of the cross, can you follow him? Is the path smooth enough for those dear feet and too rough for you?

There is he in the centre of the battle where the blows fall fastest, will you follow him? Dare you follow him, or do you pine for the tents of ease, and the soft couches of the cowards yonder who are shrinking back, and deserting to the enemy? Oh, by everything that is good, if you be indeed his followers, I charge you cry, "Where he is, there let his servant be, as he fares so let his servant fare; in this world be ours his humiliation that in the world to come we may be partakers of his glory."

This is strong preaching, you tell me, but the Saviour meant all that I have said. His was a testing discourse, but there are truths to be remembered which may console us while hearing them. It is true that you cannot build the tower; Joshua said to the people in his time, "Ye cannot serve the Lord." If you have counted the cost, you know by this time that you cannot wage the war. Ten thousand cannot stand against twenty thousand. But yet it must be done, inevitable necessity drives on behind; whatever may be in front, we dare not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. What, then, must we do? Hear ye the Lord's words, "With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Are you willing? Then the Spirit of God will help you. You shall give up the world and the flesh without a sigh; you shall fight against your lusts and you shall overcome them through the blood of the Lamb. The tower shall be built and the Lord shall inhabit it. Cast yourselves on Jesus by a simple faith: rest in his power, and from day to day believe in his strength, and he will bear you safely through.

Do you notice the verse which follows this passage? I wonder whether anything like it will follow my sermon. It is astonishing that though Jesus thundered out as from the top of Sinai, and his words seemed harsh, yet it is written, "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him," as if they said to themselves, "This man tells us the truth, therefore we will hear him." And then he began to tell them the precious truths of his free grace, acting just as the husbandman does who puts in the plough and turns up the soil; and when he sees the clods breaking in the furrow then he scatters the golden seed, but not till then. Ho, every one of you who would have Christ, come, and have him! You who would have salvation, accept it as the gift of his sovereign grace; but do not receive it under misapprehension; understand what is meant by it. Salvation is not deliverance from hell alone; it is deliverance from sin. It is not the rescue of men from eternal pain merely; it is their redemption from this world's vain and wicked ways. It cannot be divided, it is a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout. If you would have justification, you must have sanctification: if you would have pardon, you must have holiness; if you would be one with Christ, you must be separate from sinners. If you would walk the streets of gold above, you must walk the road of holiness

below. God grant you his Holy Spirit to enable you so to do, and his shall be the praise for ever. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm ciii;
Luke xiv. 25–35.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—906, 671, 596.