

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

December 13, 2015

The brethren in Colossae were in need of the great admonitions that Paul delivered in chapter three of his letter to them. They needed to be impressed again with the uniqueness of newness that marks every Christian who has given himself to Christ. After all, Christianity is a religion of new things. A new birth ushers the believer into it, about which Jesus taught Nicodemus (Jn. 3:3-7). He taught the disciples that the new birth produces new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17). At the point of becoming a new creature in Christ, the believer begins to walk in a new life (Heb. 10:20), and he wears a new name, of which Isaiah prophesied (Isa. 62:2), and which Luke wrote about its fulfillment (Acts 11:26).

The newly born Christian will engage in many new things as he grows and matures in his spiritual life. He will have a new set of attitudes, a new mission in life, a new worship toward the God of heaven, and sometimes, he will have to make new friends that will help him gain his eternal home with Jesus.

In his letter to the church in Colossae, Paul spoke about past trials, present challenges, and the glorious future that was offered to them by Christ. He wanted them to lay aside the filthy garments of sin permanently and become shining lights in a world that had become darkened with sin. That behavior would have been new to the former heathens who had given themselves to Christ, in order to enjoy the eternal joys of heaven.

However, those teachings that Paul penned for his brethren were not his own, they were taught to him by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, who brought into remembrance, the teachings of Jesus, for the apostles (Jn. 14:26). The three years that Jesus spent clothed in the flesh of man, He continually taught His disciples what it meant to be His follower. His three-year school was one that primarily focused on what it meant to be a disciple, while living in the physical world.

Jesus chose twelve men, from various walks of life, and trained them to be the leaders who would help guide the first century church through the growing pains of maturity. He led those fallible men by example, and imparted to them the water of life, which often included encouragement, instruction, and even rebuke and correction, when necessary.

On one occasion, the Master Teacher instructed His followers on the first necessary thing regarding discipleship; to be a disciple of Christ, one must first **count the cost!** Jesus was well known for His technique of teaching via parables. Only the Synoptic Gospels record those amazing teaching moments of the Lord, whereas John recorded none of the heavenly truths cloaked in earthly stories.

Jesus wants all people to understand that a great price is required if one is going to be His disciple. Through His parables, Jesus taught that each person must come to understand the importance of obeying the Gospel. In no way, was He insinuating that one can choose or not choose to be His disciple, and still reap the eternal benefits of heaven. He was, however, instructing that we should put forth the effort to understand what it means to be faithful, and to properly prepare ones' self for that. In His parable on counting the cost, Jesus said,

“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. 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. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple (Lk. 14:26-33).”

It is of the utmost importance that a disciple determines if he is willing to pay the price of following Jesus, before making such a great commitment to Him. The result of leaving Jesus, after having given one’s self to Him, is described as being foolish in the parable. The Lord uses the example of the vineyard owner being mocked because he did not count the cost of building the tower, and the king who foolishly went to war without the strategic information readily available to him, which would likely result in the loss of a great many lives, and the freedom of the nation.

To be a disciple of Christ means making good decisions based upon good information. In His day, the Pharisees had a whole host of spiritual deficiencies, the least of which was not, overemphasizing their self importance over God. They allowed pride to cost them eternal life because they were not willing to pay the price for heaven.

The *Cordova Connection* will continue next week with what it means to be a disciple of Christ.