17 Count The Cost

Count The Cost Message In Luke 14

Jesus told the rich young man that part of the salvation formula was denying himself and bearing his own cross. For him, Jesus said this meant giving up all his wealth and giving it to the poor. (Matthew 19:16-26; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-26.) For this young man, Jesus meant you cannot serve God and mammon. (Matt. 6:24.) You will love one and hate the other. The man’s love of money put him in the difficult position of hating God’s requirement for repentance when it was pressed upon him. The man went away grieved at the request to put aside his love of mammon.

Jesus again refers to this requirement of “bearing your own cross” in his famous warning to count the cost. Jesus defined “bearing your own cross” to mean that you need “to count the cost” of becoming a Christian or otherwise you would not “complete” the course, but fail to continue and have to sue for peace with your enemy (the Devil). You will be defeated. (Luke 14:28.) The passage reads:

(27) Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. (28) For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it? (29) Lest haply, when he hath laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all that behold begin to mock him, (30) saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. (31) Or what king, as he goeth to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? (32) Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage,
and asketh conditions of peace. (33) So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. (34) Salt therefore is good: but if even the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? (35) It is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill: men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Luke 14:27-35, ASV.)

If you fail to count the costs, you will find yourself to be like a king who goes to battle with 10,000 only to find the enemy has 20,000 men. You will have to sue for peace terms. In ancient cultures, this meant the king was captured and enslaved to his enemy, usually taken back to the enemy’s homeland in chains.

What Are The Costs Of Which Jesus Speaks?

Jesus makes it clear in the same context that the cost is the “renunciation of all that [you] have.” (Luke 14:33.) This is the cost you must bear.

But what does “renunciation of all that you have” mean?

Clarke says this cost means “the difficulties” with being a Christian. Gill, however, says it means you must assess the cost of the “ordinances” to which you must submit that go with your profession of Christ. Gill adds other factors in the costs:

[F]or such a work is chargeable and costly, and should be thought of and considered, whether he is able to bear it: for he will be called to self-denial; and must expect to suffer the loss of the favour of carnal relations and friends;

While these suggestions may be all simultaneously true apart from this passage, here Jesus Himself defines the costs as “the renunciation of all that you have.” (Luke 14:33.)
Thus, such costs which we must count include the high personal cost of repenting from fleshly sins, *e.g.*, greed, gluttony, envy, anxiety, adulterous lust, etc. This is clearly part of what it means to “renounce all that you have.” You must give up all that you hold dear that simultaneously holds you back from following Jesus. The Lord makes this clear not only in the *Count The Cost* lesson, but also in parallel passages.

To understand the *count the cost* passage, let’s break it down into two issues. If we can first understand what is at risk if we miscalculate the costs, then this should help us understand what are those costs we must pay.

**What Does Jesus Teach Is The Risk Of Miscalculation?**

Jesus in the various examples of those who do not count the cost (Luke 14:27-35) underscores that our salvation is otherwise at risk. First, if you did not count the costs of building a tower, then the tower is not “completed,” and merely only “begun.” It had a beginning without a successful “finish.” (Luke 14:28-29.) Others will mock you.

This first example is reminiscent of the Parable of the Sower, where the first seed “believes for a while” and it “sprouted,” but in time of temptation it falls away (Luke 8:13), withers and dies. (Luke 8:6.) Because the sower lesson is a parable, death and the loss of life signify the loss of eternal life. Thus, even though the seed like the builder began well, in each case the second seed and the builder later suffer failure. In the Parable of the Sower, this means death and damnation. Thus, it should mean the same thing in the builder example in Luke 14:27-35.

This is corroborated by Jesus’ second example in the *Counting the Cost* lesson in Luke 14. In this example, the consequence for miscalculating the costs is surrender to your enemy. Jesus says it is like a king going to war with only
10,000 men and finding out he confronts 20,000. The king miscalculated, and has to sue instead for peace. (Luke 14:31-32.)

Applied spiritually, this teaches that in our battles, if we miscalculate the costs, a Christian ends up being forced to sue for peace with his enemy the Devil. We are defeated. We have to surrender to Satan, and accept his terms. We are ensnared by Satan. We are taken prisoner into his domain.

Thus, when these two examples — the builder and king-going-to-war — are combined, Jesus means that the risk of miscalculation is to not finish what you began. It means, as a result, you become surrendered to Satan. Both cases must be talking about the loss of salvation.

That salvation is at stake for miscalculating the cost is evident in other teachings of Jesus. In Matthew 16:24–26, we read:

... if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Clearly, in this teaching Jesus equates losing one’s soul with saving your life in this world. Then Jesus says you have a stark choice: either (a) gain the whole world (in this life) and lose your own soul (in the next) or (b) lose your life in this world for Christ’s sake and gain it in the next. It is an echo of the hell whole or heaven maimed principle. (Matt. 5:30; Mark 9:42 et seq.) This save-your-life-here-lose-it-in-the-next principle is precisely the same message as in the lesson of counting the cost in Luke 14. Salvation is clearly at stake for miscalculations. Salvation is at stake if you fail to give up the whole world when you should have been prepared to sacrifice it, and thus gain eternal life. Grace is costly, not cheap.
Miscalculation In The Young Rich Man’s Response

If that is not clear enough, we can see a real life example of a miscalculation from the response of the young rich man. He was told by Jesus what he had to do to enter eternal life. More than just obeying the Law, the young man had to give up all his wealth and give it to the poor and then follow Jesus. (Matthew 19:16-26; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-26.) For the young rich man, this was a steep cost because the young man was very rich.

This lesson to the young rich man identically matches Jesus’ lesson that we must count as costs the “renunciation of all that you have.” (Luke 14:33.) Therefore, what is at stake for the young rich man must be identical to what Jesus intends to be the risk of miscalculation in the Counting the Costs lesson: salvation.

However, the cost of salvation was too high for the young rich man. The cost that Jesus required for him to receive eternal life was giving up all his wealth and giving it to the poor. Thus, Jesus taught the rich young man (and ourselves) that salvation comes at a steep price — a price the rich young man was unwilling to pay. He was not willing to renounce all that he had in obedience to Jesus’ direction. It was a cost the young rich man was not willing to suffer.

Costs Were Properly Calculated By Zaccheus

Another way to understand what the risk represents from miscalculating the costs is to look at what is the outcome from properly counting the costs. This is reflected in Jesus’ approving of Zaccheus’ response to Jesus’ message. Jesus tells us that Zaccheus did correctly understand and accept Jesus’ gospel. Zaccheus is a model of what renouncing all that you have would look like. Zaccheus repents of extortion by paying back fourfold what he stole. He gives the rest
of his money to the poor. Then he follows Jesus. After those \textit{works worthy of repentance}, Jesus responds: “Today salvation has come to this house....” (Luke 19:9.)

Thus, while the young rich man was unwilling to do what Zaccheus did, Jesus says that the outcome of what Zaccheus did was salvation. Zaccheus cut off the riches that had ensnared him (Mark 9:42 \textit{et seq.}) This means it was an acceptable \textit{act} of repentance to God. Jesus said salvation arrived for Zaccheus.

Therefore, it is more than obvious that the risk of \textit{miscalculating the costs} is to lose salvation, and the reward for \textit{counting the costs} properly is salvation.

\textbf{What Are The Costs We Must Bear Which We Can Miscalculate?}

Knowing now the risk of \textit{miscalculating} the costs is damnation, we will next study what did Jesus mean by “renunciation of all that you have.” (Luke 14:33.) Is this as Gill and Clarke portray it? Is it merely about the difficulties of being a Christian in other’s eyes? Is it merely knowing in advance what ‘ordinances’ a Christian must obey? Or is it instead, at a clear minimum, repentance from sin and actual obedience? Are these the costs which we must count as a personal sacrifice? Must we let go of our sinful desires before confronting our enemy the devil?

Proving salvation was at stake will also give the answer to this question. The \textit{costs to count} are at least the \textit{sinful propensities which we must relinquish}.

Is this only a change in the mind or acting consistently with repentance from your sin?

Jesus and the Bible before Jesus said it must be dealt with by an \textit{act} or \textit{work} worthy of repentance. A thief who steals must repay. (Nu 5:5-8.) The greedy who has hoarded must now share. Thus, Zaccheus made this calculation correctly, but the young rich man was not willing to do so. Jesus told the young rich man the price, but he was unwilling to pay
it. However, we see elsewhere Jesus meant acts of repentance from sinful desire is at minimum a part of the renunciation of self. You must be willing to “bear your own cross” by doing these acts, suffering the loss of your favorite but sinful things. (Mark 9:42-47.)

How The Hell-Whole Message Explains The Meaning Of Counting The Cost For The Rich Young Man

In the Counting the Costs lesson, Jesus says the costs we must count are the “renunciation of all that we have.” (Luke 14:33.) We learned above that failing to do this leads to loss of salvation. You will be captured by your enemy, the devil. Above we discussed that this renunciation means likely acts appropriate to one’s repentance from sin. Either obedience or works worthy-of-repentance. The encounter with the young rich man showed us that salvation requires a stern repentance that most people refuse to entertain. They want eternal life but only if it comes free. They gravitate to those within the church who arose who preached grace and God’s forgiveness is free and without any personal cost — a gospel completely foreign to that of Jesus. (Jesus only taught the gospel must be preached without monetary charge, but it is not a gospel without personal moral cost to accept.)

Thus, while you cannot atone for your own sins, God has set conditions on the receipt of God’s mercy. Jesus insists these conditions do cost you a lot.

We have also seen how this is true by the contrasting outcome with Zaccheus. In this event, Jesus makes clear what the cost is that the young rich man would not pay, but Zaccheus was willing to pay. This cost involved an act of stern repentance. For these two men, the act involved money. One
had to repay what he stole and the other had to give all his money away. These were acts worthy of repentance appropriate for these two men. They were not identical, but varied.

Jesus gives each of us just as drastic a command. It too may vary depending on what part of your body is leading you to sin.

What proves conclusively that the drastic step given to the young rich man was a work worthy of repentance-from-sin is Jesus’ famous hell-whole or heaven-maimed statement. Jesus described this as ‘cutting off the parts of your body that are causing you to sin.’ The Greek reflects a metaphor to an animal-trap from which an animal who is partially-snared can escape only by letting a body part go as the animal breaks free.2 Jesus says:

(42) And whosoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were

1. Jesus says “without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.” (Matt. 10:8.) The next verse mentions money in their purses. Thus, in verse eight, Jesus is prohibiting laying any monetary cost burden on hearing the gospel. Jesus likewise referred to the gospel message as a free gift another time. In John 4:10, Jesus addressed a woman by a well: “Jesus answered and said to her, ‘If you knew the free gift of God and who is the One saying to you, ‘Give Me to drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.’” What’s the free gift? It’s the living water. This is precisely repeated in Isaiah 55:1-8. It speaks of “waters” for the thirsty that you receive without any monetary cost. You are to “buy without money.” You are still to buy it, but not pay in human monetary price-terms. It has only a moral cost component. This is clear in Isaiah 55:7-8. It says the message of salvation (the living water) is repentance from sin and obedience. Cheap grace enthusiasts lift Isaiah 55:1 out-of-context to prove salvation is without repentance or obedience. But if you read Isaiah 55:1-8 (which is quoted in Footnote 5 on page 238), there is still a transaction. You must buy the message, but it is without any monetary price. It then spells out clearly that the cost is repentance from sin and obedience — moral costs, not monetary costs. Hence, the cheap grace enthusiasts blatantly lifted one verse from the passage to suggest the opposite of what the passage actually says.
hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. (43) And if thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire. (44) where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (45) And if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life halt, rather than having thy two feet to be cast into hell. (46) where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (47) And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out: it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell; (48) where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (Mark 9:42-48, ASV.)

Thus, Jesus makes it abundantly clear that we can go to heaven maimed or hell whole. We can go to heaven blinded in one eye, missing one hand, or hobbling on one leg. Or we can go to hell, prizing both our eyes, hands and legs. It is an action of a stern repentance that will determine your ultimate salvation, at least if you trust Jesus’ words. As Jesus said: “Unless you repent, you too will all perish.” (Luke 13:3,5.)

Hence, the costs to suffer include “the renunciation of all that you have” (Luke 14:33). What you must calculate as a cost to encounter your enemy is such a renunciation. The young rich man, as long as he did not renounce riches, was going to fail in the next encounter with Satan respecting his sin of greed and non-generosity. If you fail to make the right amount of sacrifice appropriate to your personal failings, you will be defeated by Satan. You will be captured and taken prisoner by the Devil.

2. For the discussion of that animal-trap metaphor in this passage as well as a full discussion of the passage, see page 49.
Strive To Enter

Jesus elsewhere tells us the cost and effort we must exert is high. Jesus says in Luke 13:24: “Strive [agonizomai, agonize, use all your strength] to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able [i.e., lack strength].” Cutting off body parts is no easy task. It is painful. It figuratively cuts the skin. It causes your flesh to bleed. But Jesus promises over and over if you are willing to pay the costs, you will be saved. If you lack the foresight or the will to make the appropriate sacrifice in advance of your temptations, Jesus warns you will fall and become lost. You will fail to enter the doorway that leads to eternal life.

Cheap Grace Commentators’ Explanations Of The King’s Miscalculation

One of the ways to know one has correctly analyzed a passage is by looking at how hard or impossible it is to accept a competing understanding. We can find the strength of our own conclusion only when “we look at the arguments for alternative conclusions.” (Peter Suber, Stages of Argument.)

When we study the leading commentators — Clarke, Gill and Barnes — they each try to make Jesus sound like the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace. Yet, it is transparent that their dogma is dictating the conclusion. For they have made material admissions that, if applied to its natural conclusion, end up with a contrary conclusion to their doctrine.

That is to say, the clarity of the parable forces these men to make crucial admissions which undermine the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace. They admit the king going to war in Luke 14 is a Christian. A true Christian. They admit the enemy king is Satan. They admit the cost of miscalculating the forces needed to meet Satan was surrender and defeat to Satan. (See Table 1 on page 302 below.)
To explain away these admissions, those wed to the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace try to change the nature of the *costs* so salvation remains without personal moral cost. They insist we know *a priori* that salvation is without such personal sacrifice, *i.e.*, it is by faith alone. Thus, they rewrite Jesus’ words to match that viewpoint. To them, even though Jesus says in context that the costs involved a renunciation of all that you have (Luke 14:33), the faith-alone-commentator says Jesus means you did not pray enough to God. Thus, the *cost* is supposedly that you did not depend entirely on God. You failed to pray — this is the sole cost you supposedly had to sacrifice. In fact, you allegedly did not realize there was nothing you *could do* to be ready other than depend entirely on God through prayer. They insist you did not realize that there was no *personal* moral cost you could sacrifice to meet your enemy.

But what did Jesus really mean? *The exact opposite.* You are not prepared to battle the opposing king because you did not cut off the body parts ensnaring you in sin. (Mark 12:42-47.) You did not renounce all that you have. (Luke 14:33.) You did not take up your own cross and follow Jesus. (Luke 14:27 cf. Matt. 10:37-38.) *You assumed salvation is free, without moral cost.* Jesus warns you will suffer certain defeat. Thus, *the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace is precisely the message Jesus tried to warn you against.* Cheap grace doctrine of faith alone sets you up for defeat.

This is not to say prayer has no role in a Christian life or in following Jesus. However, *we need to pray for the things Jesus told us that we need:* the ability to pay the costs that God requires. Ask God to “lead us from temptation.”

We also need to pray for the strength to resist the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace itself as a foreign pressure. *Its message tells us there are no moral costs we must suffer to gain the kingdom.* When Peter told Jesus that He should not go to the cross (His costs) — that such sacrifice was *optional,* Jesus replied “get behind me Satan.” (Matt.16:23.) Jesus is telling us likewise that if we do not accept the costs
Count The Cost

of *taking up our own cross daily*, and we think instead *they are optional costs*, we are listening to Satan. By not counting the costs in advance of taking up our own cross, Jesus says we will be defeated and captured by Satan. Jesus Himself by example taught us to suffer all the sacrifice necessary to avoid capture of ourselves by Satan. Hence, the message that sacrifice is optional — only for those who want close ‘discipleship’ with Christ rather than eternal life — is indeed the message of Satan. You need to rebuke it in your heart as strenuously as Jesus did when it came from Peter.

**TABLE 1. Parable of King Going to War in Luke 14**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parable Elements</th>
<th>Cheap Grace Filter</th>
<th>Unfiltered by Modern Gospel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King going to war</td>
<td>Admits king is Christian.</td>
<td>Same. King is Christian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enemy king</td>
<td>Admits enemy king is Satan.</td>
<td>Same. Enemy king is Satan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petition for Surrender</td>
<td>Some suggest only loss of closeness with God at stake.</td>
<td>Loss of salvation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most are quiet on implication of surrender to enemy king.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs that king did not count and underestimated</td>
<td>Failure to pray to God for strength in the battle. Failure to ask other Christians for help.</td>
<td>Renunciation of all that you have: sinful desires and desire for family/social approval.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Is Counting The Cost Repentance-From-Sin Or Failure To Pray In Advance?*

Is the failure to count the costs the failure to sacrifice sin which is threatening you with capture by Satan? Or is the failure to count the costs, as some like Gill suggests, the failure to pray in advance?

The failure to count the costs must be the failure to sacrifice the sin that is threatening your defeat to Satan — the failure to repent. How can we be so sure? Because without
repenting from sin first, God does not hear your prayers anyway! Thus, it is pointless to argue prayer, by itself, is the ‘cost’ to initially pay. This is because a prayer without repentance would not be heard anyway. Thus, to focus on prayer as the necessary sacrifice ignores the fact it has no power unless combined with repentance. So says God Almighty!

God specifically repeats over and over that He refuses to hear the prayers of those who have not paid the cost of repenting first. God will not hear the prayers of the unrepentant. (Isaiah 1:15; Zechariah 7:13.) The Psalmist knew this:

If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear: (Psalm 66:18, ASV.)

The Lutherans Keil & Deilitzsch in their famous Commentary on the Old Testament say a correct translation is even stronger on that verse’s meaning. They prefer this meaning:

We render: If I had aimed at evil in my heart, the Lord would not hear; not: He would not have heard, but: He would not on any occasion hear. (Psalm 66:18.)

Likewise, Jesus tells us that through prayer we can do anything, but a precondition is to first pray for forgiveness, which itself is contingent on our being forgiving to others.

3. “And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.” (Isa 1:15.) Keil & Deilitsch explain this means that God would not hear the prayer of unrepentant sinners. “However much they might stand or lie before Him in the attitude of prayer, Jehovah hid His eyes,...even though they might pray loud and long.” In the next verse, Keil & Deilitsch explain the message is that the cure is initial repentance and ongoing repentance (obedience) to be clean in God’s sight: “According to the difference between the two synonyms (to wash one's self, to clean one's self), the former must be understood as referring to the one great act of repentance on the part of a man who is turning to God, the latter to the daily repentance of one who has so turned.” (K&D Commentary, Isaiah 1:16.)
(24) I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours. (25) But when you are praying, **first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against**, so that your Father in heaven will **forgive your sins, too**. (Mark 11:24-25 NLT.)

Jesus is simply echoing the principle that prayer is powerful, but first you must forgive others, which then permits God to forgive you. Jesus is implying that your forgiveness from God is a contingency of your prayers, which itself turns (in part) on your forgiving others first.

**Clarke on How Doctrine of Prayer Assists Interpreting Passage**

This Bible-principle on prayer-linked-to-repentance influenced Clarke in his commentary on the Parable of the King. Clarke realized prayer alone is not what the king lacked. Clarke confesses: “Disobedience to God will **hinder our prayers from being answered**, and may give Satan a legal hold in our lives.”

Thus, Clarke is acknowledging that God will not hear any prayer from someone who has not already repented from their sins. (Ps. 66:18; Isaiah 1:15; Zech. 7:13.) Such an unrepentant person, even if they were already a Christian, are like a king who goes to battle only committing 10,000 of his

4. In this passage, God says those who will not hear the Law of Moses and the Prophets who cry out to them, God will not hear their prayers:

“(12) Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the Law, and the words which Jehovah of hosts had sent by his Spirit by the former Prophets: therefore there came great wrath from Jehovah of hosts. (13) And it is come to pass that, as he cried, and they would not hear, so they shall cry, and **I will not hear**, said Jehovah of hosts.” (Zech. 7:12-13.) Keil & Delitzsch acknowledge God was upset the people were not following the Law, although K&D narrowly describe it as “the moral precepts of the law” so as not to offend our modern teaching that the letter of the Law was abrogated. Then K&D say the consequence is a block on prayer: “As they have not hearkened to the word [sic: Law] of God, so will God [not hearken to them], when they call upon Him, namely in distress....”
troops but then finds this number is no match for his enemy’s troops of 20,000. As a result, you must surrender to your enemy the devil.

Thus, the free and easy cost-free gospel with no corresponding personal repentance/sacrifice of Gill is wrong. One cannot bank on prayer for the strength to meet the enemy forces. God does not hear the prayer of the unrepentant.

Consequently, if you have not already repented from sin in your heart, then prayer for strength in a battle with Satan does you no good. Your attitude must change before God will agree to help you succeed to follow through on your new attitude. In other words, you cannot call on God in prayer for the strength to resist that temptation if you already have not made up your mind to resist that temptation. You will be powerless going into battle. You cannot depend on the miracle of prayer when God is not listening! You must repent from sin first, and then God will hear your prayer to confront the enemy (the devil). This is precisely what Jesus means by counting-the-costs.

Many commentators who defend the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace say the costs Jesus requires includes your personal sacrifice of your creature comforts. Henry is an example. Henry starts out somewhat properly analyzing the import of Jesus’ words:

They [i.e., the prospective Christian] must be willing to quit that which was very dear, and therefore must come to him thoroughly weaned from all their creature-comforts, and dead to them, so as cheerfully to part with them rather than quit their interest in Christ.
However, in the same context, Henry starts to interject a notion that these costs are merely the price to be a super Christian. These are supposedly the standards to “follow Jesus” and “be Jesus’ disciple.” Henry and others imply this parable is not about salvation, but about having a close fellowship as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Henry suggests the miscalculating Christian will not enjoy the greater “recompense” enjoyed by the super-Christian disciple who does count the cost. Thus, counting the cost is supposedly optional, and if you skip these costs, your salvation is as safe and secure as a Christian who counts the costs. You allegedly just forfeit greater rewards (i.e., “recompense”).

However, this suggestion that laces Henry’s discussion ignores that Jesus said the stakes are very high. Jesus said if you do not count the costs, you are like a king who went to war, miscalculated the forces necessary, and you have to surrender to your enemy (the devil, in context.) Surrender means you are ensnared. It must mean you are now captured. As Jesus says in John 10:27-28, that whoever keeps on listening to Jesus and keeps on following Him can never be snatched. But in the Parable of the King, when you do not count the costs of such discipleship, of listening and following, you are snatched away and defeated. You are captured by Satan. This cannot represent anything but damnation.

Restored Church Of God Has Correct High Cost View Of Parable

The Restored Church of God (RCG) sees this parable as at odds with the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace. The RCG grounds its view in the fact Jesus’ message here is so similar to many other comparable teachings of Jesus:

True Christianity is not the easy way of life advertised by most professing Christians. Christ said, “Enter you in at the strait [difficult] gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be
which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matt. 7:13-14).^5

Thus, RCG says Jesus states there is a high cost involved. This teaching of Jesus affirms, in effect, grace comes at a high cost, contrary to what we are told by the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace.

In addition to personal repentance, the RCG says Jesus’ teachings mean that counting the cost involves accepting the risk of rejection by your social circle if you follow Jesus. The RCG explains the risk entailed in following Jesus by taking this lesson and comparing it to Jesus’ other teachings on such a price to pay:

Another ‘cost’ of true Christianity is the forsaking of this world’s ways, customs, and traditions: “…COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4).

You will find that family, friends and acquaintances will no longer view you in the same way. They will not be able to accept your new way of life: “Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you” (I Pet. 4:4).

^5. Q: What is the meaning of Luke 14:28, and ‘counting the cost?’ at http://www.thercg.org/questions/p094.a.html (last accessed 7/6/06). The RCG teaches some other interesting points. First, RCG says the ceremonial and civil laws of the Law do not apply to Christians (http://www.thercg.org/articles/acfftoc.html), but that the Law of God, represented by the Ten Commandments, does apply to Christians. (http://www.thercg.org/articles/lg.html.) Luther came around to the same view in his 1537 Antinomian Theses. The RCG also believes it is unreasonable to ignore the Saturday-Sabbath command. (http://www.thercg.org/articles/htmtsad.html.) This is comparable to Tyndale’s and the Eastern Orthodox view of Sabbath.
You must be willing to accept that your own family will likely reject you for your beliefs (Matt. 10:34-38; 19:29; Mark 10:29).

You must also be willing to accept that, ultimately, as Christ stated, “…you shall be hated of all nations for My name’s sake” (Matt. 24:9).

Thus, if you follow Jesus, teach His doctrine and obey Him, you can expect you will be rejected by your social circle. This may even include the religious circles that claim to be Christian. Losing social acceptance was another cost that Jesus repeatedly emphasized that you must count and accept.

In fact, if you teach Jesus’ gospel of salvation in America today, you will be frequently shouted down as a heretic by most of those who profess Christ. This is because, in reliance on Jesus’ words alone, you deny the cheap-grace teaching which dominates in America. Unless you are prepared to sacrifice social acceptance as a price of following Jesus, when you suffer rejection by family and friends you will be tempted to fall back into worldly thinking that rejects following Jesus and His words.

For example, even as you read this book and learn what Jesus’ Gospel represents (i.e., what Jesus says when you do not filter it through anyone else’s teachings), you come up with doctrines at total odds with the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace. Your social circle will insist you should not take Jesus’ words seriously. For example, I am repeatedly ridiculed and jibed at by my Christian friends for simply quoting back to them Jesus’ principles as serious ones to accept.

For instance, many in Christendom will urge you to dismiss Jesus’ words as intended for the Dispensation of Law, not of Grace. By resisting this pressure on you to ignore Jesus’ words, you are going to suffer certain costs. It may be ostracism. It may be subtle ridicule and contempt. It may be
the hostility of being called a heretic. Some may even hate you “for my Name's sake.” Will you buckle under the pressure or cling to Christ?

Ironically, your greatest enemies, like Jesus’ greatest enemies, will be from the group that claims it is closest to God.

Final Analysis

When you take all the commentaries and synthesize them, you come up with a clearer understanding of the parable of counting the costs. Those who filter Jesus to sound like the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace make crucial admissions which undermine faith alone. They admit the king going to war in Luke 14 is a Christian. A true Christian. They admit the enemy king is Satan. They admit the cost of miscalculating the forces needed to meet Satan was surrender and defeat to Satan. (See Table 1 on page 302 above.)

However, those who filter Jesus and read Him so as not to undermine cheap grace try to change the nature of the costs so salvation remains free of moral cost. They insist we know a priori that salvation is without personal moral cost. Thus, they rewrite Jesus’ words to match that viewpoint. To them, even though Jesus says in context that the costs involved a renunciation of all that you have (Luke 14:33), the filtering-commentator says Jesus means you did not pray enough to God. Thus, the cost is supposedly that you did not depend entirely on God. In fact, you allegedly did not realize there was nothing you could do to be ready other than depend entirely on God. They insist you did not realize that there was no moral cost you could sacrifice to meet your enemy.

But to repeat: what did Jesus really mean? Again: the exact opposite. You are not prepared to battle the opposing king because you did not cut off the body parts ensnaring you in sin. (Mark 12:42-47.) You did not renounce all that you have. (Luke 14:33.) You did not take up your own cross and follow Jesus. (Luke 14:27 cf. Matt. 10:37-38.) You assumed
**salvation is free, without moral costs.** You will suffer certain defeat, Jesus warns. Thus, the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace is precisely the message Jesus tried to warn you against. Faith alone doctrine sets you up for such defeat.

Even Calvin admitted this, even though incongruously he otherwise upheld ‘faith alone.’ Calvin taught: “Lest any one should think it hard to follow Christ on such terms, which require the renouncement of all his lusts, a proper admonition is given to meditate beforehand what a profession of the gospel really requires.” (Quoted by Lisco, The Teachings of Jesus (1850) at 281.)

Thus, if you simply let Jesus teach you, then you are prepared for facing Satan. To do this, and lead others to follow Christ, you will have to reject the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace. But to do this will expose you to abuse and ridicule from the dominant ‘Christian’ authorities and their followers.

What should you do? Count the cost, including the loss of friends and social approval. Jesus is always the better reward. Don’t worry. Accept the sacrifices. Following Jesus’ words can never jeopardize your salvation. Persecution is just one more cost of following Jesus. Bonhoeffer paid the price for preaching costly grace. You can too. We must handle this as Job did. He spoke up! “Did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me, that I kept silence?” (Job 31:34.) If you keep silent, you will bear the sins of those deluded. (Eze 33:6-7.) Thus, the cost of silence is deadly.

To repeat, this is not to say prayer has no role in a Christian life or in following Jesus. However, we need to pray for the things Jesus told us that we need: the ability to pay the moral costs that God requires. Ask God to “lead us from temptation.” We also need to pray for the strength to resist the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace itself as a pernicious social pressure. It seeks us to believe there are no moral costs we must suffer to avoid capture by our enemy. If we fall for this gospel, Jesus says we are not ready. We must count the costs necessary to avoid capture of ourselves by Satan.