

Dear Friends,

In life, I have been told, we should be careful what we choose because we may need to live with the consequences for some time to come. We often see this in politics when someone's words somehow look different in a new context and *'come back to bite them'*. Certainly, I did not predict that when I had a friendly chat with a Methodist superintendent minister, back in the early 80s, it would lead to over 30 years' service as a Methodist minister! So, sometimes serendipity and Providence also influence our lives in a positive way, revealing God's will while we are still making our human plans! However, that does not mean that sometimes foolish or rash decisions may not be regretted later on.

Jesus spoke of a property scheme to build a tower and a king who went to war (Luke 14). In the first instance He speaks of failure to count the cost leading to running out of money before the project is completed, forcing them to abandon the project and facing ridicule. He went on to ask which king would ever go to war without first sitting down with counsellors to ask whether victory could be assured. Statesman today could learn from Jesus before planning vast infrastructure projects or embarking on military adventures.

J. C. Ryle, the first Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, wisely wrote some challenging words:

*"It costs something to be a real Christian... There are enemies to overcome, battles to be fought, sacrifices to be made, an Egypt to be forsaken, a wilderness to be passed through, a cross to be carried, a race to be run. Conversion is not putting a person in an armchair and taking him to heaven, it is the beginning of a mighty conflict, in which it costs much to win the victory."*

Nevertheless, clearly God is nobody's debtor. There is a wonderful verse in Luke 18, following the story of the rich young ruler who would not make the sacrifice required to follow Jesus. Jesus assured his hearers that those who have sacrificed precious things, and even family life, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, *'will be repaid many times over in this life as well as receiving eternal life in the world to come'* (NLT). The Christian life is about giving freely as we have been freely given the gift of salvation. Nevertheless, we are promised, *"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."* We serve a wonderful God. In the end, deciding to love and serve Him is the best decision we could ever make.

God bless you,

Keith

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