

Counting the Cost

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(introduction left out of transcript)

It's a pleasure being with everybody, and having the opportunity to speak and to share some things with you, some important things. We're going to be talking a little bit about what it means *to count the cost*, and what it is that God desires and requires of us.

Luke 18:18: "And a certain ruler asked Him, saying, 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Then Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good except One—God'" (vs 18-19).

As we've heard from Fred in the past, Jesus was stating that there is only one good and that is God. Jesus was in the flesh and He had human nature and had the 'law of sin and death' within Him, and He was acknowledging "...**No one is good except One—God,**" referring to the Father. I think it's important to study these.

John 17:3: "For this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, **and Jesus Christ, Whom You did send.**" He was God in the flesh, and he was subject to the same limitations of humanity, the exact same limitations that you and I have. That was something very, very interesting for Him to say,

Luke 18:19: "Then Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good except One—God.'"

Jesus Christ Himself knew that He was subject to the 'law of sin and death,' subject to the same temptation, the same limitations of the flesh. The difference was that He was full of the Holy Spirit that God gave Him without measure' (John 3). He obviously never sinned, but He was subject to those temptations. That's why He said, "...'Why do you call Me good?....'"

Verse 20—Jesus said to the ruler who wanted to know how to obtain eternal life: "You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery. You shall not commit murder. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and your mother.'"

Listen to this and analyze what He is saying; He's saying the commandments are necessary to inherit eternal life. They're needed; they're required! It's interesting which commandments Jesus talks about. He talks about, first, not committing adultery, then murder, then stealing and bearing false witness, and then honoring your father and mother. So, you have five out of the ten, He does not list all ten.

Pay attention to the ones He does not mention. The first four, as we all know, have to do with our love and relationship with God. Jesus did not name those. He said, "You know the commandments..."

The other thing that is interesting is that Jesus does not mention the tenth commandment either: *you shall not covet!* We're going to see later the reason why he didn't tell them the first four and the tenth one.

Verse 21: "And he said, 'I have kept all these *commandments* from my youth.':

How many of us have been in the Church of God for a long, long time? Some of us have even grown up in the Church, since we were little children. Do we keep these commandments? I can say that I was only three-years-old when my father was baptized, but it's interesting that this ruler kept all the commandment from his youth.

Verse 22: "And after hearing these things, Jesus said to him, 'You still lack one thing; **sell everything that you have,** and distribute to *the* poor, **and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me.**" *This is part of the Ten Commandments: do not covet!* Not that he was coveting, but Jesus told him that he still lacked that one thing.

It's interesting that "...come and follow Me." We know that the first four commandments have to do with our relationship with God, and Jesus was God in the flesh. If the rich man would have followed Jesus, maybe Jesus would have gotten into the other four commandments and what that means, and how to keep them.

Verse 23: "But when he heard these things, he became very sorrowful; for he was quite rich. Now, when Jesus saw him become so sorrowful, He said, '**How difficult it is for those who have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God!** For it is easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God'" (vs 23-25).

Why did He say *riches*? He was using this ruler as an example, but this is important for us to analyze and do a little bit of thinking on our own.

What are the things that we treasure? *This is part of counting the cost!* That's typically when we are about to get baptized and the elder or minister asks us if we have counted the cost and what it requires to become a Christian, to follow Jesus Christ and do what He said and go and follow Him,

as He told this ruler.

Verse 24: “Now, when Jesus saw him become so sorrowful, He said, ‘How difficult *it is for* those who have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God!’”

Know and understand that these are not just physical riches. This example was about physical riches, this person was very rich, but the riches can be any type of things that we treasure. That’s what He said, “...sell everything that you have, and distribute to *the* poor... [the next part is very important] **...and you shall have treasure in heaven...**” (v 22)—*come and follow Me! **We** are to have treasure in heaven!*

Verse 25: “‘For it is easier *for* a camel to go through an eye of a needle than *for* a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.’ And those who heard *this* said, ‘Who then is able to be saved?’ But He said, ‘The things *that are* impossible with men are possible with God’” (vs 25-27).

Jesus was pointing out that it’s difficult for those who have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God. He asked the rich man to do that.

Do we have multiple possessions, things? We know that there’s a hierarchy of things in life; this is true for every human beings.

Let’s see about this hierarchy that we’re talking about, because Job was a very wealthy man as well, and God tested him. Satan came before God and God used that opportunity, that challenge from Satan, to teach something to Satan and also to Job.

Job 2:3: “And the LORD said unto Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, **a blameless and an upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil? And still he is holding fast to his integrity...**’”

This is after God had taken all of His possession: his children died, his house was destroyed, everything that he had, even the animals were taken away from, everything that he had.

“...although you moved Me against him to destroy him without cause.’.... [God did destroy him] ...And Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘Skin for skin, yea, all that a man has he will give for his life. But indeed put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face.’ And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Behold, he *is* in your hand, but spare his life’” (vs 3-6).

Verse 7: “And Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the top of his head”—*very, very difficult conditions!*

The point is that Satan was saying was it doesn’t matter how many riches somebody has, life is more important. Christ also said that when He was telling us to not worry about things, what we shall eat, what we shall wear, because He clearly said that life is more than food and the body is more than clothing.

We’re going to see what is required of us when God calls us. Just like He told this ruler, ‘Come follow Me! God and sell all of your possessions and give to the poor and you’ll have treasure in heaven. Come and follow Me!’

Luke 14:25: “And great multitudes were going with Him; and He turned *and* said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple’” (vs 25-27).

Christ is saying that the requirement is the same for us as it was for the ruler. We have to follow Him, but we cannot follow Him if we don’t do this: *hate father, mother, wife and children, brother and sisters and in addition our own life!*

What does it mean to hate father and mother, etc., are we not to love them? Why does it say *hate*? One thing is real, when God begins to show us who we really are, our carnal nature, and the carnal nature of everyone around us—every single human being—which is hateful; that nature is hateful. That is what Jesus was referring to here.

I don’t know about you, but sometimes, some of the things that I do I don’t want to do. That was the conclusion that Job got to, he said, ‘I abhor myself. I repent in dust and ashes.’ Because of that human nature that God showed him and what he saw. This is one of the requirements, not just father and mother, etc., but his own life also.

It’s not the person, it’s the nature of each person. Unless we do that, unless we reject that human nature, their humanity and carnal desires... Like the Apostle Paul said, ‘I don’t do what I want, but what I hate, this is the thing that I do.’ This is what Jesus is talking about. Hating that nature and that nature in other people around us.

But what He requires is for us to carry our cross and come after Him to be His disciples!

Verse 28: “For which one of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has *sufficient* for its completion; lest perhaps, after he has laid its foundation and is not able to finish, all who see *it* begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build, and was not able to finish’? Or what king, when he goes out to engage

another king in war, does not first sit down *and* take counsel, whether he will be able with ten thousand to meet him who is coming against him with twenty thousand? But if not, while his *enemy* is still far off, he sends ambassadors and desires the *terms* for peace. **In the same way also, each one of you who does not forsake all that he possesses cannot be My disciple**” (vs 28-33).

He didn't tell him to not covet, but He knew what was in his heart, He knew what was his treasure. Jesus said, 'Have treasure in heaven, come and follow Me. I will teach you.' You have to do that first! You have to obey and get rid of those things in your mind, and physically as well.

Matthew 16:24: “And Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and **let him take up his cross and follow Me**. For whoever desires to save his life shall lose it; but whoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it” (vs 24-25). *This is part of counting the cost!*

This is in all three of the Gospels. You see little different things in each one of them. But this one says that “...‘If anyone desires to come after Me...’—*it's a requirement!* Before we follow Him we have to deny ourselves; that's part of the cost.

We've heard v 25 before. In the context of things we have always heard, if it is necessary, to give our physical life, to die in martyrdom. That is true, and it absolutely one of the meanings of v 25.

However, it's talking about losing one's life, and our life is our time. If we lose our life for Christ's sake, we will find it, but we have to deny ourselves. We have to be able to take stock, each one of us, and see where is our treasure? If it's not in heaven, if it's not in the Word of God then there's something we need to do. We need to basically lose our life for His sake, because then we will find it. What does that mean.

Mark 8:34: “And when He had called the multitude to *Him* with His disciples, He said to them, ‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross and follow Me.... [same words] ...For whoever desires to save his life shall lose it; but whoever will lose his life for My sake **and for the Gospel's**, he shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?’” (vs 34-37).

What can we give in exchange for our life? For our eternal life? Solomon wrote in the book of Ecclesiastes, ‘All is vanity!’ It doesn't matter what we achieve; it doesn't matter what we do, it's all going to pass away. Everything physical is going to pass away, it doesn't matter what it is. We ourselves

are going to pass away. That was determined that way. What can a man give for his life?

Psalms 49:16: “Be not afraid when one becomes rich, when the wealth of his house increases; for when he dies he shall take nothing with *him*; his wealth shall not descend after him.... [go back to the beginning about the ruler who had a lot of riches] ...Though during his life he blessed his soul; yea, men will praise you when you do well to yourself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. A man in honor, but without understanding, is like the beasts; they shall perish” (vs 16-20).

If we're not with God, if we're not fulfilling the purpose that He called us for, then we're not that different than the beasts!

What He was saying in Mark 8:37: “Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?”

Psalms 49:6: “Those who trust in their wealth and in their many riches boast themselves.... [but this is not enough] ...No man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is costly, and no payment is ever enough” (vs 6-8).

This goes back to the hierarchy that we were talking about with Job. Skin for skin; everything that a man has, if it came down to that... If somebody asked us to give them everything that we possess right now—just like Jesus asked the ruler—absolutely everything, I don't think there's a single one of us that wouldn't do that if we had to, if someone is pointing a gun at us. Nobody would say, ‘No, I won't give my possessions.’ It's another level, brethren! It's not just possessions.

- What is our treasure?
- What is it that we love?
- What is it that we spend our time in?
- Where do our thoughts go?
 - ✓ that is our life
 - ✓ our thoughts are our life
 - ✓ our time is our life

Luke 9:23: “Then He said to all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross daily, and let him follow Me; for whoever desires to save his life shall lose it; but whoever will lose his life for My sake shall save it’” (vs 23-24).

- What does it mean *to lose our life* for His sake?
- Is it to give our treasure, the idols in our mind?
- Things that are precious to us? *Wealth or riches can be anything!* It can be:

- ideas
- health
- money
- family
- good times
- traveling
- What is it that we love?
- What is that we appreciate?
- What is that we cherish?

That is our treasure! It can be any of those things, it doesn't have to be money or possessions. It can be experiences. The millennials, that new generation, that is one thing they seek, they seek experiences. They no longer care so much about how much money they make when they get a job. They actually care more about the experiences they are going to get.

It's interesting if we take stock of what are things that we really, really deep down inside... And only each one of us know what those are. **But God knows!** He knew that ruler; for him it was the possessions, and He told him that he had to sell it all.

As we know, Jesus is never going to ask us to do something that He hasn't done Himself. *Never!*

- How do we deny ourselves?
- How do we pick up our cross and follow Him?
- What does this mean for us today?

We're going to go back a little bit and see what does this mean and what this is all about.

Matthew 16:21: "From that time Jesus began to explain to His disciples that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem, and to suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and to be killed, and to be raised the third day. But after taking *Him* aside, Peter personally began to rebuke Him, saying, '*God will be favorable to you, Lord. In no way shall this happen to You*'" (vs 21-22).

Isn't it always true, Satan always comes with a benefit, something that seems good. 'You shouldn't suffer, Lord. We love You; You shouldn't do that, this is not good for You'

Verse 23: "Then He turned and said to Peter, **'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, because your thoughts are not in accord with the things of God, but the things of men.'**"

- How many of our thoughts are on just the things of men?
- The treasure on the earth, not in heaven?

The things that we value! If it's in heaven, that's great! If that's where our mind is! If our mind is on the things of God! That's what God wants. It's not

just a requirement; it's actually a walk with God!

But He says here, "...because your thoughts are not *in accord* with the things of God, but the things of men." *Not thinking the way that God views things!*

In God's plan it was necessary for Christ to suffer and die for our sins so we may have life. For Him the sacrifice was something necessary. It was not going to be pleasant. It was the most difficult challenge ever, but He did it out of love, because to Him love is more important than a physical body and physical suffering.

Verse 24: "And Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross and follow Me'" —*after He has said what our thoughts are to be!* Our thoughts are to be in accord with the things of God, not with the things of men.

Brethren, we cannot generate those thought on our own. God has to give them to us through His Holy Spirit.

As I mentioned before, God will never ask us anything that He hasn't done Himself. Let's see what it is that it means 'to deny himself.'

Philippians 2:5: "Let this mind be in you... [this is a command; God has to give it to us] ...which *was* also in Christ Jesus; Who, although He existed in *the* form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself... [denying Himself] ...*and* was made in *the* likeness of men, *and* took the form of a servant" (vs 5-7).

What a wonderful example! To deny Himself! To empty Himself completely from God in heaven above, the Creator of the universe, and become a pinpoint of life in the womb of the virgin Mary.

Not only divested of His Divinity, v 8: "And being found in *the* manner of man, He humbled Himself, *and* became obedient unto death, even *the* death of *the* cross."

There's so much in here! Fred said in one of his recent sermons: *humility doesn't really have to do with how we look at ourselves, it has to do with how close we are to God.* This is exactly what Christ did. If we are Christians, which we are, we have to follow His example, and His example was to do this: "...being found in *the* manner of man..." *I'm going to do it, so you do the exact same thing!*

He humbled Himself; He was close to God. He said, 'I am here' and "...became obedient unto death, even *the* death of *the* cross." We're going to read to what level He emptied Himself every single day!

Verse 9: “Therefore, God has also highly exalted Him...”

The point is, what He did He set for us the example of denying ourselves. That’s exactly what God requires of us. He emptied Himself and He’s requiring each and every one of us that we also empty ourselves and deny ourselves, and that our most prized possession that we count them as nothing, that we forget about them and don’t see them that way. *For following Him and His Word!*

We’re going to read in John 8 one of the many ways that He emptied Himself, humbled Himself and became obedient.

John 8:28: “Then Jesus said to them, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you yourselves shall know that I AM, and **that I do nothing of Myself. But as the Father taught Me, these things I speak.**” *He spoke the words of God the Father!* This is not the only place where He said this.

Those are actions, and in other places He says that He doesn’t speak His own words, but the Father’s words. He interchanges words for actions, and actions for words. But both of them were coming from the Father. This is one of the many ways that He emptied Himself.

We understand this, to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him. It’s to have that Holy Spirit in us, to follow His example to this level, that we can deny ourselves and actually speak the words of God:

- *if* we’re reading every day
- *if* we’re studying every day
- *if* we’re praying to God
- *if* He’s giving us His Holy Spirit

John 3:31: “He [Jesus Christ] Who comes from above is above all. The one who is of the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth. He Who comes from heaven is above all... [He was the God of the Old Testament] ...and what He has seen and heard... [with the Father] ...this *is what* He testifies; but no one receives His testimony. The one who has received His testimony has set his seal that God is true; **for He Whom God has sent speaks the words of God...** [this is why and how] ...and God gives not the Spirit by measure *unto Him*” (vs 31-34).

When we think about the life of Jesus Christ and what He did, He denied Himself to be completely in the hands of God the Father. He said:

- I speak not My words, they are the words of God the Father
- I do nothing of Myself, the Father does the works

“...for He Whom God has sent speaks the words of God... [God the Father] ...and God gives not the Spirit by measure *unto Him*” (v 34). *That was the key to not sin!* Even though He was God in the flesh, and was limited in the flesh just like anyone of us. He was full of the Holy Spirit without measure, constantly.

He always spoke the words of God, never spoke His own words. That’s the level that He emptied Himself, denied Himself. This is one of the requisites in us when He says that ‘we have to deny ourselves, pick up our cross and follow Him.’

If we are able to understand, and God grants us that—none of us can generate this, God has to give it to us—God has to give us His Holy Spirit every day and we have to ask Him for it. We have to have our mind in Him, in His Word, in His purpose for us in each one of our lives.

We’re all different; we’re all unique! We all have different upbringings, in different place, different languages. We are very different! God is working something wonderful with each and every one of us. But those experiences shape who we are. God wants us to be exactly what He was with Christ.

Verse 35: “**The Father loves the Son** and has given all things into His hand.” *Let’s see that love!*

John 17:25: “Righteous Father, the world has not known You, but I have known You, and these have known that You did send Me. And I have made known Your name to them, and will make *it* known; so that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them” (vs 25-26).

This is what God wants to do. God the Father and Jesus Christ want to come and make Their dwelling place, Their abode, in us!

But we have to count the cost! We have to know that if it is necessary to give our life. That doesn’t mean our livelihood only. That’s not what it means. It means *our entire life*:

- our thoughts
- what we value
- what we cherish

To have our thoughts in Him, to be in that connection, to pray constantly, Paul says, ‘Pray without ceasing.’

To do those things! That’s how God is going to build us up. It’s very easy for us to see where our treasure is, what are our riches.

God didn’t say for a wealthy man, for a man with a lot of possessions, He said, ‘A rich man.’ Those riches are what we value. Those riches can be anything.

Matthew 6:19: “Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and rust spoil, and where thieves break through and steal; but **store up treasures for yourselves in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust spoils, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also**” (vs 19-21).

Our heart is in things that we love! To obey the first commandment the way that God desires and requires us to do is that we have to love Him above anything else. That should be our treasure! God the Father and Jesus Christ, Their word, because nothing else will be enough! We have to deny ourselves to that exact same point.

Since we’re Christians and we believe in Jesus Christ and follow His example, He says that ‘His words are not Mine.’ We have to get to that level! We have to, and God will make it happen for each one of us *if we believe in Him*, and I know we do!

Christ said that ‘the one who believe in Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’ *That water is the Holy Spirit that Jesus had without measure!* That’s how He was able to live in the flesh and never sin.

- His words were not His, they were the Father’s words
- His actions were not His, they were the Father’s actions

That’s how when He talks about the vine (John 15) it’s the same thing. We saw where it said that ‘where our treasure is that’s where our heart will be also.

Matthew 12:33—Jesus is talking to the Pharisees: “Either make the tree good and the fruit good, or make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt; for **a tree is known by its fruit**.... [they didn’t believe in Him] ...Offspring of vipers, how are you able to speak good things, being evil? For **out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks**” (vs 33-34).

So, if we connect “...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” with ‘where our treasure is there will our heart be also’ it’s easy to see where our heart is. The heart of most people, because what we talk most about, that’s really where our heart is. It’s out of that abundance. It could be anything! Human nature takes us in many different directions into many different things. *We can see where a person has their heart based on what they speak!*

We have to remember what it is *to count the cost!* We have to deny ourselves! It is required. It is a requirement that we deny ourselves.

Ephesians 4:11: “And He gave some as

apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for *the* work of *the* ministry, for *the* edifying of the Body of Christ; until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ” (vs 11-13).

That’s our goal! In order to do that we have to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him! We have to be able to give our lives to Him everyday, in every thought, in everything that we do. God is not going to dwell, not going to force Himself upon us. God and Christ will come where They are welcome. They will come where there is space, where there is love for Him, for His Word, where there is love for His ways. If we do that and love God with all our heart, mind, soul and being He will respond! This is the goal!

Verse 14: “So that we no longer be children, tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men in *cunning* craftiness, with a view to the systematizing of the error; **but holding the Truth in love**...” (vs 14-15).

Who is the Truth? John 14:6: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the Way, and **the Truth**, and the Life...’”

Ephesians 4:15: “...may in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, *even* Christ”—*because we are all members of His body!*

We are all unique and our paths are unique, and the way that God works with us and shapes us is unique and different. But He wants to be with us, in us and guiding us, telling us where to go and what to do. The Holy Spirit will guide us. In the measure that God gives it to us, it will guide us. It is Jesus Christ guiding us through the words of the Father coming through Jesus Christ, Who is the Word—New and Old Testament, the God of the O.T.—“but holding the Truth in love, may in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, *even* Christ.”

That’s a very tall standard that, at some point, we can say, ‘Not my words, Father, not my word, Christ, but Your Word is the Truth, that’s what I want to talk about. That’s what I want to be, I want Your words to be.’ How we address our spouse and our children, how we treat them, what we say. That it will be God’s words, because He’s going to teach our children through us, if we let Him. He’s going to heal our relationships, our marriages, everything in us through this process, if we do this and deny ourselves.

But we have to empty our self! That is the requirement! That is counting the cost and really giving our life, every moment, every *thought, every action. Filling* our mind with His Word!

Verse 16: “From Whom all the body, fitly framed and compacted together by *that which* every joint supplies, according to *its* inner working in the measure of each individual part, is making the increase of the body unto *the* edifying of itself in love. So then, I declare and testify this in *the* Lord that you are no longer to walk even as the rest of the Gentiles are walking, **in the vanity of their minds**” (vs 16-17)—*in the material things, the vain things!*

- we all have to work and make a living
- we all have to be the source of the blessings that God gives us
- we all trials and tribulations

But our focus has to be in the Word of God every day!

We are not to walk as the rest of the Gentiles. We cannot walk in the vanity of our mind.

Verse 18: “Having *their* understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their hearts. They have cast off all feelings, *and* have given themselves up to licentiousness, to work every uncleanness with insatiable desire. But you have not so learned Christ; if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, according to *the Truth* in Jesus: That concerning your former conduct, you put off the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts; and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new man, which according to God is created in righteousness and Holiness of the Truth” (vs 18-24).

This is what God wants! He wants to dwell with us. He wants to make His abode in us, but we have to let Him live in us so that we can yield those fruits.

John 15 reflects this same process that we’re going through; John 15:1: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. He takes away every branch in Me *that* does not bear fruit; but He cleanses each one that bears fruit, in order that it may bear more fruit” (vs 1-2).

It’s every branch in God the Father and Jesus Christ so we can yield the fruit.

Verse 3: “You are already clean through the word that I have spoken to you.... [this is a commandment]: ...**Dwell in Me, and I in you.** As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, but only if it remains in the vine, neither *can* you bear fruit unless you are dwelling in Me. I am the vine, *and* you are the branches. The one who is dwelling in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; **because apart from Me you can do nothing**” (vs 3-5).

As we read in the Psalms, nothing is worth

it. It doesn’t matter if we amass riches, it doesn’t matter if we’re the most known person, it doesn’t matter what rankings or levels, money or anything that we achieve. It doesn’t matter how smart our children are or how good we appear on the outside. ***That is nothing to God!*** God wants fruits! He will produce those fruits that are His. He can produce them, because that’s what He wants.

Those fruits are the Father’s fruits; the branches are just a conductor, just passes on the water and nutrients. That’s the fruit that God wants to give.

In order to inherit eternal life we have to keep the commandments and we have to deny ourselves. It’s more than that. Everything that we cherish, appreciate, and are thinking about—our priorities—has to be gone! ***We have to deny ourselves just like Christ did!*** To say, ‘Not my words, but Yours! Not my actions, but Yours!’

Little by little God will continue to work with us, He will continue to give us His Holy Spirit more and more in the measure that we follow Him, that we pray and study, that we delve into His Word and believe Him. We have to believe Him and believing Him is doing exactly as He said.

- let’s remember to count the cost
- let’s remember to deny ourselves
- let’s remember what that is:
 - ✓ our thoughts
 - ✓ our actions
 - ✓ our emotions
- let’s remember that there is nothing that we haven’t received
- let’s remember that there is nothing that we haven’t been given

God has given us everything, but we have to think about this, think about this lesson. Think about this ‘rich man’ and think about our riches. Let’s analyze our riches. What are our riches? Let’s ask God if we don’t know and that He will reveal them to us. That He will show where we are spending our time. What is precious to us? What do we value? Where do we put our time? Where to do we put our effort and energy?

Ask Him to help us to move that toward Him, to His Word, to being in Him, to loving Him so that He can continue to work with us and take us to His Kingdom!

Scriptural References:

- 1) Luke 18:18-19
- 2) John 17:3
- 3) Luke 18:19-25, 24, 22, 25-27

- 4) Job 2:3-7
- 5) Luke 14: 25-33
- 6) Matthew 16:24-25
- 7) Mark 8:34-37
- 8) Psalm 49:16-20
- 9) Mark 8:37
- 10) Psalm 49:6-8
- 11) Luke 9:23-24
- 12) Matthew 16:21-24
- 13) Philippians 2:5-9
- 14) John 8:28
- 15) John 3:31-35
- 16) John 17:25-26
- 17) Matthew 6:19-21
- 18) Matthew 12:33-34
- 19) Ephesians 4:11-15
- 20) John 14:6
- 21) Ephesians 4:15-24
- 22) John 15:1-5

EE:bo

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