

# Foundational Principles of the Christian Faith

## Chapter 1

### The Lordship of Jesus

Right from the outset of this study we need to clearly understand what the Lordship of Jesus really means. If we have not got that right, we have not got our salvation right (CP Luke 14:26-35 {Mt 10:37-38 also refers}). The word hateth in V26 does not mean that we are to literally hate our fathers and mothers, etc, but that we are to love them less than we love Jesus. Jesus demands that our love and our loyalty for Him be greater than any other attachment we may have, including even our attachment for our families, and He warns all that would follow Him to count the cost involved. While the benefits of the gospel are solely on the basis of personal choice, complying with the conditions for appropriating those benefits are part of the cost of that choice. Salvation is a paradox. It is both free and costly. Free because Jesus has already paid for it with His life's blood, yet there is a cost in terms of its impact upon those who would follow after Jesus. The Lordship of Jesus demands that all that we have: material possessions, family, even our own life must be placed at the service of Christ. It also requires our total renunciation of all self-interests and ambitions and everything else that would take precedence in our life over the things of God. In the parable of the tower builder (V28-30), Jesus illustrates for us the absurdity of seeking to follow after Him without first counting the cost, and in the parable of the warring king (V31-33), He illustrates the impossibility of being saved unless one is willing to forsake all for Him. The word forsaketh in V33 means to bid farewell, to take leave of, to dismiss, to renounce. The parable of savourless/ saltiness salt teaches us that like salt that loses its saltiness has no value and is thrown out, so disciples who no longer contain the characteristics of discipleship - that of total consecration to the service of God and complete surrender to the authority of Jesus - are of no value either. **This very clearly teaches that**

**once saved does not mean always saved as a great many Christians believe. If it were not possible to forfeit salvation then this scripture and others that teach the same thing would not be in the Bible (CP Luke 9:57-62).**

**Here we have three seemingly sincere candidates for salvation but all failed to measure up to the standards Jesus has set for His followers. These passages teach above all else that anything less than total commitment to God eliminates one from the kingdom of heaven. The first incident teaches that an emotional enthusiasm that has not considered the cost of abandoning material security to follow Him is insufficient by Christ's standards. The second teaches that loyalty to Christ must take precedence over all other loyalties. Following after Jesus must be our highest priority. Jesus is not being insensitive to the propriety of funerals here, but is teaching against procrastination - putting off the work of God. Followers of Christ have the urgent task of proclaiming the life that is in Him to them that are lost. This is more important work than burying spiritually dead people who have physically died. Jesus said let their own spiritually dead bury them. The third incident teaches that once we start in God's service we cannot turn away. Service to God demands our undivided attention, and if we are not prepared to single-mindedly serve God then we forfeit our place in His kingdom (CP Ge 19:1, 12-26). Lot's wife would not let go of Sodom where her treasures were. She disobeyed God's word and looked back on Sodom and turned into a pillar of salt.**

**There must be no confusion in our minds concerning what these scriptures teach. To follow Jesus requires complete surrender to Him, and anything less will cost us the kingdom. These seem to be harsh conditions, and the question could be asked: are they meant to be taken literally or can they be adapted to suit our own particular walk? Friends, they have to be taken literally. They are for the admonition of every professing Christian. Of course, we are not to literally hate anyone as we saw earlier, but our lives are to be totally consecrated to the service of God and completely surrendered to the authority of Jesus. Jesus has set this divine standard and no one can come to Him on any other terms (CP Jn 12:24-25). Although V24 is a prediction by Jesus of His death, the principle by which He illustrates it applies to us too. Unless we die to self we cannot bring forth any fruit. It means not only believing the gospel, but also committing ourselves sacrificially to follow Jesus (CP Luke 9:23). To deny oneself means that we are to put the interests of the kingdom above all else and renounce all self-interests**

**and ambitions which are contrary to God's word. There can be no compromise here because the choice between denying ourselves or living for our own selfish desires must be made daily and that choice determines our eternal destiny (CP Ro 6:16-23; 8:1-14; Ga 5:19-24; Col 3:1-10).**

**We are also to take up our cross daily, not periodically or when it is convenient or popular. Taking up our cross means committing ourselves sacrificially to the service of God. The cross of Christ is a symbol of suffering, ridicule, self-denial and rejection, and we must be prepared to suffer the reproach, hatred and ridicule of the world because we have separated ourselves from it both morally and spiritually, but if we are hanging onto even a small part of the world still, then we have no part in Christ (CP Col 1:21-23; 2:6-8; Jas 4:4; He 13:11-14; 1Jn 2:16-17). We must be prepared to lose our life, not gain it. This means that making the achievement of happiness and pleasure our goal in this life instead of living in God's will and by His principles, will end in disappointment and loss. To renounce our own ways and live in fellowship with Jesus, basing our lives on His teachings is to find true life and joy here, and hereafter. This explains the paradox of discipleship - to lose life is to find it: to die is to live (CP Mt 10:39; 19:27-30; Mk 8:34-37; Luke 9:24-25; Jn 12:25). This is what it really means to be yielded to the Lordship of Jesus. We must always live unashamed of Christ and His word. Those of us who seek to be popular in, or accepted by the world rather than follow Christ in strict compliance to His word, will be rejected by Christ when He comes again (CP Mk 8:38; Luke 9:26). These are grim warnings, directed to Christians - not heathens, about the fear of man. It is the fear of man that makes Christians ashamed of Christ and His word. If we are not prepared to confess Christ before all men regardless of who they are, and proclaim His gospel of salvation, then we will be damned to hell ourselves (CP Mt 10:24-28; 2Ti 2:12; 4:2; Rev 3:5; 21:8). The fearful in Rev 21:8 are professing Christians whose fear of man overrides their loyalty to Christ and the truth of His word. Their personal feelings and status among men means more to them than being faithful to Christ and witnessing to His saving grace. Fearful means to be timid, afraid, fainthearted. Notice that Jesus placed them first among those who will be consigned to hell because they profess to be Christians, but they compromise His word rather than proclaim it. It is futile for Christians to live their lives unto themselves without being totally conformed to God's word and surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus. We delude ourselves if we believe that we can and still be saved**

**(CP Luke 6:46-49 {Mt 7:21-27 also refers}). This clearly demonstrates the futility of not conforming to God's word and surrendering to Jesus' authority. Only those who hear the word and do it can be saved (CP Jas 1:22-25). The one who merely hears God's word quickly forgets it. Only the one who hears the word and does it is blessed of God because he has built his house upon solid rock not upon shifting sand. Obedience to the word of God brings about the work of God. We are to hear the word and do the work (CP Psa 119:9). We must order our lives according to God's word. To heed means to hear and obey.**

**Jas 1:22-25 is directed to those in the Church who profess faith in Christ believing that is all that is necessary for salvation. This clearly highlights the grave error in that thinking. James teaches that faith such as that is dead (CP Jas 2:14-26). Faith without works will neither produce salvation nor anything else that is good (CP Jn 14:21 with 1Jn 2:4-5). The only true expression of our love for Jesus is to obey Him. If we are not obedient to His word it is because we do not acknowledge Him as Lord. It is meaningless to call Jesus Lord and not do as He commands (CP Mk 10:17-25 {Mt 19:16-24 and Luke 18:18-25 also refers}). The rich young ruler did not get saved. He failed the test like the three candidates did in Luke 9:57-62. He sincerely wanted to be saved but like them he wanted it to be on his terms not the terms Jesus laid down. The rich young ruler was not prepared to obey Jesus and put Him above his possessions. This is not teaching that believers have to dispose of all their possessions as a condition of salvation, but it does teach that whatever material wealth we do have, we must be prepared to employ it for the kingdom, not for self-gratification. Believers must place all of their possessions at the service of God once they are saved. There is a lesson for the Church here and that is that nobody can be saved by a gospel of 'easy-believism'. We must never represent salvation to anyone as something that requires no commitment on their part because Jesus has done it all for them and all they have to do is merely believe in Jesus to be saved. That is not what Jesus teaches as this study clearly proves, yet there are many in the Church who do teach that notwithstanding. Demons believe in Jesus as Jas 2:19 teaches, but they are not saved, and they are not going to heaven (CP Jas 2:19). Every candidate for salvation and every new convert to Christ must be made aware of what Christ expects of them regarding obedience to His word. Jesus holds each and every one of us responsible for teaching them that truth (CP Mt 28:18-20 with Luke 14:28-33). The word 'observe' in Mt 28:20 means to obey, to keep, to fulfil a duty. We are to**

**teach repentant sinners that to obey God's word is to fulfil our duty to Him for His salvation. It is patently obvious from scripture that there is no such thing as a gospel of 'easy-believism' in God's redemptive plan. We owe Him our obedience and complete surrender, and without we give it to Him there is no salvation for any of us, and we cannot teach otherwise. As Jesus only lived to express God to mankind so the Christian must live to express Jesus to the world. As Jesus consecrated Himself to the service of God and was completely surrendered to God's will, so the Christian must also be with Jesus. As Jesus did all to glorify God, so too must the Christian for Jesus. Only thus is Jesus enthroned as our Lord.**

**When citing the beatitudes in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was laying down the principles of the kingdom of God, and it is incumbent upon Christians to live out those principles in their daily walk (CP Mt 5:1-12). The first principle of the kingdom is the first beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". The poor in spirit are those who recognise their spiritual helplessness without Christ and forego their own identities as individuals in order to possess the kingdom. They see the kingdom as the ultimate, to be possessed (CP Mt 11:12). The violent here are those Christians who vigorously seek the kingdom in all its power no matter what it costs them. It is the responsibility of every professing Christian to seek unceasingly, in all its manifestations, the kingdom of God. The second principle of the kingdom of God is the second beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted". They that mourn are those who are grieved over their own weaknesses in relation to God's standard of righteousness and kingdom power, and are grieved in their spirit over the sin and immorality manifested in the world. They take upon themselves the burden for the souls of sinners and cry out to God for their salvation. They are comforted by receiving from God righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (CP Ro 14:17). The "meek" in the third kingdom principle are those who find their refuge in God and commit their way entirely to Him. Meek is not weak, but controlled strength in gentleness and forbearance. The meek shall inherit the earth. The fourth principle of the kingdom is to hunger and thirst after righteousness. The spiritual condition of Christians right throughout their lives will depend on how much they hunger and thirst after righteousness. The Christian's hunger for the things of God is destroyed by worldly anxiety, deceitfulness of riches (CP Mt 13:22), desire for things (CP Mk 4:19), worldly pleasures (CP Luke 8:14) and**

failure to abide in Christ (CP Jn 15:4). When the hunger for God and his righteousness is destroyed those affected will forfeit their salvation, whereas those who continually hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. The fifth principle of the kingdom: "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" means that Christians are to be not simply possessed of pity but are to be actively compassionate toward those who are suffering from sin or sorrow. They mercifully desire to make such suffering less by bringing those people to the grace and help of God through Jesus Christ (CP Mt 18:21-35; Luke 10:30-37; 1Pe 3:8-9).

The sixth principle of the kingdom of God is the sixth beatitude: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The pure in heart are those who have been cleansed from the pollution and the guilt of sin by the grace of God, and now strive to please and glorify God. They seek to have the same attitude of heart that God has - a love for righteousness and a hatred of evil. Only the pure in heart shall see God. That means they shall be His children and will dwell in His presence now and in eternity (CP Rev 21:7; 22:4). The seventh principle of God's kingdom is to be a peacemaker. Peacemakers are those who strive by their witness and life to bring lost sinners to be reconciled to God. Peacemakers are not simply ones who make peace between two parties, but ones who spread the good news of the peace of God which they themselves have experienced in His salvation (CP 2Cor 5:17-20). The eighth kingdom principle is to suffer persecution for Jesus' sake. Persecutions have been promised as a portion for Christians (CP Mk 10:29-30; 2Ti 3:12). Christians will suffer unpopularity, rejection and criticism, but they are to rejoice when they do. We must beware of the temptation to compromise God's word in order to avoid these experiences, for the principles of God's kingdom never change. All that live godly in Christ shall suffer, but those who endure it will have eternal life (CP Mt 5:10-12; 2Cor 4:7-11). The kingdom of God is established in the hearts of men and the beatitudes are the principles upon which the kingdom is based.

The purpose of Jesus' coming into the world was to establish the kingdom of God, thus the Lordship of Jesus and the kingdom of God are inseparable. If Jesus is not our Lord then the kingdom of God and the power manifested in it are none of ours either. The real purpose of becoming a Christian is not to be saved from going to hell, or being saved to go to heaven. It is to become a child of God with the character

of Jesus Christ. If the character of Jesus has entered into us then we are like Him in purpose, and we are like Him in fact, but if the character of Jesus is not manifest in us then we are not like Him in purpose at all and we are none of His (CP Mt 22:8-14). The wedding garment in this parable represents a Christ covered life, or the character of Jesus. Wearing the garment is symbolic of having "put on" Christ, or manifesting His character. The parable teaches that only those who have manifested the character of Jesus, who have "put on" Christ and made Him their Lord will enter into the kingdom of heaven. The wedding guest who refused to wear the garment represents professing Christians who will not obey God's word and surrender to the authority of Jesus. Outer darkness symbolises hell.

There is no more graphic illustration in the Bible than this of what will happen to those who profess to love Christ but whose purpose in their Christian walk conflicts with God's purpose for them (CP Jn 15:16 with Jn 14:21-24 and 1Jn 2:3-4). The wedding guest wanted to partake of the king's provision, but on his terms, not the king's: just like the rich young ruler and the other three candidates for salvation we studied earlier. Many Christians are like that - they want to partake of the kingdom benefits but they do not want to obey our King, the King of Glory, Christ Jesus. That is what Jesus means when He said "...many are called but few are chosen." Sadly, not all who call Jesus Lord will be going to heaven, which our study of Luke 6:46-49 also taught us. It is only to the extent that we obey God's word that we have made Jesus our Lord and ensure our place in heaven (CP Pr 4:4). A successful Christian life rests upon our knowledge of the teaching of Christ whose word is the final authority in all matters, and consecration to do the will of God as declared by the Lord Jesus Christ, which He commanded us to do in Mt 28:18-20. We can only be saved under the Lordship of Jesus and scriptures quite clearly tell us what we must do. We must continue willing to follow Jesus daily to the end of our life, not only when it suits us, or when it is convenient or popular, and that means always in strict obedience to His word. To claim eternal life when we only follow Jesus when it suits us is to deceive ourselves and merely professing faith is not good enough (CP Jn 12:26; He 3:6-14; 10:38-39; Jas 2:14-26).