

Cost of Holiness

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[0 : 00] Well, this morning we are in the Sunday School series, Holiness by J.C. Ryle. There's going to be two more chapters after today.

Last week we looked at the fight, the fight for holiness. Ryle says, Those are things that happen in any war, aren't they?

There's bruises, there's watching, there's going without food, there's just tiredness. Maybe you've seen the pictures of soldiers who've been at war for 72, 84, 96 hours in a row, just dragging and tired.

But still, every believer, without exception, without exception, brothers and sisters, is more than conquerors through him who loves us. So the difficulty is real, the pain is real, the tiredness, the fatigue is all real, but the Lord says we will be more and we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ who loves us.

Ryle says, Soldiers are shot and wounded and come home limping, but they all come home safe.

[1 : 47] It's a fight, but it's a good fight with a good end. Well, in every conflict, every fight, there is a cost to winning.

Olympians must pay the price in order to compete and in order to win. I'm probably showing my complete nerdiness here, but the World Chess Championship finished up this week.

And I know you guys were following it very closely. It went 11 games. Everything changed in Game 6.

Game 6 was the longest, the most moves, World Championship match ever. It started on one day and it ended in the morning on the next day. Magnus Carlsen, the world champion, took the challenger, Jan Nepomniuk, down this agonizing path.

His plan, he said, was to drag it out and make it as long and as difficult as possible for the challenger. Every step was going to be grueling.

[3 : 02] He wasn't going to give Jan anything easy. And he would just keep going and going and going. That was his plan for Game 6. Basically, there was going to be a price to pay if you wanted his World Championship crown.

And Magnus Carlsen said, I will pay it. Are you going to be willing to pay it? To win means you have to pay the cost.

That's true, Jess. That's true in anything. Ryle says, a Christianity that costs nothing is worth nothing.

I want to repeat that because that phrase has really stuck out to me. A Christianity that costs nothing is worth nothing. So for the joy set before him, Jesus endured the cross, scorning its shame.

But I want you to realize that Christ, without a cross, he's worth nothing to us. Without his pain, without his suffering, without him paying the cost, he can't save us.

[4 : 15] And so he paid the price and he took the crown. Hebrews says, without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

Without enduring hardship, there's no seeing the Lord. Without making every effort, there's no seeing the Lord.

And so Christ, our world champion, paid the cost. And now he says, follow me. And he's not telling us to follow him through pastures green and just easy walking.

There's a price. Take your Bibles and turn to Luke chapter 14. Luke chapter 14. And I'm going to ask you, as I read this, to look.

And I want you to tell me after I'm done. What is the cost that Jesus says we have to pay? Luke chapter 14, verse 25.

[5 : 19] I'm going to read 25 through 33. And again, I want you to be following and telling me afterwards. What does the believer have to pay?

What is the cost? Large crowds were traveling with Jesus. And turning to them, he said, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Or will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?

For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.

Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with 10,000 men to oppose the one coming against him with 20,000?

[6 : 33] If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

So verse 25 says there were large crowds and Jesus turned and he said it's time to sift some of the wheat from the chaff.

The devil isn't the only one who sifts God's people. Jesus says it's time to thin the crowd. And he said following me is not as simple as just walking behind me, getting bread, seeing miracles, hearing good stories, seeing some interesting back and forth between me and the Pharisees. There's a cost. What did he say the cost is? What do you have to be willing to pay to be my disciple?

Everything. Everything. Was that a surprise ending? So what's included in that everything? Everything.

[7 : 54] Everything. Everything. What else? Our life.

Our life. Our family. Can you be more specific? Our relationships with who?

Our parents. Our children. Our children. Our father. Our mother. Our spouse.

Our children. Our brothers. Our sisters. And then even your own life. Our fathers. So, no uncertain terms there.

Everything. That's the price. Jesus doesn't hide it. And then he says, only fools don't count the cost.

[9 : 09] Only fools don't count the cost. He doesn't want us to just glibly slip past all of those things that he just said and that word everything and just think, yeah, okay.

He wants us to sit down and do some accounting, some reckoning, some real pros and cons, some really thinking hard about this. You count the cost.

Cost. If you're buying a house, if you're buying furniture, if you're sending your children to school, if you're buying Christmas presents for your children, your family, if you're planning a vacation, it's prudent.

It's prudent to look forward and ask, what does it cost? Cost. Only a great fool would plan a vacation with no consideration of whether they have the money to pay for that vacation.

Or to buy a house and say, I hope I can pay for this. Not just the mortgage, but the taxes and the insurance and the upkeep. I have to count the cost.

[10 : 15] And only a fool, Jesus said, would just blindly follow me, would blindly follow me without realizing that there's going to be a price to pay.

So Ryle brings out three points this morning. And here they are, three headings. First, what does it cost to be a true Christian? Second, why is it so important to count the cost?

And third, how do you count the cost rightly? So first, what does it cost to be a true Christian? Now, we're not talking, and he brings this up, and I think it's necessary to say this.

We're not talking about what does it cost to save a Christian soul? What does it cost to save your soul? The blood of Jesus.

What does it cost you? Nothing. It's all Jesus. We have to repent and believe. But it's not with silver or gold that we're redeemed.

[11 : 22] But with the precious blood of Christ is a lamb without blemish or defect. And that's the cost. But we're really asking a different question here.

It might be a connected question, but it's a different question. What does it cost to be a disciple? What does it cost to be a holy man, a holy woman?

What do we have to sacrifice to serve Christ? That's the question. And again, a Christianity that costs nothing is worth nothing. But the Bible is clear.

There is a cost. It's going to cost you your self-righteousness. It'll cost you your pride. It's going to cost you your conceits about your goodness.

The gate is... What is the gate that leads to everlasting life? Narrow.

[12 : 24] It's narrow. It's not wide enough to fit you and your goodness. You and your self-righteousness.

There's no room for a self-made man or woman on this road. There's no room for those who haven't done anything wrong.

You have to be shrunk down to fit into the gate. And so what will it cost? It's going to cost you your... Standing on your dignity and your self-righteousness.

It's going to cost you. You're going to have to give that up. If you're going to follow Jesus. The only people that fit in through the gate, the only people that are narrow enough to fit on the road, are beggars.

So, we have shelves of pride. And shelves of self-righteousness. And shelves of conceit. That we have to sacrifice.

[13 : 31] What will it cost? Will it cost a man his sins? It will cost a man his sins. No sin gets a truce.

No sin is singled out. And gets a special deal. He must set his face against it. So, it's going to cost you your sin.

Ryle says, he must set his face against it. Quarrel with it. Break off from it. Fight with it. Crucify it. And labor to keep it under whatever the world around may say or think.

So, there has to be real repentance. Not just in word, but in action, in heart, in deed.

You have to fight against your sin. And so, again, no sin gets a special truce, a special deal. No sin gets to escape. That's the cost. You and your sins must quarrel, or you and God cannot be friends.

[14 : 38] And so, there's a difference. And I've brought this up before. There's a world of difference between a besetting sin and a cherished sin. Besetting sins, we will fight and contend with until, and have to deal with until we die.

But cherished sins, we cannot have. We must turn against them all. The psalmist says, I love your law, therefore I hate every evil way.

Every evil path. So, what will it cost? It will cost you your ease. It will cost you your ease, your comforts. Watch and pray, Jesus says.

Cut off your right hand, he says. Gouge out your right eye. So, does the war against your sins and towards godliness ever stop?

It never stops. It never takes a day off. It's in private, and it's in public. It's in the morning, and it's in the evening.

[15 : 47] You go on vacation, but you never leave this battle against your sin. Your time, your tongue, your temper, your thoughts, your motives, your desires, your relationships, your prayers, your Bible reading, your Sundays.

The war is on every front. And so, does your holiness cost you trouble? Does it cost you some comfort? If it doesn't cost you, then I can say you aren't really holy.

If it doesn't cost you anything, if it doesn't cause you any trouble, if it's easy sailing, if it's a part-time job, then you aren't holy. Jesus would sail through bloody seas, and we're just going to go to heaven on a bed of ease.

That's not the way it's going to work. Christianity that costs nothing is worth nothing. Holiness that is easy is not holiness.

It might be politeness. It might be civil society. It might be you're being a nice person, but it's not real, genuine holiness. It will cost you the favor of the world.

[17 : 14] Ryle says, you must be content to be hated by man if you want to be pleasing to God. Wasn't it John who said the friends of this world are enemies of God?

So you must be thought a fool. You must be willing to be thought a fool anyway. A fanatic. An idiot. Misguided. Misrepresented.

Misunderstood. Jesus said, the servant is not greater than the master. They persecuted me. They will persecute you. The cup the master drank, the disciples must drink too.

That's the cost. And so again, that's not a, it's not an easy list. But which one can we do without? Which one can we say, oh, well, we don't have to pay that price.

Can you get to heaven and be self-righteous? Can you get to heaven cherishing your sin? Can you get to heaven without fighting against sin?

[18:19] No. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. Narrow is the way. There's few that find it. Narrow is the gate and few enter into it. And so it costs, and it costs a lot.

But you know what? If you're going bankrupt, you become pretty desperate and you're willing to pretty much sell anything and everything. If your ship is sinking, and the only way that you can avoid drowning is to get rid of the cargo, it does not matter how valuable the cargo is.

You have to get rid of it. There's no point in going down to the depths of the ocean with your treasure chest. Your gold will rot and you will perish.

So what good does it do you to keep your cargo and sink to the bottom of the ocean? Ryle says, if your leg is full of gangrene, you cut it off.

It's better to have one leg than to be all dead. And so there's a cost that must be paid. Secondly, let's talk about the importance of counting the cost.

[19:26] the importance of counting the cost. Why should we be encouraging those that were inviting to Christ to count the cost?

And why, as believers, is it important for us to go back to our accounting books again and again and say, okay, have I counted the cost?

Have I counted it correctly? Why is it so important that we count the cost? Well, the answer is we'd be fools to not realize that there are plenty of professing Christians who are just Christians in name, but they've never paid any sort of price for their Christianity, for their holiness.

So they have a name. They have a profession. But it hasn't cost them blood and sweat and tears. It's good manners and an easy smile.

And they come on Sunday morning and that's the full extent of their religion. Or they grew up in church and they knew the doctrine and they know the teaching, but they haven't worked it out in their inward experience.

[20:42] They can answer all the questions that the Sunday school teacher gives them and yet it's never been put in their inward places. So those kinds of people go a little ways and when trouble comes, they turn around.

When God puts them into the fire to test them, they don't come out. They melt in the heat. They don't count the cost and it costs them everything.

Most of you know Pilgrim's Progress and most of you know the story of Pliable. What's Pliable's story? Where do we meet him?

How does he begin? What does he do and how does he end? I know you know this story. Someone does. Pliable. Anyone, please.

He started out but then when he got stuck in the slough and despond, he changed his mind. And? Went back.

[21:53] He went back. Where did he start? He started in the... Will, you have an answer? In the city of destruction. Yeah. He started in the city of destruction.

Why did he start going? Why did he start pilgrimaging? He heard the promises of heaven and all the good things that were coming to the believer. He heard all the good things and he was very excited and he went down the road and he told Christian, he asked Christian, now tell me more about these good things.

And he was happy to talk about the good things. And then he fell into the slough of despond. And when he was covered in the muck, in the mire, what happened to his attitude?

He instantly became bitter and he regretted it. And he got out on the other side, not the side toward heaven.

He got out on the other side towards the city of destruction and... I haven't read it in a while, but I think he comes back to the city of destruction and they make fun of him for it.

[23:16] He ended exactly where he began. That's why you have to count the cost.

Because it's not good enough to just begin. The end of the matter is better than the beginning. So the first generation that came out of Egypt was full of zeal and nothing was going to stop them until they got hungry and thirsty and then they found giants in the land and they turned around and they turned against God and started complaining against him.

John 6 says, many of Jesus' followers turned back when they heard the hard doctrines that he was teaching and their faith gave way and it proved to be no saving faith at all.

Demas, for the love of this present world, left Paul. He left the gospel. He left Christ and when he found that he couldn't have the world and have Christ too, he chose the world.

And it's not just people back there. I, and I'm sure you, have seen people walk away from the faith when God didn't give them something that they thought they deserved or he didn't give them a happy marriage.

[24 : 37] I've seen people turn from Christ because they, they just had to get married. They had to have this person and the choice was between obeying and submitting to the Lord or going their own way and they chose this person.

I've seen people walk away because they thought they had to deal with God. I live this Christian life and you give me what I want.

God's made no such deal with anyone. But when their legalistic dreams fall apart, they have left.

If God would give them trouble, they didn't want God. God's made no such deal and then there's hundreds and thousands of professing Christians who in the excitement of hearing the gospel, hearing a false gospel, but still saying, I want to follow Christ, they respond with joy in their, but when their feelings are gone or when their dreams don't turn out, they're gone.

they're nothing but stony ground hearers. Temptations and persecutions arise because of the word and they are offended. And so maybe little by little their zeal melts away and their love evaporates.

[25 : 59] Children of Christian parents, it's easy to be a Christian, to wear that title, to act like it when you're in the cocoon of the Christian family, but when things are not so nice and comfortable anymore and it becomes hard, they walk away.

There are plenty of Pliables in our world. And Pliable perished in the city where he was born. And his short time of walking did him no good.

And so we need to count the cost. We need to count the cost because there is going to be a cost. And if we don't count it, we're going to be disillusioned when it comes time to pay it.

Now, third thing, how do you count the cost rightly? How do you count the cost rightly and accurately? I don't know if this has been discouraging to you.

All this talk about the pain and the suffering and the perseverance and the endurance and the difficulties and the people turning away. I hope it's not discouraging.

[27 : 18] Sometimes staring difficulty in the face with honesty can actually be the most encouraging thing. When you just sit down and, I don't know, you look at your budget, you look at your situation, and you say, wow, we are in big trouble.

Well, now what do we do about it? Sometimes looking at the difficulty right in the face can be the most encouraging thing. Remember Winston Churchill's first speech that he gave as the prime minister when he became prime minister of England during 1940?

It was right after the miraculous evacuation at Dunkirk. Maybe you remember this. The Germans had cut them off and the British had retreated to the sea and they were in danger of losing their entire British expeditionary force and then the Navy and all of the citizens miraculously, you know, got all their boats and they evacuated 300 and some thousand men in a very short period of time. And believe it or not, the national mood at that moment was euphoric. They were not depressed.

They were euphoric. They were happy. They were so relieved that they had escaped. And Winston Churchill saw that and he said to his happy countrymen, wars are not won by evacuation.

[29 : 04] In the same speech, he angrily criticized the Belgium king for surrendering to the Germans. their surrender almost cost the British their entire army on the continent.

In the speech, he talked about the sacrifices and how difficult the British Air Force was facing.

He talked about one British fighter pilot who ran out of ammunition and charged at a German bomber and made him crash into the sea. When he had no ammunition, he used himself.

Winston Churchill's point was it took everything we had not to lose. And then that's when he said his famous line, we shall defend our island whatever the cost may be.

And he does a geographical up the island. land. And what he's picturing here is the Germans overrunning their country.

[30 : 17] We shall fight them on the beaches and we shall fight them on the landing grounds. We shall fight them in the fields and in the streets. We shall fight them in the hills. And he's gone right from the beaches to the grass to London and all the cities and all the way up to Scotland.

We shall fight them in the hills. we shall never surrender. And then he says even if we've lost we're going to hope that our allies come and rescue us.

The point he was making was this was not going to be easy. Victory was not close at hand. There was death and destruction ahead and if they weren't willing to pay the price they were going to lose everything.

Now there was no point in painting a rosy picture because it wasn't rosy. It wasn't easy. His point was that through bravery and through sacrifice we've survived this far and that's the way that we're going to finish.

That's the cost for victory and his point was then let's get on with paying it. Now again I don't want to discourage you but I hope that just thinking about this cost rouses you and says well I too must fight if I will reign.

[31 : 41] Well then let's get on with it. Let's count the cost. So how do you count it rightly? We've got five minutes. Riles says we need to count and compare calculate some things.

He says count and compare the profit and the loss. What are you going to gain and what are you going to lose by paying this price? Jesus said what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

You will lose something of this world. There is just no ifs ands or buts about that. You will lose something of this no fool to give up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

True holiness will cost you the world but you will gain everlasting life. Count and compare the praise and the blame.

Who is going to praise you and who is going to blame you? Real holy Christians will be blamed by men. They will be made fun of.

[32 : 59] The Puritan the Puritans that name was not a distinction of honor given to them by other men. It was a badge of criticism and ridicule.

You'll be blamed by men. That's true. And so we need to mark it down. You'll be persecuted to some degree or other. But you will have the praise of God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

And so mark it down. There is a cost. You're going to lose the praise of fools. You are going to lose the praise of mortal, variable, changing, blind, fallible men and women.

You're going to lose the good opinion of people whose good opinions are not worth having. But your praise will come from the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

I've been meditating this week on Revelation 1. And the question is, who cares what Caesar says to you? When the one like the son of man dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet with a golden sash around his chest, his head and hair white like wool, white as snow, his eyes like blazing fire, his feet like bronze in a furnace, his voice like the sound of rushing waters.

[34 : 26] Who cares what Caesar says when you have the praise of Christ, when you have him crowning your head, when you have his honor.

the great men of this earth mostly rise to their place by accident, by chance, as we would say.

Most of the time, they aren't any smarter, wiser, more clever, more talented, or more righteous than any other men. A lot of them, it comes down to right time and right place.

You've heard that expression about being born on third base and thinking you hit a triple. Well, you're going to lose a lot of that praise from those kinds of people.

But, you know, keep all that praise together, pile it all up, and then watch it evaporate, because it won't last. But Jesus is worthy. He's worthy because of what he's done.

[35 : 37] He's praiseworthy. And because he's praiseworthy, his praise is actually worth something. And so you need to count it up. You will lose the blame, or you'll get the blame of silly men, but you will gain the praise of glorious God.

Riles says, count up your friends and your enemies. A holy man will have enemies. He'll have the devil and the wicked for his enemies, but he'll have the friendship of Jesus.

Your will bruise your heel, and they will roar loudly, but your friend will protect you to the very end, and he will save you to the uttermost.

You'll have the friendship of those of whom the world is not worthy. You'll have the friendship of those whom the world is not worthy. Count and compare the life now and the life to come.

it's not easy now. It's a time of watching and praying. It's a time of constant and ceaseless conflict, and we do get tired, and we do say, how long, oh Lord?

[36 : 54] And there's going to be fighting on the seas and fighting on the beaches and the landing grounds and in the streets and in the hills, but it is for a few short years, years, and then peace, and forever rest.

Swords will be beaten into plowshares, and we will live under our own vine and fig tree. So, count and compare.

There's a few short days worth eternity. There's a few short, fleeting days of pleasure worth everlasting damnation.

Only a fool would make that deal. Last, compare and contrast, count and compare. Who's left the world for Christ, and who has left Christ for the world?

And here I want to talk about, we've talked about those who were pretenders, we've talked about those pliables, but I'm talking about those who actually really, really left the world for Christ.

[38 : 10] You know, Ryle says, every day people are leaving the world's way and following Jesus. That broad road to destruction, you see all sorts of footpaths, all sorts of footsteps, turning out of the way.

They were going down to hell, and they saw the gospel, and they made a turn, and they went the other way. But, if you look at the narrow way, the narrow way that leads to life, and those who are really, really on it, you never ever see anyone turning out of it.

You never see anyone turning away from it. you know, I've said this multiple times.

I have heard lots of people say, I wish I wouldn't have waited so long to become a Christian. I have never, ever heard someone say, I wish I would have waited longer.

I would only hear, I wish I would have come sooner. they say, I wasn't counting right before, but now I am. Now I am.

[39 : 26] So, there is a cost, and we need to count it. So, brothers and sisters, let's get on with it. There is a cost, there is a price, there is a battle.

We need to pay the price, and so let's get on with it. First the cross, and then the crown. We're dismissed. And the