

POWER

“the gospel is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16)

Will You Forsake The Cross?

by Aaron J. Cozort

One of the most challenging texts in all Scripture is found in Luke 14:25-33. As Luke records it, Jesus has been in the house of one of the Pharisees. He has chastised the attendee's lack of humility. He has admonished the host concerning inviting those who cannot do anything for the host in return. He then gave a parable describing how those invited to God's feast would not be allowed to partake, but would be replaced by those brought in from the streets, the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind.

He then turns to the multitude and challenges them:

"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

His illustration of the challenge is two-fold:

1. A man who intends to build a tower will first count the cost to see whether he has enough to finish it.
2. A king who discerns if he can win the battle against his enemy when he is outnumbered two-to-one.

And Jesus concludes with this statement, "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple."

So the question comes to each of us, "Will we forsake the Cross, specifically our own Cross?" There is a Cross for each of us to bear. There is a commitment for us to make. When we pick up our Cross, when we make that commitment, it is for life, until death, and above all other commitments. Is that a challenge we are willing to take, or will we forsake our Cross?

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EXEGETICAL POWER

AN EXAMPLE OF COMMITMENT

by Aaron J. Cozort

This is a new section of POWER called EXEGETICAL POWER where you will receive an exegesis (i.e. a critical explanation) of a passage of Scripture.

I love the book of 2 Corinthians. It provides a deep insight into the mindset and thoughts of one of the greatest Christians to have ever walked the Earth. It is this insight which allows us to see this Giant as a Man who cared so much for an assembly of believers that he had taught and converted.

In 2 Corinthians 4:7, the Holy Spirit has portrayed for us Paul's commitment to the Gospel message (cf. vs. 5) and what it cost him.

4:7

There is first the recognition that the power to accomplish the goals of the Gospel lies exclusively in God, and not in a preacher. Christians ought to be committed to the message, to the good news, to the power of salvation.

4:8-12

Paul begins a series of contrasts about their situation:

- » **We are pressed, but not crushed**
- » **We are perplexed, but not in despair**
- » **We are persecuted, but not forsaken**
- » **We are struck down, but not destroyed -- suffering in the flesh like Jesus, delivered to death for the manifestation of His glory.**

4:13

Paul quotes Psalm 116:10, "I believed and therefore I spoke."

There is a challenge here for Christians today. If you will not speak, it is because you do not believe. If you believe, then you will speak. Someone may the contrary, but they only prove the Paul to be accurate. What excuse can a person make in the face of a such a simple reality? Belief demands confession. Without confession, faith is void (cf. Rom. 10:7-17).

4:14-15

"Paul, Why can you allow your faith to cause you to speak when it might cost your life?"

Paul answers, "knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus." Jesus said, "...fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mat. 10:28).

Consider Paul's reasoning and compassion. He says, "For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God."

Have you ever thought to yourself, "If I suffer for the benefit of teaching others, they will receive God's grace through His Gospel, and will thank God. Therefore, because I suffered, God was glorified"?

4:16-17

Because Paul was selfless, because his situation glorified God, he didn't lose heart; he didn't forsake his commitment; he was renewed daily by the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. What you see in this life, what you experience, is limited to this life. If you're pressed, perplexed, persecuted, or struck down in this life, it shouldn't affect the life to come!

4:18

Therefore, Paul looked to the "invisible" things--the eternal glory promised to those who are faithful to God.

5:1

There is an assurance from God, a home awaiting, built by God, eternal in the heavens.

5:2-4

Again, Paul provides his hope and expectation, earnestly desiring the habitation which is from heaven. We are tired of the burdens of this life. It is not that we want to leave this life, we sincerely want to experience what is beyond what this life can offer.



AN EXAMPLE OF COMMITMENT (CONT.)

(An Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:11)

5:5

The Spirit was sent as a guarantee. God will fulfill what He has promised.

5:6, 8

When a person makes a promise, and then supplies a guarantee for that promise, you have reassurance that what has been promised will be fulfilled. When we are at home in the body (in the flesh), we are absent from the Lord. We will someday be absent from the flesh, and at home with the Lord.

5:9

It is therefore our aim, no matter where we reside in relationship to the Lord, that we will be well pleasing to Him. We will serve Him acceptably.

5:7

"For we walk by faith, not by sight." So many have abused this passage. So many have abused its context. Paul answers the unspoken question, How can I suffer in this life for the sake of the Gospel? The answer: I know that this life isn't all that exists. I walk, focused on ETERNITY (obeying the commands of the Lord to be well pleasing to Him), and not focused on what I see in the hear and now (living for self).

5:10

Why should we follow Paul's example? Because we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. If you're going to appear before a Judge, wouldn't you like to know in advance that He will rule in your favor? You can know that about Christ--if you live faithful to Him.

5:11

If we know the reality of eternity; if we know the reality of judgment; if we know the saving power of the Gospel; if we desire to please the Lord now, and in eternity; then we persuade men. Plain and simple, we preach and teach the Gospel that will save souls.

Paul is an amazing example of commitment. How do you and I compare?



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A POWERFUL THOUGHT

WHAT DESTROYS YOUR COMMITMENT TO CHRIST?

By: Aaron J. Cozort

This is a new section of POWER called A POWERFUL THOUGHT where we will present the "bones" of a thought that could easily be turned into a sermon outline or a devotional by any simply applying some additional "meat" to the bones.

Wrong Priorities

Demas forsook Paul (and the mission of spreading the Gospel) because he loved this present world (2 Timothy 4:10).

Failure to Endure Trials

We are told the trying of our faith works patience (James 1:3).

Peter said our faith would be tested, as by fire (1 Peter 1:7), but that the faith that comes through the trial is found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Revelation paints a picture of saints whose "patience" caused them to keep the commandments, keep the faith, but lose their life (Revelation 14:12-13), but who in death were blessed and found rest.

But those who faith to endure trials, they are not worthy to enter the Kingdom.

Losing Focus

Jesus wrote to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 1 and commended them for so many things, but in the end He said they had lost their first love. They needed to repent and return to the first works. To focus again on Christ.

Self-Defeat

1 Timothy 6:11-17 warns of a person who will trust in uncertain riches, and desires to be rich. He is setting a snare for his own soul.

Doing It All Myself

So many times in Scripture, God shows us that faithful service isn't a one-man show. It is a team effort where children of God work together to please the Lord and to remain faithful.

Elijah (and Elisha).

Moses (and Aaron).

Paul (and Barnabas, Timothy, Titus, Silas, Luke, etc.)

There are so many "weak knees" that need support, and falling hands that need lifting. If you try to do it all yourself, you lose (cf. James 4:10).

Now review the list and ask yourself, "How many of these things that can destroy my commitment to Christ come from outside of me, and how many come from SELF?"

Can we like the Psalmist say, "Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart." (Psalm 26:2)? Are we that committed?

POWER from the PAST

DIG A LITTLE DEEPER

by Bobby Dockery

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One of the fascinating stories of Bible Archaeology concerns the discovery of ancient Nineveh. For a long time no one was sure where to look for the ruins of Nineveh and possible sites were a matter of considerable debate among scholars. In the early 1840's, an amateur French archaeologist, named Paul Bofta, hired a crew of native diggers and began excavating a likely looking mound on the banks of the Tigris River. After several weeks of fruitless digging, however, Bofta concluded he was searching in the wrong place. He moved to another location. Soon afterwards, Henry Layard, an English archaeologist, began digging on the site that Bofta had abandoned.

With almost the first shovel of dirt, Layard struck the walls of one of the great palaces of Nineveh! If only Bofta had dug a few inches deeper he would have made one of the great archaeological finds of all time and would have been hailed as the "Discoverer of Nineveh" instead of Layard!

There are many areas of life where we need to stay on and dig a little deeper.

Church changes. Some church members are too ready to abandon their home congregations and place membership elsewhere if all does not go to suit them. They join a disgruntled parade of church transients who make the rounds of churches looking for a "perfect" congregation. What is needed is members who will stay and work a little harder to improve things where they are (1 Cor. 15:58).

Preacher changes. Churches frequently fire preachers for the flimsiest of reasons. Preachers sometimes elect to leave over trifles. What is needed is a willingness for preachers and congregations to work together "for better or worse." Churches need to back their preachers and patiently help them to cultivate their talents. Instead of resigning their pulpits, preachers need to "resign"-to renew their commitment and dig deeper where they are (2 Tim. 4:15).

Job changes. Job dissatisfaction is a common fact of twentieth century life. Many who are dissatisfied with their working conditions flit unhappily from one job to another, constantly searching for a situation more nearly resembling their dream career. There are good and valid reasons for changing from one job to another, but often the problem lies within us and not with our job. We need, at times, to dig a little deeper and do our work where we are as though we are doing it for the Lord (Eph. 6.-7).

Mate changes. We live in the divorcing-est generation in history! A couple marries and then when the inevitable problems arise they shrug and say, "Let's call the whole thing off." We need commitment to stick together no matter what! God meant for marriage to last for life (Matt. 19:9, Malachi 2:16). We all need to dig deeper for the happiness and fulfillment that God intends for marriage.

Are you discouraged? Burned out? Disappointed? Tired? Dissatisfied? Ready to move on to greener pastures? Dig a little deeper right where you are!

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[HTTP://YOUTUBE.COM/SOUTHAVENCOC](http://youtube.com/southavencoc)



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