

Kingdom costs, cheap grace & counting numbers!



J. C. Ryle

Shrinking our churches might be a great way to impress unbelievers!

Let us not mistake feelings for faith!

Are they truly converted?

[10] Our Lord spoke as He did to prevent men following Him lightly and inconsiderately, from mere animal feeling or temporary excitement, who in time of temptation would fall away. He knew that nothing does so much harm to the cause of true religion as backsliding, and that nothing causes so much backsliding as enlisting disciples without letting them know what they take in hand. He had no desire to swell the number of His followers by admitting soldiers who would fail in the hour of need. ... Often – far too often – people are built up in self-deception, and encouraged to think they are converted when in reality they are not converted at all. Feelings are supposed to be faith. Convictions are supposed to be grace. These things ought not so to be. ... never let us urge people forward without telling them what true Christianity entails. Never let us hide from them the battle and the toil. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol.2 p 169

a. The costs & conditions of discipleship (14:25-35)

14:25,26 Does Christ care about numbers? How, then, should we evaluate churches?

[1] [14:25] The Saviour's activities and words in Trans-Jordan had made Him amazingly popular with the masses, and great multitudes who had begun to look upon Him as the possible Messiah followed Him while He was on His way to Jerusalem. However, He desires to check this light-hearted manner of following Him, and so He turns to the multitudes and in a determined tone lays down His absolute demands for everyone who wishes to be His disciple and His true follower. **Norval Geldenhuys** *Luke* p. 397

[2] The section has been called "The Conditions of Discipleship." These are four. 1. The Cross to be borne (25-27; Mt. 10:37,38). 2. The Cost to be counted (28-32). 3. All Possessions to be renounced (33). 4. The Spirit of Sacrifice to be maintained (34,35; Matt. 5:13; Mark 9:49). ... a large multitude is following. They are disposed to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and that the crisis of the Kingdom is at hand. They therefore keep close to Him, in order not to miss any of the expected glories and blessings. This fact is the occasion of the address. They must understand that following Him involves a great deal. Like the guest in the Pharisee's house (ver.15), they have not realized what the invitation to enter the Kingdom implies. **A. Plummer** p.363

[3] The close imitation of our Lord's conduct in this passage would probably greatly lessen the number of our communicants. But it may be doubted whether we should not gain in quality what we lost in quantity, and whether we should not be freed from many of those disgraceful backslidings, and gross inconsistencies, which so often nowadays bring discredit on religion. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol.2 p 171

14:26-30 How does THIS king assert His sovereignty? (Rom.10:9; Matt.13:44-46; 1 Cor.12:3)

[4] [14:25,26] Thousands of Christians will bless God at the last day, that they had relatives and friends who chose to displease them rather than Christ. That very decision was the first thing that made them think seriously, and led finally to the conversion of their souls. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol.2 p 168

[5] [14:28-30] *Sitting down* and *counting* are emblems of the serious acts of recollection and meditation which should precede a true profession. This was precisely what Jesus had done in the wilderness. But what happens when this condition is neglected? After having energetically pronounced himself, the new professor recoils step by step from the consequences of the position which he has taken up. He stops in the sacrifice of his natural life; and this inconsistency provokes the contempt and ridicule of the world, which soon discovers that he who had separated himself from it with so much parade, is after all but one of its own. Nothing injures the gospel like those relapses, the ordinary results of hasty profession. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.369

[6] To be a mere nominal Christian, and go to Church, is cheap and easy work. But to hear Christ's voice, and follow Christ, and believe in Christ, and confess Christ, requires much self-denial. It will cost us our sins, and our self-righteousness, and our ease, and our worldliness. All – all must be given up. We must fight our enemy, who comes against us with twenty thousand followers. We must build a tower in troublous times. Our Lord Jesus Christ would have us thoroughly understand this. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol.2 p 168

Are we building barns, churches – or the body of Christ?

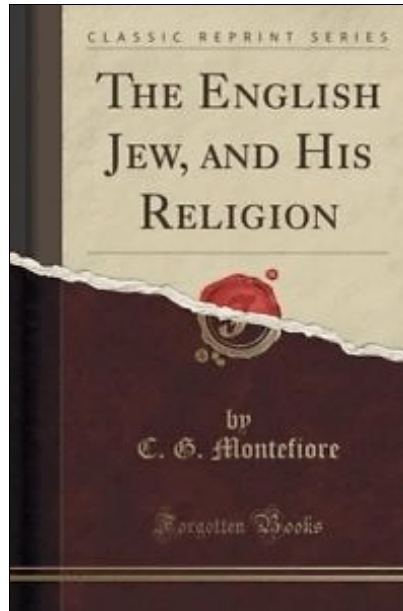
14:31-35 What willingness must we demonstrate to be able to call ourselves Christian? (Phil.3:7,8)

[7] [14:33] He must relinquish *all* his possessions – not merely money and material things, but also his dear ones and everything that his heart clings to, yea, even his own life, his own desires, plans, ideals and interests. This does not mean that he must sell all his possessions or give away all his money or desert his dear ones and become a hermit or beggar or wanderer, but it means that he must give Christ his full control over his whole life with everything that he is and all that he possesses, and that under His guidance and in His service he should deal with his possessions in the manner that is best. **Norval Geldenhuys** Luke p. 399

[8] [14:33] All disciples must be *ready* to renounce their possessions. Many of the first disciples were called upon actually to do so. Comp. the sarcasm of Julian [the 'Apostate' emperor of Rome, half-brother of Constantine]: "In order that they may enter more easily into the Kingdom of Heaven in the way which their wonderful law bids them, I have ordered all the money of the Church of Edessa to be seized" (Ep. 43). **A. Plummer** p.366

[9] [14:34,35] And to be a servant of the world and of sins costs incalculably more than to be a disciple of Jesus – the price of it is the loss of the highest happiness in this life and darkness and affliction of soul throughout eternity. How insignificant is the price of self-renunciation in His service in comparison with

the price to be paid for rejecting Him! **Norval Geldenhuys** Luke p. 399



C. G. Montefiore
... a great Jewish scholar
recognizes Jesus'
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[11] [14:35] Many things which have deteriorated or become corrupt are useful as manure, or to mix with manure. Savourless salt is not even of this much use: and disciples without the spirit of self-devotion are like it. **A. Plummer** p.366

[12] [14:34] But the general teaching of the New Testament appears to be that nothing is so displeasing to God as the misuse of knowledge, and the wilful turning away from truth once seen and acknowledged, to the service of sin and the world. The Bible teaches, in fact, that no sinner is so unlikely to be saved as the man who after making a high spiritual profession, falls away and returns to the world, and no heart so unlikely to be changed as the heart which once professed to love the Gospel, but afterwards became cold and indifferent to it. I can certainly testify, after 16 years of ministry, that by far the most hopeless and painful deathbeds I have attended have been those of backsliders. I have seen some such persons go out of the world without hope, whose conscience really appeared dead, buried and gone, and on whom every truth and doctrine and argument appeared alike thrown away. They seemed to have lost the power of feeling, and could only lie still and despair. I fear the true account of such persons' state of soul was the sentence of our Lord, on which I have now been dwelling. **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol.2 p 172

b. What 'counts' with our King? (15:1-10)

15:1-4 An absolute Sovereign who is also Good Shepherd! (John 10:11-14; Ezek.34:1-16)

[13] [15:1-3] There is once more no indication of time or place; but connexion with what precedes is perhaps intended. There a thoughtless multitude followed Him, intending to become His disciples, and He warns them to count the cost. Here a number of publicans and sinners congregate about Him, and He rebukes the suggestion that He ought to send them away. It was well to check heedless enthusiasts, that *they* might be saved from breaking down afterwards. It would have been a very different thing to have sent away penitents, that *He* might be saved from legal pollution. **A. Plummer** p.367

[14] What He was upon earth He is now at the right hand of God, and will be to all eternity. He is emphatically the sinner's Friend. **J.C. Ryle** p174

15:5-7 How should these words shame the Jewish religious leaders?

[15] [15:5] There is no upbraiding of the wandering sheep, not murmuring at the trouble. **A. Plummer** p.369

[16] [15:5,6] Here Jesus earnestly calls upon His critics to rejoice with Him that some of the lost ones are saved instead of criticising Him because of His preaching to them. **Norval Geldenhuys** Luke p. 402

15:8-10 How - again – is God's character set in stark contrast to His opponents'? (Matt.20:25-28)

[17] [15:8-10] With what minute pains are the efforts of this woman described, and what a charming interior is the picture of her

A great Jewish scholar on Jesus' 'new note' – God's search for the sinner

[21] [15:1] This verse sums up one of the specific characteristics of Jesus and one of the new excellences of the gospel. 'The sinners drew near to hear him.' Surely this is a new note, something which we have not yet heard in the Old Testament or of *its* heroes, something which we do not hear in the Talmud or of *its* heroes. 'The sinners drew near to hear him': his teaching did not repel them. It did not palter with, or make light of sin, but yet it gave comfort to the sinner. The virtues of repentance are gloriously praised in the Rabbinical literature, but this direct search for, and appeal to, the sinner, are new and moving notes of high import and significance. The good shepherd who searches for the lost sheep, and reclaims it and rejoices over it, is a new figure, which has never ceased to play its great part in the moral and religious development of the world. **C.G. Montefiore** *Synoptic Gospels* Vol. 2 p.520

persevering search! She lights her lamp; for in the East the apartment has no other light than that which is admitted by the door; she removes every article of furniture, and sweeps the most dusty corners. Such is the image of God coming down in the person of Jesus into the company of the lowest among sinners, following them to the very dens of the theocracy, with the light of divine truth. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.375

[18] [15:8-10] Among the rabbinic writings there is the lost coin motif, but it is used very differently. If a man keeps seeking for a lost coin much more should he seek the Law, said the rabbis (*Canticles Rabbah* I. 1:9). There is no rabbinic equivalent to god's seeking of sinners. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p. 239

[19] [15:9,10] In no other religion in the whole world does one come to know God as the One who in His love seeks the lost person to save him through His grace. In the writings of other religions we see how man seeks and yearns for God, but in the Bible we see how God in Christ seeks man to save him for time and eternity. Because the Saviour has paid with His precious blood for the redemption of man, every soul has an infinite value in God's sight and the way to the throne of grace lies open to everyone who desires to enter. **Norval Geldenhuys** *Luke* p. 403

[20] [15:10] Christ's love is a self-denying love. The shepherd brought his lost sheep home on his own shoulders rather than leave it in the wilderness. The woman lighted a candle, and swept the house, and searched diligently, and spared no pains, till she found her lost money. And just so did Christ not spare Himself, when He undertook to save sinners. "He endured the cross, despising the shame." He "laid down His life for His friends." Greater love than this cannot be shown. (John 15:13, Heb.12:2) ... If we take comfort in our own love to Christ, we are building on a sandy foundation. But if we lean on Christ's love to us, we are on a rock. **J.C. Ryle** pp 175,176