
Words of Truth

What Does It Mean To Forsake All?

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When Jesus was teaching those who desired to follow Him, He challenged them to count the cost of discipleship. In one account, Jesus said this: *“And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, 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**”* (Luke 14:25-33).

On more occasions than I can number or care to number, I have had people say to me that they do not believe Jesus meant what He said literally. In those discussions, people often feel that Jesus would never expect someone to leave a job, a family, a house, etc. for His sake. Now, I know fully that some things in the Scriptures are not literal. That is why we have to rightly divide the word of truth when we study it (II Timothy 2:14-18 and II Peter 3:15-18). However, there is nothing in what Jesus said that indicates any figures of speech or evidence that He was exaggerating some point (yes, there are exaggerated statements throughout the Bible: <http://www.wordsoftruth.net/wotvol13/wotbulletin07142013.html>). Furthermore, if you study what it means to be a follower of Christ, you find that such sometimes requires leaving a job, family, and house behind. It is here that we shall begin our study.

Literally Forsaking It All

Peter, whom became an Apostle, was a married man (Matthew 8:14). Peter was a fisherman (Matthew 4:18). As you will read in a moment, Peter owned a business with other partners. Thus, he was not just an employee of someone else. Notice what following Jesus meant for Peter and even his business partners: *“And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned*

unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him" (Luke 5:1-11).

Now, we should be able to see very clearly that when Jesus expects someone to forsake something, He means that literally. That includes men who have families to support and businesses to run. So, what happens when a person has something in their lives that they are not willing to give up to be a faithful disciple of the Lord? When Jesus said, "he cannot be my disciple", did He mean that literally?

Literally Speaking, You Cannot Be His Disciple

What if a person really WANTS to be a disciple of our Lord, but there are things they are having a hard time giving up to do so? What if those things are a place to call home, an important family function, or even relationships? As we did with our earlier question, let's notice an example. In this example, you will see three individuals who WANTED to follow Jesus. However, our Lord refused them because they were unwilling to put Him unquestionably first in their lives. Notice: *"And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"* (Luke 9:57-62).

Is there anything unclear in what you just read? If so, it is not the wording that is the problem; but your heart is not open to the truth. Jesus will not accept a person who wants to be His disciple, if that person has ANYTHING or ANYONE that they'll put before Him (Matthew 19:16-24). Jesus wants to be first in our lives (Matthew 6:33, Matthew 10:34-37, and Colossians 3:1-4). A person's disbelief of those facts is not going to change the facts. Denial of those facts is the same as calling Jesus a liar, for it is HE who said the things we've examined in this study.

Conclusion

If you are reading this study and looking at the Scriptures, you know you must not have anything that you put before Jesus. If there is someone or something that is standing between you and the Lord, remove it (Hebrews 12:1-3). Our Lord is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34 and Romans 2:11). Since He has required others to be willing to leave everything, don't think you're special and the Lord will grant you some excuse as to why you did not. Forsaking all literally means ALL! That is what the instructions we have read show us. Therefore, you'd better be willing to give up any and everything for our Lord (Philippians 3:7-8).