



## “RESOLUTE: *Following Christ*”

– Luke 14:25-35

by Pastor Tim Dodson  
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**Luke 14:25-35** *Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, 26 "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. 27 "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it — 29 "lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 "saying, 'This man began to build and was "not able to finish?" 31 "Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 "Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. 33 "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. 34 "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? 35 "It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*

Recently, in the handling of the issue of the resurrection of man and the raising of Lazarus, we spoke of living again after having died. And today we look rather at the call to die... after having been given that opportunity to “live again.” Dying to oneself and this worlds pursuits to be a disciple once having been “reborn”. Such is the essence of the act of baptism. As we put you “under the water,” such symbolizes the death of self and the resurrection of the new man or woman, and the public testimony of that occurring in the life of the one baptized.

One does not have to walk with Christ for very long before he or she will begin to see the sides of the road are strewn with the bodies of those who traveled before us and failed to make it. As much as we might like to do otherwise, their spiritual corpses are hard to ignore. Like a traffic accident, we slow down and stare. They are those who no doubt began the race with the best of intentions, and at first they never *dreamed* of turning back...never *considered* that they would not make it to the finish line. But they failed to consider the costs, they failed to pay attention to the dangers. They trusted in themselves and in their strength and stamina to “dance near the flames” and survive it. They failed to be “resolute.”

To be resolute is to be “determined, pointed, earnest, and committed.” Jesus was unmovable in his purpose to “*seek and save the lost,*” (Luke 19:10) and when the time came, he literally “picked up HIS cross” and finished what He started. Because above all things He loved His Father and He loved us, and He knew His purpose and at all cost He was going to complete it. He was firm. Unwavering. **Resolute.** Such is a rare commodity in our world today. A generation that knows little about concepts such as loyalty, faithfulness, and duty. But that lack does not change the fact that such are qualities that Christ does indeed desire to see exude in us and reflected forth from our churches.

Our world today is, *it seems*, lived out in shades of gray. Nebulous meanings, vague content, and fluid usage provides for truth to dance in and out of the light...escaping a pure review. How I long for a world wherein I can nail the feet of truth to the floor, but that is unlikely any time soon, in an age which few men actually *want* emphatic truth and absolute verity. Because absolutes call for an answer. Undeniable facts require a reply and a response in light of that truth. Why put ourselves through it? Why not simply drift around in the ambiguous fog of situational ethics and social relativism? That way anything I do can be justified...and any choice I make can be righteous, no matter if it makes sense to no one else and defies the laws of gravity.

Example: Science *says* it adheres to certain 'laws and principles' that are absolute and unchanging. One of those rules is the *second law of Thermodynamics*. Of all the laws of science—they don't get any simpler and easier to understand than this. In fact, Albert Einstein called it the most *basic law* of science. The idea in this "law" is that all things move from order to disorder...from order to chaos. It's called "entropy." Yet, that concept so tightly held by the science community, flies in the very face of evolution which they *also* say they believe! Evolution is a universal movement from chaos to order...from random to organized. So which is it? Until we understand the absolute meaning of words like truth, faithfulness, commitment and love, we certainly will never be able to live them out with any consistency!

The battle...*the quandary that is herein presented*, is born out of such a word play and unwillingness to declare an absolute. We tend rather to invest in the tweaking our faith here and there a little, and ebb and flow on particular elements of Christianity as they individually rise to our attention via some pulpit message or a book we are reading at the time. Such is the nature of our living...the rise and fall of our Christ proximity, the rules, the efforts, the "better" and the worse. But seldom do we actually acknowledge the "elephant in the room." For to declare its reality, would mean then we have to deal with such and what will I do with an elephant? What do you feed it?

The stark reality...the taboo subject at hand, is the wide chasm between the *believer* and the *disciple*. Between those who are just trying to stay out of hell and those who want to "move the world." Between those who seek to be a religiously motivated 'good person' and those who are inclined to participate in a spiritual version of Spain's "running of the bulls." Words like 'radical' and 'bond-slave' and 'on mission' enthrall us and yet still make us bristle a little, because we don't want to cause a ruckus or have people not like us. We don't want people to think we are in some kind of cult after all!

We know we can't *afford* that fast little sports car, but we are also told that it's already paid for...it's free. But then there is the up keep, the insurance, the lower 'miles-per-gallon,' all of which still keep us from getting behind the wheel. So we just drive by the car lot every day and look at it and wonder about those people who drive by us in one with that crazy grin on their face and the wind blowing through their hair!

It's like having a real pining for a girl, but just spending a lifetime admiring from a far. I mean, if I stepped forward, things could get messy right? Relationship with her could be time-consuming and difficult, and I might put my foot in my mouth, and she might hurt my feelings and my comfortable life might get up-ended. So I will just stay over here where it's safe and dream of a life together, a life of marriage, the communion, the relationship, and pass on the sex, and the high of an interactive love. It's a nice dream, *but...*

Jesus had a way...*a characteristic*, that encompassed the whole of His ministry and message. And it is something that the wider church world is working so very hard to ignore or erase. It is the fact that He taught a message that embraced an “all or nothing” motif. Few aspects of Christianity trouble the masses more than this one. We want to believe in *degrees* and *levels* and the idea that He wants *everything* is just, well, **troubling**. It’s uncomfortable! The idea makes us squirm a little in our seats and we break eye contact and look away a little.

I mean, really? **Hate** my mother? Seriously? Well, firstly, we know that Christ is not speaking those words as a singular, stand-alone idea. This isn’t one of the ten commandments: “*Number 4, hate your mother.*” It’s in context of a concept, spoken in a hyperbole to once again dramatically emphasize the magnitude of the message...the sheer *size* of that elephant! Our love...our commitment...our ‘sold out’ position to Christ and kingdom must be so high that our love for mom would look like hatred in comparison! *OH! See? There you go pastor! That’s what I’m talking about! That’s so extreme. So ‘over-the-top!’ Can’t we just be nice church going folks who don’t engage in extra-curricular sex and snort cocaine? No.*

Our faith must be more than just *not doing* bad stuff and going to church on Sunday. A butterfly doesn’t just fly on Sundays. He’s committed and has moved to the “no turning back” mode. I think that Satan’s greatest coup is to convince believers that Jesus is sold in bite size portions and like the old Lay’s potato chip ad’s, I *can* eat just one!

“...*whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.*” The word “forsake” in this verse means to “bid farewell, to take leave, to send away. To separate, to renounce.” Does this mean I have to...like the rich young man in Mark 10, “*sell all that we have and give to the poor?*” Maybe. I guess it depends on how tightly you are holding on to that stuff and what having it is doing to you. The premise here is not the stuff...not the *money* but rather the “love of money” and the desire for and the control of the stuff you have over you. What Jesus is after here is a serious approach to sin and our walk with Him. I remember one young man coming to me once and handed over his lap top and said “I can’t have this.” He “forsook” his computer in order to be a disciple.

Let us ask ourselves the unthinkable. Is *anything* in my life standing between me and Jesus...between me and a radical living, between me and “being a real disciple?” Because the first disciples sealed their commitment to Christ with their own blood. **How about us?** They were in for a penny and in for a pound. They walked away from their livelihood and their security and were “all in.” Where we would get the idea that things have changed and today we get a special dispensation to indeed have “other god’s before Him?” It is interesting that the Greek word for “witness” is martyr. We know and use that same term in our day, and we clearly understand it to mean “one who lays down his life” for a cause.

The man that “witnessed” for Christ in those first Christian centuries usually paid for it with his life. They fed him to the lions in the Coliseum, they put him in boiling cauldrons of oil, they crucified him, they exiled him, they confiscated his property. Why? Was it because the world at that time was full of loathing towards Jesus? Was it because they hated the new religion? Was it because they objected to having another god to add to the hundreds they already recognized? No. In Athens they had all kinds of gods, any kind you could think of, and they had a monument for each of them. All their streets were lined with gods. So many that perhaps they might have overlooked one somewhere. Paul said, “As I walked along, I noticed an altar to an unknown god” [Acts 17:23]. Maybe we’ve overlooked one.

No, the people of that time were more than happy to add Jesus and Jehovah to their trove of god's. They were Pantheists after all. What's one more god? But the disciples wouldn't go along with that. Their attitude was "we'll die first." And they often did. But they didn't die because they brought a new god to the table, but because they said *He was the only one, and the rest of these false gods needed to step back*. They died because of the radical aspect of Christ and Him only.

The world on that respect has not changed too much. The world will tolerate...often even *welcome*, the addition of Christ to one's life and one's world. But what they will *not* stand for is the raising Him up as supreme and only. They will not stomach a "first and only" approach and they will not allow a supreme ruler over them and their lives. That is 'crossing the line.' *That* position will cost you public opinion and maybe some good old-fashion persecution.

There is the historical account of the death, the martyrdom, of Polycarp, the pastor at Smyrna. If he had just toned it down...if he had just 'went along' everything would be fine. He wasn't being asked to give up his belief in Jesus. That wasn't the rub therein. The Roman procurator of Smyrna, of the province of Asia, said, "Polycarp, if you will say *kurios Kaisar* ("*Caesar is Lord*") you will live." And the old pastor of the church stood before the procurator and said, "It will be *kurios Iesus*." ("*Jesus alone is Lord*.") And he died. They burned him to death in the public square, the marketplace of Smyrna.

**"Everything or nothing."** He is what He said He was, or He is an indescribably wicked imposter. He said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). He said, "I am the door to life, to heaven, to God" (from John 10:7). He said, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11). He said, "I am the resurrection and the life: and he that believeth in me. . . shall never die" (John 11:25). He said, "I am the Christ, the Son of the Highest, of the Blessed" (Mark 14:61, 62). Are these things true or not? There is nothing ambiguous about these statements. He was "all in."

The great apostle and disciple Paul wrote once...from a jail cell no less, that "*For me to live is Christ, and to die is a gain*" (Philippians 1:21). If for me to live is money, to die is a loss. If for me to live is the world, to die is a loss. If for me to live is pleasure, to die is a loss. If for me to live is sin, to die is a loss. If for me to live is self, to die is a loss. But if for me to live is Christ, to die is a gain (Philippians 1:21). Not just the mortal cessation of life and heartbeat, and not just later on, but to die to this world *now* is to me a gain. I gain purpose, and peace. I gain vision and clarity and relationship and fulfillment. I gain destiny and care. "*Whether we live, whether we die, we are the Lord's*" (Romans 14:8). That is the Christian faith. To disciples it is not *first*, it is *everything*.

Jesus wrapped up this great throw-down by stating "*Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?*" Well, what's that have to do with anything? **Everything**. Because salt's inherent qualities are to flavor and to preserve. If salt has lost those abilities, it may still be salt but it is also still good for nothing and has no value. His point is *we're the salt*. We're theoretically "the Christian." But if we lose the qualities of real discipleship...HIS version of such, then maybe the world would look at us and say "oh sure...they're salt...they're a Christian." But are we good for anything?

"*It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out.*" They throw the salt away because it doesn't do what salt was made to do. Jesus finished by saying "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*" What about it believer? **Do you have ears?**