

Mark 8:34 & 35 "Then he called the crowd along with his disciples and said, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? 37 "For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.'" Mark 8:36-38, NAS95.

In this passage I believe we see not so much of an evangelistic plea but a warning that genuine discipleship has a cost. Not that there is not a sense of the fact that if one does not know Christ yet owns the world, he will lose everything.

I see it as a stern warning that if one becomes a follower of Christ, the test will come to prove it. If the desires and the riches of the world or self take precedence over the demands of discipleship, then one loses all if they in fact lose Christ, meaning they never had Him to begin with.

Jesus is re-emphasizing the picking up of the cross, the denial of self, the expectation of the difficulties that may be faced now as a disciple of Christ but the blessing that is guaranteed in the present to some degree and completely when in glory with Christ

The paradox is simply this , in the end, the spiritual life is far more important than the material life. That is not the way most people think. Most people live their entire lives trying to take care of the physical and material needs they have in life, while they give little attention to the spiritual or at least true spirituality based on Christ's view of what it means to be spiritual.

There are all kinds of supposed spirituality in the world and even in the name of Christianity. At present there is another so called revival going on in Lakeland Florida. It is as bad as the Toronto and Brownsville happenings in the 1990's.

All kinds of people speak about God in one way form or another.

This week I heard an interview with Sidney Poitier and he described events in his life as being guided by forces that could direct his life the way it should go to produce the best person he could be. When he was asked why these forces don't push people

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away from doing horrible things his reply was that we are imperfect people and will not  
always use the direction we have been directed to follow as we should.

Notice he said imperfectiOn, not sin. No mention of sin. This is false spirituality.

The Way To Save Your Life Is To Lose It – v. 35 – This verse is a paradox. A paradox is a statement that seems contradictory, but is still true. Jesus says that if you believe that having your own way, living life on your own terms and being your own lord is more important than surrendering to His Lordship, you will lose your life. However, if you will yield your life to Him, giving up total control over all you have and are to Him, you will actually save it. From a human perspective this makes no sense, but from heaven's viewpoint, nothing else makes sense

In verses 36, Jesus asks a powerful question. Think about it for just a moment.

**"36 "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" Mark 8:36, NAS95.**

Imagine that you possessed the whole world and all the riches in it. Imagine that you could do anything you wanted to do, be anything you wanted to be, or go anywhere you wanted to go. Imagine that you were the absolute ruler of all things material.

Sounds like a dream come true doesn't it?

Now, imagine at the end of that experience of having, being and doing as you please that you die. Now, imagine that after death you found yourself in Hell forever. Would those few years, or even decades, of pleasure be worth an eternity in Hell?

Jesus told a story about a man who experienced such a fate, Luke 16:19-31. That man lived his life in the lap of luxury and then he died and went to Hell. When he arrived there, all the money, all the pleasure and all the power he had enjoyed in this life were useless to him in Hell. He had lost his soul, thus, he had lost everything.

Let's be realistic. Most people in this room will never know what it is like to possess riches, power and the ability to do as you please. So, imagine that you live your life, doing all the things that you want to do, and when you reach the end of your life you die. You have worked hard all your life. You have done without, endured hardship and

Where is the profit in that? What have you gained? You have gained nothing, but you have lost everything! That is why when you know the deep sense of conviction of sin and have a clear understanding that sinners do not go to heaven and that the blood of the cross is the only way you can escape the penalty that all men deserve, Christ says repent and believe for the kingdom of God is at hand. God brings that conviction, we respond to it. God brings the understanding, we respond to it but calling on Christ to forgive us our sin and trusting in the promise of His salvation. Then we take up the cross and deny ourselves and follow Him.

That is why the warning is so severe. Jesus wants to make it clear that there is only one genuine disciple, one who comes and after that cannot deny Him or His life or His lordship.

Jesus asks another powerful question in verse 37. What is the worth of your soul? Before you answer, let me remind you that your soul is the only part of you that will live forever. Your body will die and be buried, your soul will live on in either Heaven or in Hell and then there will be a resurrection. So, what is your soul worth?

Are you willing to trade your eternal soul for some alcohol or drugs? Are you willing to trade your soul for some sexual relationship? Are you willing to trade your soul for the right to do as you please and live life on your own terms? Are you willing to spend eternity in Hell for a few years of being your own god?

If you are lost, that is exactly what you are doing! You are trading the most valuable possession you have for the trinkets of this world. You have bought into the lie of the devil and you are going to lose all you have and all you are in a place called Hell.

When you and I reach the end of our earthly journey, nothing we have achieved or accumulated in this life will matter. All that will matter in that hour is our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. All that will matter is that we willingly lost our lives to His will so that He might live through us.

**Mark 8:36&37 "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?"**

**Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"**

There was an occasion on which John Bunyan, the author of Pilgrim's Progress, was preaching in London. Whenever it was announced that Bunyan was preaching somewhere crowds of people flocked to hear him. On this occasion he announced this very text and he said to the packed congregation, "I have chosen at this time to handle these words among you, and that for several reasons." Then he told them why he wanted to speak on this theme, and his reasons should be ours:

The soul and its salvation is a wonderfully great thing. Nothing is more important for each one of you than this. Houses and lands, works and honours - what are these compared to salvation?

This fact is amazingly neglected in our day.

We are told that 180 years after the death of the Emperor Charlemagne, around the year 1000, his tomb was opened by order of the Emperor Otho, and when they looked inside it this is what they saw. Charlemagne had been buried sitting upright on a throne, a crown was on his skull, and a copy of the gospels was on his lap, and he had directed that his finger be pointing to this very text of ours. Indeed it was! A bony finger of what had been the most powerful and wealthy man in the world rested on these words, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" There is an old saying, "He captured Venice, and then was hung at its gate." In other words, men may achieve all their goals for wealth, fame and power but just as quickly be stripped of everything. May the life-giving Spirit of God enable us all to feel the power of these words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Each one of us is body, and each one of us is soul (sometimes this latter is referred to as the 'spirit' and that emphasizes that it was made by God and for him. The word 'soul' emphasizes our unique personhood and identity. Each one of us, as well as obviously being body, is also soul and is spirit - the same part of our beings is being referred to. You are not merely body - like a slug, or a fly, or an animal, or a starling. You are soul! You can communicate profoundly to another. You can love. You can deny yourself for others. A man will choose lay down his life for his friends. Parents will

The Titanic hit the iceberg and there followed scenes of extraordinary bravery as scores of fathers and husbands made the conscious decision to drown in those icy waters that their wives and children might first enter the lifeboats. If that had been a cattle ship would the bulls have drawn back and let the cows clamber onto a rescue ship? Would the cows have drawn back to let the calves get on before them? Never! Because they are not souls. But you are. You deny yourself for the sake of your loved one. You can meditate, you face up to the future, you are overwhelmed by the beauty of creation and music and literature. You are soul. You as spirit can contemplate the sun, moon and stars:

**"When I consider you heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained; What is man, that you art mindful of him? and the son of man, that you visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honour" (Psa. 8:3-5).**

You can know God the Creator; you can comprehend the Sermon on the Mount, the gospel of John, the letter of Paul to the Romans - because you are soul and spirit.

Consider when God made Adam, he formed him from the dust of the earth - as he had made the animals before him. So there are many parallels between the body of a man and the bodies of animals. God in his divine economy does not spread diversity unnecessarily. But that body which God had designed needed something more before it had the life of a man. We are told that God came so near, almost kissing this dust, and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and then man became a living creature in God's image. Then man became soul and spirit as well as body. Let us establish this fact in our minds that we are all so made as souls and spirits so that we shall never die. This body of ours which we look after, and clothe and feed, which we wash and powder and cream and spray and perfume..... this body which we examine for lumps appearing and moles changing their shape and color, which we will hurry off to the doctor if there is anything wrong . . . this body alone is not you. You are more than your body; you are also soul. The death which each one of us must die doesn't make an end to man. All is not over when the doctor makes his last call, when the last breath is taken, and the

last flicker of electrical activity is gone in the brain, when the coffin is screwed down, and the funeral schedule is complete, when the flames of the crematorium have devoured the body and turned it to ashes, when another voice is soon sounding from our old office desk, and other people live in our homes and we become forgotten. I tell you that all is not over at the moment of death. The spirit of a man lives on. Every one is also an undying soul.

Remember the last words of Jesus Christ, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit!" Had our Lord thought much about life, and death, and the soul, and God? Yes, much. Could he have thought more about it than you? Yes, more. Was there something utterly divine about him? Yes. Who are you going to trust? Him, or your own theories - "well, I think of life and death like this . . ."? At the end of Jesus' life his commended his spirit to God. His body was taken down by his friends and wrapped in grave clothes and laid in a sepulcher, but his soul was not annihilated at that moment. It went to the one Jesus knew to be his Father in heaven. On the third day his body was resurrected and his soul was reunited to it for ever. You have a voice within you that tells you that this was so. What I say to you is truth. When we have accompanied the bodies of our loved ones on that last journey of their lives, and seen their coffins lowered into their graves, who then does not know something rising in our hearts to say, "There is a life to come! All men and women from the mightiest to the lowest are souls."

You go to every culture and civilization and you find that this is so. Their temples and pagodas and funeral rites all speak of the same thing, from the time of the pharaohs until today.

The Lord Jesus is saying here that your soul is more valuable than the whole world. Your life is far more valuable than all the world. There is no immortality to works of art, to champion race horses, to luxury liners, to mighty skyscrapers - moth and rust destroy them. Terrorists bomb them. Though the universe expires, melting with fervent heat, your soul shall live on in eternity. You may be poor in this world, but you are soul. You may be sickly and weak in body, but you are soul. You may be a nobody, but you

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are soul, and that soul is what God chiefly regards. The soul is you, and it is the most important thing about you.

God has loved the world, yes, but men may lose their souls. God has sent his own Son, yes, but men may be lost. God has imputed sin to Christ and his righteousness to sinners, thank God, but some men may still lose their souls. Full atonement has been paid for all for whom Christ died; he has cried, 'It is finished!' Yes it is true, but men may still lose their souls. There is a narrow path that leads to life with just a few upon it, and a broad road that leads to destruction and many find it. Christ has said that he will separate mankind into two groups, like a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats. To some he will say, "Come you blessed," and to others he will say, "Depart from me!" The souls of some are saved while the souls of others are lost.

Is there one man in the world who has a natural inclination to save his soul? No, not one. If you went into any school in our county and asked the children in those schools what is the most important thing they have, that they must never lose, you would get a fascinating assortment of answers but which child would look back at you big-eyed with seriousness and say, "My soul sir!" And if there were one in whose life grace was operating who replied, "My soul," the rest of the children and the teachers would think her raised by fanatics, and mock her. None of us have any natural desire to have our souls saved. We are weak, corrupt and inclined to sin. We call evil good, and good evil.

Many destroy their souls with false religions, humanism, New Age philosophies, evolutionism, the cults, and all the inventions of men that exalt man and have no place for the saving work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They are all soul-killers. It is not enough that you are sincere. It is not enough to sneer at the bigotry and narrow-mindedness you think you see in Christians, flattering yourself that you are not like them, that you belong to no church, and that somehow it will be all right with you at the end.

"The most famous living author of the 1930s was William Somerset Maugham, 'Willie' was a novelist, playwright, and short story writer. His novel 'Of Human Bondage' is a

classic. His play 'The Constant Wife' has gone through thousands of stagings. He was a man who lived for his own tastes and comforts, and his sexual perversions. In 1965, at the age of ninety-one, he was still a fabulously rich man, although he hadn't written a word in years. He claimed he was still getting over three hundred fan letters a week.

"What had life brought W. Somerset Maugham? The "Times" carried this excerpt by his nephew, Robin Maugham who went to visit him (April 9, 1978): 'I looked round the drawing room at the immensely valuable furniture and pictures and objects that Willie's success had enabled him to acquire. I remembered that the villa itself, and the wonderful garden I could see through the windows - a fabulous setting on the edge of the Mediterranean - worth millions. Willie had 11 servants, including his cook, Annette, who was the envy of all the other millionaires on the Riviera. He dined off silver plates, was waited on by Marius, his butler, and Henri, his footman. But it no longer meant anything to him.

'The following afternoon I found Willie reclining on a sofa, peering through his spectacles at a Bible which had very large print. He looked horribly wizened and his face was grim. "I've been reading the Bible you gave me . . . And I've come across the quotation, 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' I must tell you, my dear Robin, that the text used to hang opposite my bed when I was a child . . . Of course, it's all a lot of bunk. But the thought is quite interesting all the same."

"Robin Maugham goes on to describe an empty, bitter old man who repeatedly fell into shrieking terrors, crying, 'Go away! I'm not ready . . I'm not dead yet . . . I'm not dead yet, I tell you. . .' He was a man who had gained the whole world and lost his own soul." (R. Kent Hughes, "Mark, Volume One," Crossway Books, Westchester IL, 1989, p.203).

Jesus has a word here for those who reject His message. He refers to those who are "ashamed" of Him and His words.

The word "ashamed", in this context, means "unwilling or restrained because of fear of shame, ridicule, or disapproval." It refers to those who will not come to Jesus for



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salvation and who will not follow Him because they refuse to accept Him or His  
message.

When a person comes to Jesus and begins to follow Him, there is a price to pay. The believer rejects the world and its ways, choosing instead to walk in with Jesus. The believer must be willing to be persecuted, reproached and even hated for the cause of Christ.

Not everyone is willing to pay such a price. Those who refuse to come to Jesus and live a separated life prove that they want no part of Him or His message. These people will face a terrible judgment when Jesus comes. Just as they have refused to acknowledge Him, He will refuse to acknowledge them. They will face Him in judgment and they will be cast into Hell. (I never knew you - Matt. 7:21-22.)

The true believer may suffer in this life, but the true believer will enter into the joys of Heaven when this life ends. The lost person, on the other hand, might enjoy the best this world has to offer, but when this life is ended, they will face God in judgment and spend eternity in Hell. Which ending would you prefer?

Joining a church will cost you nothing, but coming to Christ will cost you everything! For those willing to pay the price there is a home in Heaven and eternal glory. For those who shrink back from the shame of the cross, there is nothing but judgment.