

Luke 14:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

Analysis

Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? This second parable intensifies the cost-counting theme through military analogy. The phrase *tis basileus poreuomenos heterō basilei symbalein eis polemon* (τίς βασιλεὺς πορευόμενος ἑτέρῳ βασιλεῖ συμβαλεῖν εἰς πόλεμον, "what king going to engage another king in war") introduces a scenario of national stakes, not merely personal shame. The verb *kathisas* (καθίσας, "having sat down") parallels v. 28—deliberate calculation before action.

The term *bouleusetai* (βουλεύσεται, "will deliberate/consult") indicates careful strategic planning. The question *ei dunatos estin en deka chiliaisin hypantēsai* (εἰ δυνατός ἐστιν ἐν δέκα χιλιάσιν ὑπαντῆσαι, "whether he is able with ten thousand to meet") poses a numerical disadvantage—facing *eikosi chiliadas* (εἴκοσι χιλιάδας, "twenty thousand"), a 2:1 deficit. Wisdom demands assessing whether to fight or negotiate.

Applied to discipleship, Christians face a powerful enemy—Satan, the world, and the flesh (Ephesians 6:12). The battle is real; the stakes are eternal. Yet Christ has already won the decisive victory (Colossians 2:15), and He provides resources for His soldiers (Ephesians 6:10-18). The question is whether we're willing to enter

the warfare of discipleship, recognizing we're outmatched without divine aid but victorious through Christ. Counting the cost means recognizing discipleship is warfare, not leisure.

Historical Context

Warfare in the ancient world required careful calculation of resources, troop strength, and strategic advantage. Kings who miscalculated faced catastrophic defeat, loss of territory, slavery for their people, and often their own execution. Biblical examples abound: David's census brought judgment (2 Samuel 24); Amaziah's proud challenge to Israel brought disaster (2 Kings 14:8-14); Jewish rebellion against Rome (66-70 AD) ended in Jerusalem's destruction.

A 2:1 disadvantage was considered decisive unless the smaller force had superior position, training, or divine aid. Jesus' audience would recognize the dilemma: engage in unwinnable war or seek terms of peace (v. 32). Applied spiritually, humans are hopelessly outmatched against Satan apart from God. But those who enlist under Christ's banner serve in an army whose Commander has already defeated the enemy (Revelation 12:7-11). The cost-counting is not whether to abandon discipleship but whether to acknowledge its warfare nature and rely wholly on Christ's power.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does understanding the Christian life as warfare change your approach to discipleship and spiritual disciplines?
2. What does this parable teach about self-reliance versus dependence on Christ's strength in the battle against sin and Satan?

3. In what ways have you underestimated the spiritual warfare involved in following Christ, treating discipleship as leisure rather than combat?

Interlinear Text

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|----------------|-----------------|------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| ἡ | τίς | βασιλεῖ | πορευόμενος | συμβαλεῖν | ἐτέρῳ | βασιλεῖ |
| Or | what | king | going | to make | another | king |
| G2228 | G5101 | G935 | G4198 | G4820 | G2087 | G935 |
| εἰς | πόλεμον | οὐχὶ | καθίσας | πρῶτον | βουλεύεται | εἰ |
| against | war | not | down | first | and consulteth | whether |
| G1519 | G4171 | G3780 | G2523 | G4412 | G1011 | G1487 |
| δυνατός | ἐστιν | ἐν | δέκα | χιλιάδων | ἀπαντῆσαι | τῷ μετὰ |
| able | he be | with | ten | thousand | to meet | with |
| G1415 | G2076 | G1722 | G1176 | G5505 | G528 | G3326 |
| εἴκοσι | χιλιάδων | ἐρχομένῳ | ἐπ' | αὐτόν | | |
| twenty | thousand | him that cometh | against | him | | |
| G1501 | G5505 | G2064 | G1909 | G846 | | |

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 20:18 (Parallel theme): Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.

Proverbs 25:8 (Parallel theme): Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.

1 Kings 20:11 (Kingdom): And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.