

since a Father's care directs and a Father's hand controls all things. In view of all this, the soul that is willing to go forward will not fail to reap a large reward.

*There are advantages to be derived from counting the cost. The cost shall not then take us by surprise when it has to be paid.* Merely to look at one side of the picture would leave a false impression of the nature of religion. There is a crown and a kingdom promised, but also a cross. Glad tidings of great joy bring afflictions, scorn and shame. The young man who said—"Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" went away sorrowful, for the cost was too great. He was taken by surprise. The fair and promising blossom was nipped. Unconditional surrender of all to Christ is too much for some, and they are offended. We read of those who went back and walked no more with him; had they counted the cost there had been no such result.

*This counting will show us our own weakness and teach us to look for Divine aid.* The tower fails to rise to heaven when only earthly power is applied. Resolution fails. Babel confusions break off the purpose. We triumph through Almighty grace. Counting that we cannot stand in our own name or strength, we plead constantly at the throne of grace for mercy and for grace. Great demands are made and they are met, so that the building goes on. Each particular difficulty as it occurs is overcome. The wisdom of a wise master builder has re-viewed the whole plan, and carries it on to completion.

*Practical religion thus begins on principles and considerations that dispose to the endurance of all things rather than turn back or give up.* It was no childish fear that shook the strong sinner from his sleep of sin. The whole question of salvation was calmly weighed. An eye was open to any signal of relief. From the consideration of the whole matter it was deemed right to set out from the city doomed to destruction, to seek for a heavenly and an eternal home. The heart was given to Jesus. It was not to please men that he was called Lord. The glitter and show of Pharisaism were without weight in turning the scale, deep down in the heart is the resolution formed, it is felt worth the sacrifice of all to enjoy the favour of God and find a welcome in heaven. What then the baubles of earth, its noise and shows? Strong reasons dwell in the soul constraining it, having received the Lord Jesus to walk in him.

The last advantage to which we shall allude is *an escape from ridicule and scorn on the ground of failure.* To this the Saviour alludes when he says, "Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build, and was not able to finish." Should persecution arise because of the word, the expectation of it will prepare the spirit for encountering the blast. Consistency will also often silence reproach—from henceforth let no man trouble me for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. The arrows of the wicked fall powerless, the shafts of malignity do not strike, when a firm resolution braces the soul stedfastly to hold fast the beginning of its confidence unto the end.

*There is a right choice to make notwithstanding the cost.* Immense interests are at stake in this issue. Safety and happiness of the soul for ever. Though left in comparative darkness, and threatened with many more difficulties than really exist in the way to heaven, even then, this is worthy of our highest thought and strongest desire—what must I do to be saved? *The claims of Christ are paramount and supreme.* Decide for Jesus at all hazards. No rival should take away the heart from him who is the chief among ten