

Counting the Cost

Every true and genuine thing in the spiritual life has a cost. If one wants to truly grow in the spiritual life and receive grace that would transform his life, he has to be ready for the cost. On the other hand, anyone who wants to live a Christian life without any cost, his spiritual life will be superficial and not genuine.

Some may ask:

Why should there be a cost when God has prepared everything for us and said 'it is finished'? Isn't grace free?

Indeed this is very true; **Grace is free.**

In Romans 3: 24, we read: *'being justified **freely by His grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus'.*

It is also written: *'For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; **it is the gift of God**'* (Ephesians 2: 8).

Why then is there a cost if grace is free and is a gift granted to us by God?

It is important here to point out that the cost **is not at all** in exchange of grace because grace is a free gift. It is not possible to pay a cost in exchange of grace because grace is not cheap; it is invaluable; there is nothing that we can give in return of it. Even if one gave his life, it is nothing compared to the value of grace; it is just the life of a human sinful person. Even if a millionaire gave all his wealth, it is still of no value. It is written: *'If a man*

would give... all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised' (Song of Solomon 8: 7). Therefore, there is nothing at all that can be offered as the price of grace. Grace can only be granted as a free gift of God.

Why then am I emphasising to you that a cost is necessary in order to live a true genuine Christian life; otherwise, it becomes superficial?

Superficiality in the spiritual life is a problem in our days and has become a phenomenon, even among ministers.

Why is the spiritual life of the ministers weak?

It is because it was built cheap without a cost; there is no grace deep within. Their life is empty, poor, lacking the powerful testimony, and lacking the manifestation of life.

How then can a life bear a powerful testimony and the life of Christ be proclaimed and manifested in it?

One has to be ready to pay the cost.

How is there a cost when grace is a free gift of God?

We need to understand this point well because it is a foundational matter in the spiritual life.

Grace is like a precious pearl. Every precious pearl should be kept in a box or a safe place. If we place a precious jewel carelessly in any place, this indicates that we do not appreciate its value.

Grace is very precious. We should appreciate its value and put it in a suitable place. It is necessary to prepare a place for it inside us. There is a

space inside each person which is already occupied with something. This thing needs to come out to make room for the grace to come and fill this space. This space needs to be prepared for the grace to come in it.

What is this thing which is inside the person and fills him?

It is the old man; the 'I'. In the mind, one has his thoughts, dreams, ambitions, and plans. In the heart, there are fallen emotions swinging him right and left. In the inner being, there is the ego, the self, the fallen nature.

The need is for all these things to come out and man's inner being to be filled with grace.

One of the things that confuse us most in our spiritual journey is our lack of understanding of the situation and what needs to be done and how to do it. Therefore, we move a bit and then stop. However, if we learn to see what we are heading towards, this vision of the purpose will help us move forward. Lack of vision causes confusion and paralysis. In the book of proverbs it is written: *'Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint'* (Proverbs 29: 18). Clarity of purpose and revelation are very essential.

The spiritual life of ministers should have correct and sound foundations. The spiritual life moves in stages. It is important to understand our situation at each stage and what we need to do.

The spiritual life is like a building¹ that has foundations and different levels or floors. In the life of some, their house or building is in ruins having

¹ 1 Corinthians 3: 9

neither the foundations nor the floors. In the life of others, there may be some spiritual information or knowledge which may not be all correct.

It is important to correct our inner building in order to have a genuine spiritual life and be able to serve the Lord. Serving the Lord entails knowing what God requests of the person and obeying it.

Ministry is not mere knowledge or information that we receive and then communicate to others; this is not the ministry at all neither is it Christianity. As ministers, we are not supposed to be information-bearers. In the Christian life, ministers are *life-bearers*. Information goes and comes easily; but to be life-bearers requires a cost. The cost is not in the source of life, but in receiving it.

In conclusion, in order to be prepared as ministers of God, we need inner spiritual building. This inner building requires a cost. Without this cost, the Christian life would be weak and fake. The cost which we should pay is not at all the cost of receiving grace because this is impossible and this would make grace cheap; grace is a free gift of God which is offered to us. We receive grace by faith; yet we need to prepare a place for it inside us. This preparation requires spiritual diligence and paying a cost. One should receive '*grace upon grace*', as Apostle John puts it (John 1: 16).

When I receive grace upon grace, my spiritual life is built and edified. After that, anyone who sees me will realise that I have grace. This grace is not of myself; but, from God. He is the one who has prepared it and finished it; it is His pleasure to give it to me.

It is then my role to receive it. It is written: *'looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God'* (Hebrews 12: 15). This means that one can fall short of the grace offered. If I do not want to fall short of grace, I should receive it in a worthy manner, be diligent, and pay the cost in preparing a place for it.

Therefore, it is important to accept the cost to be able to receive the free grace offered to us so that our spiritual life may be built up and established. As a result, one becomes a true minister of the Lord who is not bearer of knowledge and information but a life-bearer.

As people who are being prepared for ministry, our primary aim is to be spiritually built and edified and to know the purpose of God in our lives.