

THE IMMODERATE DEMANDS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Copyright, J. Michael Strawn

From Luke 14:25-35. THE IMMODERATE DEMANDS OF DISCIPLESHIP, PART 1

The Lord's requirements for discipleship are immoderate. Three times Jesus refers to those who may want to be His disciples, but of whom, by revealed standards, he says "cannot be my disciple" (v. 26, 27, 33.) Discipleship is regulated by the Lord.

REGULATION #1: (v. 26) DISCIPLESHIP IS A MATTER OF SCALE.

The Lord comes first on the scale of discipleship. Personal loyalties, concerns, responsibilities are relative to the purpose of God. This regulation runs up to and includes "even his own life" (v. 26). So, no sacrifice, no loss is "off the table," "out of the question," or "negotiable."

Meaning: Personal concerns and circumstances are not regulatory over the terms of discipleship. God does not turn over His *regulation of discipleship* to

- a) His own people,
- b) The individual,
- c) The church,
- d) Theologians,
- e) Human circumstances, nor to
- f) Human experience.

There are no moderating influences on the terms of discipleship. None!

Discipleship is presented as an ordering of human existence; an ordering of meaning. Therefore, this scale of discipleship is to be applied as an overlay on all personal sacrifice and circumstance. The Almighty plays hard ball! Discipleship is not subject to human explanatory devices based on human reason and experience.

Luke 14:25-35. THE IMMODERATE DEMANDS OF DISCIPLESHIP, PART 2

REGULATION #2: (v. 27) PERSONAL SACRIFICE IS A GIVEN.

"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (v. 27). The Lord refers to the analogy of public crucifixion--harsh, humiliating, punitive, lethal, terminal; an

instrument of state power against the individual. This is a condition of circumstance that the disciple must be willing to bear.

And Jesus was. At the least, this is a reference to hard times and unspeakable experience. Penalties brought to bear on His disciples because of their discipleship are inherent in the analogy. This is state-created, state-sponsored manufacture of a type of experience to eliminate the social, cultural, viable practice of discipleship to Christ.

There is no peaceful co-existence between the state and Christ. Disciples are in the middle. This temporal and passing experience that Jesus calls discipleship demands the sacrifice of immediate experience.

Such sacrifices are made in favor of eternal promises about a life to come. So, the "cross" refers to another scale. In this scale of judgment, the promises of God are on the high end while immediate experience is very low scale. The mind (personal judgment) must occupy the high end of the scale.

In the world there is a direct correlation between the anti-christ – and -- the anti-disciple. This is difficult to choke down: Personal sacrifice is where we start. No deferment is mentioned by Jesus. Self-pity is ruled out.

But, the upside is this: The life of discipleship is regulated not by our enemies but by our God. Taking a crack at the disciple is taking a crack at tshe Almighty! The Lord won't thank them for that!

From Luke 14:25-35. THE IMMODERATE DEMANDS OF DISCIPLESHIP, PART 3

REGULATION #3 (v. 28-33.) HUMAN WISDOM IS TO BE SURPASSED.

Four analogies are employed by Jesus:

- a) The cross,
- b) The tower,
- c) War and
- d) Salt.

THE ISSUE OF CONSTRAINT: The Scripture constrains the meaning of the analogy (its reach); the analogy does not constrain the meaning of Scripture. In the Bible, analogies are bent to the purpose of Scripture; Scripture is not bent to the shape of the analogy. The importance: If

analogies are allowed to shape the meaning of the Text, then human wisdom is mapped on to the Text; and thereby "good old common sense" displaces revealed meaning.

The argument of the academics runs like this: The Word of God and faith are more valuable than "gold," says the Text (1Peter 1:7). Jesus and the apostles and everybody else understood the meaning, the academics suggest. Then they make the leap of reasoning to say that therefore Scripture agrees with normal experience and with general human wisdom. That is why Jesus used the analogy, we are told. Academics and others, like the casual reader, use an "analogy scale." On this scale, analogies function to trim down the meaning of the Text so it agrees with human lived experience! The analogy, in their thinking, overrules Scripture. In just this way, induced and imperceptible injury is forced on to the Word of God.

However, discipleship is not a common sense enterprise. It is, in fact, irreversible self-sacrifice. And that is not the function of human reason. The Lord's analogy of the "cross" (v. 27) is proof of this.

GENERALIZATION: Absolute meaning allows the mind to safely benefit from the analogy used in the Text, without repressing eternal meaning. The regulation is this: Human reasoning is obligated to be a function of revelation; not the other way around!

From Luke 14:25-35. THE IMMODERATE DEMANDS OF DISCIPLESHIP, PART 4

REGULATION #4 (vv. 28, 29) ONCE YOU COMMIT TO DISCIPLESHIP, DO NOT GIVE UP.

Starting to build, in the analogy Jesus told, was perhaps an impulsive act. However, the man entered the project without due regard of the cost. The man did not "sit down and calculate the cost" (v. 28.) This was not a serious commitment, but rather an immature act; and inevitably he runs out of money. Just as inevitably, the man incurs ridicule: "All who observe it began to ridicule him" (v. 29.) This man would have been called a failure, stupid, inept. Why? "This man began to build and was not able to finish" (v. 30.) Ridicule followed the collapse because there was no thought about what he was doing.

The Meaning: Discipleship regulated by God is inherently costly and personally so. Discipleship consumes all manner of personal capital:

Material,
Mental,
Spiritual,
Social,
Psychological

Discipleship is a kind of tax, and it is consumptive ! Jesus tells us here that discipleship puts our lives on a very different scale. Everything runs beyond our control. There is nothing cheap

about this venture. We will be "exhausted," "at the end of our rope," "at wit's end," "out of resources," "frazzled."

We know this. But we must decide every day and in all kinds of circumstances that there is no turning back ! The world may think us fools but they cannot say that "they were never in the game!"

If called to bear it; we bear it. If called to give it; we give it. If called to fight it; we fight it. After all we are not alone in this regulated hot water!

From Luke 14:25-35. THE IMMODERATE DEMANDS OF DISCIPLESHIP, PART 5

REGULATION #5 (v .31-33.) TOTAL INVERSION

Discipleship is not what one gets out of it; rather it's what one puts into it. Discipleship is an inversion. What the Lord is looking for here is everything! Everything that we have under any category/every category becomes relative to regulated discipleship (v. 33): "So then none of you can be my disciple who does not give up all his possessions."

This regulation does not trade in fractions. The Lord wants 0%-->to 100% of everything. Included are mind, body, soul, material, time, money -- otherwise, we are like the analogy.

Here is a king who has 10,000 troops and considers how he can defeat an opposing king with 20,000 troops. The weak king concludes he cannot win. So, he seeks terms of surrender (v. 32.)

Jesus as Regulator of Discipleship says give it all up now; you will lose it anyway.

REGULATION #6 (v. 34,35.) SALT: THE DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN GOOD AND USELESS.

Salt has the purpose to enhance that with which it comes into contact. Discipleship cannot function without the full usefulness of the disciple. The disciple must be "good," not "useless." In other words, we must all embody discipleship.

Jesus is the sole purveyor of salt -- not the world, not culture, nor society, not even the church.

Generalization: Jesus says: "It is Me you must please." Nothing else has such consequence in all of time. The disciple represents another world, another understanding, another purpose.