

Supreme Affection for Christ

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 July 2017

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn for a little to the second portion we read in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 14. Luke, chapter 14, verse 25.

Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Now we know that Jesus is at this point, he's on his way up to Jerusalem, and he knows all that's ahead of him. He knows the betrayal, he knows the false accusations, he knows the ridicule, he knows the beatings, he knows ultimately the death that awaits him.

All these things are ahead of him. And it couldn't have been an easy journey for Jesus, but elsewhere it tells us that he set his face as a flint to go up to Jerusalem.

[1 : 22] In other words, there was just this absolute commitment, this determination that there was nothing going to sidetrack him, nothing was going to put him off koshe.

He had come to do a particular work, and he had a koshe to walk and to fulfill, and so he is making his way to Jerusalem at this particular time.

And as we were saying there about the Lord Jesus, there is this total single-mindedness, this absolute commitment, this zeal.

And although we cannot put it at exactly the same level as Jesus, Jesus is also requiring of us a similar mindset.

He's requiring of us an awareness of what we're doing, but a single-mindedness also of what we're doing, and a total commitment and a zeal, all these things the Lord requires of us.

[2 : 30] And Jesus is telling us very clearly that to be a Christian is a very serious thing. It's not something you enter into casually, that it is a serious thing to be a Christian.

And Jesus, although we know that the Christian life is full of many, many blessings, one of the things that the Lord Jesus does, he spells out to us from the very outset what it is going to involve and going to cost to be a Christian.

Because you know how sometimes you can sign up to something or get something, and later on you discover that there's small print, that as time goes on you realise you didn't exactly get what you thought you were getting, or that there were snags in it, or there were things that you were going to have to pay later on.

You weren't aware of that, you weren't told that the people, or the person who was selling this to you, or giving this to you, or sorting out in this particular way, wasn't up front with you.

And it was as time went on you realised, I didn't realise just all I'd let myself in for. Well the Lord doesn't do that with us. He doesn't say to us, you follow me, and later on I'll tell you some of the things that might come your way.

[3 : 51] The Lord is very up front, and while, as we said, the Christian life is a life that is full of blessings, it is also a life that will tax us to the full.

And the Lord makes no bones about it, and he makes it very clear to us that that in fact is the case. Now, Jesus gets right to the point where he says, if anyone, it's very strong, what he says in verse 26, but he says, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Now, we've got to be careful with the word hate here, because it is used in a sort of, what we would call, a comparative force, that Jesus is making a comparison. The Bible doesn't require us to hate ourselves.

The Bible doesn't require us to hate our family and those whom we love. That's very, very clear. But what Jesus is saying is that he has to have supreme affection, the supreme place within our lives. And that there are going to, that it will often be the case, as happens in many places in this world, where a choice has to be made between him and family. It's, it might be the hardest thing that a person will ever have to do, but that is true.

[5 : 22] That is what is required. And most certainly in the early days, in the early church, when Christianity was beginning to flourish, there was a huge cost in following the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the fires of persecution were burning, it was a massive thing. for a person to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. And, we know that even today, it's the same in many parts of this world.

And particularly in, say, places of a, say, a very, very strong Jewish background or out of a very strong Muslim culture, there are sometimes people will, will really suffer.

And maybe parts of Southern Asia where there's strong ancestral worship. again, for people to, to leave that.

The way the family looks in these particular backgrounds is a total betrayal of everything that they've been brought up to, everything that they know. And, many people who become Christians from these backgrounds will forfeit maybe their work, their home.

[6 : 36] Very often, the family will disown them. it's not that they've turned their back on the family, but that the family have thrown them out. It happens frequently. It even happens in our own, in our own country coming from these backgrounds where families have disowned completely, having any more to do with them because they have become Christians.

And that's what Jesus is talking about here. That's a force of this. It's not that somebody hates a father or a mother or brothers or sisters or a wife or children.

Not at all. In fact, the Christian will never cease to love. But it means that there will come for the Christian a cost often like that.

And that's certainly true for many, many Christians in the world today. Now, the whole thing of discipleship the Lord is showing us really, not only here but elsewhere, is an ongoing work.

It isn't something that happens straight away so that we become the completed article, the moment we come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We know it's an ongoing work.

[7 : 49] It's almost like a project and I use that reverently but every believer, every person who comes to faith in Jesus Christ is almost like a project to the Lord to renew, to restore, to rework.

Of course, the Lord is going to make each and every individual that comes to faith in himself perfect one day but not here.

But there is an ongoing work. And if you are seeing a house and there's a renovation project going on, sometimes a lot has to be taken down and rebuilt and reworked.

And so the Lord is at work with us and he's having to sometimes squeeze and to break and to push and to take this down in order to build something else up.

And that's the way it's going within our lives. So, becoming a Christian, as we said, although it involves many blessings, it also involves us being aware of what we're doing.

[8 : 58] there has to be a consideration in it. And that's what Jesus was wanting because, now, again, we know that we talk about the Lord, that it's all of grace, and of course it is, and we don't dismiss that for one moment.

But we're looking, Jesus is taking this from the human level, from our perspective, of how we are, and in relation to the whole offer of the gospel, and in order to follow him.

And he says, we ought to count the cost, and he uses the two examples of one man who's going to build a tower. The first thing he'll do is he'll look at his resources, and he'll look at his income, and say, right, can I afford this?

Do I have enough in order to complete it? Because I don't want, at the end, to get halfway through it, and then have to give up. I think that's the places of the noble, and McCaig's Folly, or something. I don't know whether the history of it, but I've been told that that tower up on the hill, that it was somebody who wasn't able to complete it, whether that's right or not. But the case is that the Lord is using that illustration to say, look, this is serious.

[10 : 15] You can't sort of go in and then out. Now, as I say, we're not looking at it from the Lord's perspective, from the way that God works within us where his grace transforms and changes, but looking at it from our perspective and what we're facing up to.

And again, the other picture he uses is a king who's going to go to war, and he looks at his own army, and he says to himself, right, here are my resources.

He said, I have 10,000 men, can I defeat this other king with 20,000, or would it be wiser to sit down and negotiate?

So again, there is this assessing the situation, how it's going to work out. And then Jesus goes on to highlight in verse 27, whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

And that's very, very powerful because Jesus is living at a time where the Romans held the sway within the land of Palestine.

[11 : 28] And Jesus himself was the one who was going to know all about cross-bearing. But Jesus says, whoever does not bear his own cross. Now as we know, when the Romans were going to execute somebody, one of the things they had to do was they had to carry their own cross to the place of execution.

And it was a must have been an awful scene when you would see somebody walking along bowing under the weight of the cross, taking it. And the one thing you would say, well, this person, this poor person who's carrying that cross, has no more future, has no more say really in his or her own life. This person is now completely under the authority of Rome because there's nothing more they can do. Their life, as it were, is over. And in a sense, that's how it is for the Christian because our life at one level is over.

Our life is a life that has been yielded to the Lord. We are under his authority, under his rule, under his dominion.

And there is a dying to self. The scripture makes it very, very clear to us that for the Christian there is a dying to self. Paul often elaborates upon using the whole picture of crucifixion that we have been crucified with Christ.

[12 : 58] Now, of course, we weren't in Golgotha crucified with Christ. We didn't experience the pain of the nails going through our hands and feet. But at another level, there is a crucifixion that is taking place within our lives.

Because we are being crucified with Christ, our whole being is at war. And you see, the thing is, we're full of sin, full of lusts, and our nature is such that we love these things.

We side with them. It's not like the moment a person becomes a Christian, it's like everything is removed out of us, as if there was a spring cleaning, a clean sweep of everything, and all of a sudden we become perfect.

That doesn't happen. One day we will be perfect, but not in this world. But the moment we become a Christian, we become a Christian as God's Spirit enters into our heart and applies the work of Jesus Christ into our soul.

And things change, and our work has begun. It is God who works in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. So there is a command and a call from the Lord to us through the word in order that we will put to death the things of the flesh.

[14 : 29] And that's not easy. It is one of the hardest things that we face. And it is not a battle for one day, or a battle for one month, or a battle for one year.

It is a battle for every day in our life for as long as we live. And there are some days we might feel that we're winning in one area, only to find we're not winning in another area.

And we go on and on struggling in this way. But we shouldn't struggle in despair, because the Lord is working in us.

He is at work. And we've got to remember that the Christian is growing down. In order to grow up, we need to grow down. And that's why it's sometimes so difficult to see that we're going anywhere or getting anywhere.

And sometimes we can feel quite despondent. And we look at ourselves and we say, you know, I was far better. I was far better 10 years ago or 20 years ago as a Christian.

[15 : 29] 30 years ago. I feel I was much better. actually you weren't. You might have thought you were, looking at the way you are now.

But it's because our knowledge of ourself has grown. Our understanding of ourself has grown. We are seeing things that we didn't see before. And of course, we are plagued by this sin.

So this is a process that goes on. And as we say, it's painful. It's not that God is out to make our lives painful and difficult.

We mustn't think that for one moment. We mustn't think that the Lord is saying, right, to be a Christian, you know, it's going to be a hard life. And you're signing up, as it were, into this life that's going to be difficult for you.

And I've made it difficult. It's not that. The Lord wants the best for us. He wants us to live a life that is fulfilled in this world.

[16:32] But we need, in order to have this, we need to be fulfilled in himself. And this is why the Lord wants the best life possible for us.

And that's why he's breaking us. He's breaking us in order to build us, to build us into a better place, to build us in order to see him in a better way.

That's what we read at the very beginning there. in the Beatitudes, where the Lord is showing us a blessing. Blessed are those who mourn.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. And you'd say to yourself, humanly speaking, how can that be? But that's the way God is working. He's working, restoring, renewing, breaking, building, and it's ongoing, ongoing, ongoing.

And this is part, we're all aware of, what I'm saying, we're all so aware of these things. Now, of course, the cross can be very difficult, different for different people.

[17:38] And you might say to yourself, well, I have a cross in my life. Well, everybody has a cross, one way or another. Sometimes, our crosses can be just through the differing providences that we go through.

It might be through a cross within your home, or a cross at work, or a cross within relationships, or crosses through losses, or deaths, or bodily afflictions.

It might be through the Lord has given you for his own purposes, his own glory, and for your good over to a period where Satan is bombarding you day and night, where you're being tempted on all sides.

You might have a cross where people are speaking ill of you, where they picked up a completely wrong story and are spreading it, and you know that you're at the center of these things.

There's no end of things we could say are crosses within the Christian life, but it's part and partial of what God is doing.

[18:47] So why the cross? I suppose we have to ask ourselves. Well, one of the things is to keep us humble in this world because pride is one of the things that's deep rooted within our very nature.

We're told indeed, and I think there's a lot of truth in it, that pride is the mother of sin, that it is at the very heart of all sin, a pride, and it can work in a very subtle way.

And maybe you're saying to yourself, you know, I'm not a proud person. Well, it's amazing how quickly we can take umbrage, how quickly our nose can be put out of joint when somebody says something about us, how quickly we can react to situations and we find that maybe I'm not as calm or maybe I'm not as humble as I thought I was.

And the Lord uses so many different things to bring us down. And humility is so Christ-like.

It was one of the great marks of his life. It was one of the great marks of who he is in that, remember that great passage in Philippians where it talks about how he humbled himself and made himself of no reputation in order to save us.

[20:14] And the more humble we are, the more Christ-like we become. And again, the Lord gives us this cross to keep us from becoming too settled in this world.

Because again, there's a danger of us becoming settled in the world. There are times, sometimes, maybe for many of you today, that's not the case. But there are times our roots can go down quite deep in this world.

We can become quite attached to this world. Now that doesn't mean that we aren't to live in this world and work in this world and plan in this world and be settled in this world.

But we must have the spirit of Abraham rather than the spirit of Lot. Abraham always saw that he was a pilgrim and a stranger. Abraham was always looking forward to that city whose builder and maker was God.

He had never settled down. Although he was living in the land of promise, he was always a pilgrim and a stranger. And that's the way the Lord wants us to live.

[21:26] Not like Lot. Remember, Lot became so settled in the world and he became so settled that even when Abraham delivered him out of Sodom, he went straight back into it.

So this is one of the pictures, one of the things the Lord is trying to instill upon us so that he will allow things into our lives to break our attachment to this world.

Maybe today you'd have to say, I'm weary of the world. You know, there are times a Christian gets really weary, weary of the world and ready to go home. because that's another thing the cross does. The cross prepares us for the crown that is to be. Because remember, we were reading earlier where Jesus was saying, rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven. And he's talking in light of where we're being persecuted, where we're going through difficult and sore times. again, the cross is used to test what's really in us.

[22 : 36] You know, a person can say, well, you know, I'm a Christian. But when a cross comes into a person's life, the reality of what is there will come to the fore.

They used to use that expression, a fair weather traveler. In other words, if everything was going well, people would say, and the climate was very favorable to Christianity and it was easy to be a Christian.

People would say, well, I'm a Christian. But the reality is often discovered when the tests come. Jesus makes this very clear in the parable of the sower.

Remember how there was some fell upon stony ground. And when the heat of the day came, it had grown up very, very quickly, the seed had sprouted up very quickly, but when the scorching heat came, it withered away just as quickly because there was no root.

It hadn't gone down. There was just too much stony ground. And Jesus is making the point that there are people who come under the sound of the gospel, they are impressed by the gospel, and then they say, well, you know, I'm going to start following the Lord Jesus Christ.

[23 : 50] And they do begin outwardly to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. And then troubles come into their life or something difficult happens or just something and they go away and that's it.

Well, obviously that was because the root had never taken. They had never truly come into a union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Their profession was outward, not inward.

And so the Lord is saying these crosses had come into our lives. Prove what is there. and some of you today, you've had plenty crosses in your life and you've had many things from a human point of view that could have brought you to throw in the towel and just turn back.

You've been tempted often enough to give up. Why haven't you? Because you're not a stony ground hearer. It is because the root has gone down deep into your heart and you are continuing to follow despite all the crosses and the troubles and the sorrows and the pains and the difficulties that have come into your life.

And that is such an encouragement often because you say to yourself, despite everything, I am still following the Lord.

[25 : 17] And so the Lord gives us these crosses. And again he gives us the cross in order to discover his grace. Because you know, this again is part of the nature of sin.

We are self-reliant and self-sufficient by nature. We want to do things ourselves. I'll do this. I'll handle this. I'm strong enough to do this. I, I, I.

But then the Lord will take us to a place where we can no longer say I. and you say, you know, I, I really, I don't know how to bear with this. I don't know how to cope with this.

I can't see a way out of this. I feel enclosed on every point. I feel like the Israelites were the Egyptians behind and the Red Sea in front.

And I really am not sure where to go or what to do. Have you been there? well, you know, the one thing it does is it throws you upon the Lord. And it is there that we discover the sufficiency of his grace.

[26 : 25] And sometimes it's only through things like that that we are thrown upon the Lord because, as I say, we're, we're always ready to try and do things on our own.

So the, the cross comes in all these different ways. But the call that goes out is, eh, whosoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

That is, who will follow, follow me. And we follow the Lord by being obedient to his word, by laying hold upon his truth.

And, you know, when we follow the Lord Jesus, a disciple really is an imitator. That's what, what it is to be a follower, a follower, Jesus, an imitator.

And we seek to imitate how Jesus lived in this world. And that's why, again, we need, need his grace, we need his help, we need his strength.

[27 : 25] So that every day we ask the Lord, Lord, help me to live like you. It's a tall order. Lord, and, but this is, the Lord is seeking that we will live in a way where people will see him in us.

And that is what we must be asking the Lord. Help me, Lord, to live today in a way where people will see something of Jesus in my life. Again, Jesus, he spoke, his words were grace and truth. And again, we should be asking, Lord, help me to live in a way where I speak in such a way that my words, my words are full of grace, my words are full of truth.

And that is why the Lord says at the end, salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile.

It is thrown away. And again, in order for us to be the true salt that Jesus wants us to be, we have to live in this particular way, resembling him so that we mirror something of Jesus in our life, in our conduct, in our speech, in all these things.

[28 : 48] Because if not, then we're not acting as salt. Because salt, remember, preserves. Salt flavors. and the Christian is somebody that flavors society for good.

The Christian is somebody that preserves society. Isn't it incredible how many today in our land, if there was one thing they could, if there was one thing that they wished could happen, and it would happen, it would be that the Bible would be removed and Christianity would be eradicated.

there are many, many, many people within our land today, and that's what they would want. Do you know, there couldn't be a worse judgment come upon the nation than if the Lord said, right, I will take my word completely out from the land, and I am going to, in one day, I'm going to remove all my people, so that from tomorrow on, none of my people will be in the land, and none of my word will be in the land.

You cannot think of a worse judgment, because there is nothing to preserve, and there is nothing to flavour, and that is where people are so blinded by sin, that that's what they want.

They want God removed, they want God's word removed, they want all that thing. Let us pray that the Lord will always keep his candlestick burning within our nation, and he will always have his cause to flourish within our nation, that his word will not be eradicated and removed, because we know that there are many powers at work to try, they're trying to break down every fibre and strand of Christianity, but we need to seek that the salt will always be preserving and flavouring within our society.

[30 : 46] God's word is calling us today to follow him. Sometimes when we present the gospel, we can present in it all its attractiveness, in all its beauty, in all its loveliness, which it is all of these things.

But we are also told some of the harsh realities of what it will cost us in order to follow the Lord Jesus. Today he's saying, are you ready to take up your cross and to follow me?

Because at the end of the day, it is the only way. Let us pray. Oh Lord, our God, we pray that we may indeed be challenged by your word, realising that often your word cuts across our words and our life.

Help us, Lord, to submit before your authority and to recognise that you are a great God and that you are doing us good, even when we might be finding it hard.

We ask, Lord, that you will uphold us and keep us, that you will shine your face upon us, take us all to our homes and safety, we pray, and have mercy upon us, cleansing us from our every sin.

[32 : 10] In Jesus' name, we ask it. Amen. We're going to conclude singing in Psalm 80, the 80th Psalm. And the last two verses of the Psalm, Psalm number 80.

This is a interviewing Nephi, the shows the comun withalarca.

I cannot do you Psalm number 80 and verses 18 and 19.

Psalm number 80 and verses 18 and 19.

Psalm number 80 and verses 18 and 19.

[34 : 21] Psalm number 80 and verses 18 and 19.

Psalm number 80 and verses 18 and 19.

Psalm number 80 and verses 18 and 19. Psalm number 80 and verses 18 and 19. Amen. Amen.

Amen.

Amen.