Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Losing Your Life to Save It
Scripture: Mark 8:34-38
Code: 41-41

A NOTE ABOUT THIS TRANSCRIPT

The following sermon transcript does not match the*video* version of the sermon—it matches only the audio version. Here's a brief explanation why.

John MacArthur routinely preaches a sermon more than once on the same date, during different worship services at Grace Community Church. Normally, for a given sermon title, our website features the audio and video that were recorded during the same worship service. Very occasionally, though, we will post the audio from one service and the video from another. Such was the case for the sermon titled "Losing Your Life to Save it," the transcript of which follows below. The transcript is of the audio version.

Let’s open the Word of God to the eighth chapter of the gospel of Mark, Mark chapter 8. We are working our way through the gospel of Mark, been at it about a year and we’re about half-way. We are studying the history of the life and ministry and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, as recorded for us under the direction of the Holy Spirit, by Mark. It is the fast-pace approach to the gospel, the shortest of all the gospels. It has less teaching sessions and sections than any other gospel. It is called, therefore, “The Action Gospel.” And that’s why we’re moving at the rate we are moving.

When we come to chapter 8 verses 34 to 38, we really come to the diamond for which the rest of the gospel is the setting. This is the jewel of the gospel of Mark. If you could only hear one message in the gospel of Mark, this would, perhaps, be the most important one that you could ever hear because it is the pinnacle of our Lord’s teaching with regard to inviting sinners to come to Him.

Here in the text before us are the words of our Lord to sinners, inviting them to come to Him for forgiveness and blessing and peace and joy and eternal life. This is our Lord’s own invitation.

Those of us who have been in the church for any length of time are used to invitations. They have been a part of the church, at least in America, for many, many years. Perhaps today there will be thousands of invitations given across America in churches to sinners to come to Christ. However, I think I’m safe in saying that few of them will follow the pattern of our Lord’s own invitation. Here is the standard. Here is the archetypal invitation. Here is the model for all invitations and one that is not always followed.

Not only do preachers need to understand this invitation, but all believers do because we are all held responsible, aren't we, to be witnesses to Christ, to be evangels, to declare the gospel, to proclaim it to sinners and to invite them to salvation. You need to know this as well as I do. And so it's such an important portion of Scripture for us. Here is the way to life. Here is the way to forgiveness. Here is the way to heaven. Here is the way to joy and peace. Listen to our Lord's words starting in verse 34.

"And He summoned the crowd with His disciples and said to them, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospels will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 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.'"

Now you who have been with us through the years know that this same account is given to us in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew. This same account is given to us in the ninth chapter of Luke. And very similar words are expressed at many different intervals in many different texts in the gospels through the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. To say that is to say this is consistently the Lord's invitation. It doesn't sound perhaps like any invitation you ever heard in a church. This invitation deals a death blow to man-centered, self-centered invitations. This is not an invitation to health, or wealth, or fulfillment, or prosperity, or healing, or a boosted self-image, or trouble-free living. This is an invitation to self-denial, cross bearing, and obedience. But this is the Lord's invitation and this is the one that we must give if we would be faithful.

Just in case you think this might be a little bit isolated, I would remind you of some other portions of our Lord's teaching. For example, in Matthew 10 verse 32, He put it this way. "Everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven." And then He said this, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth. I didn't come to bring peace, but a sword. What do you mean? I came to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. When somebody becomes a believer, they immediately are alienated from the people in their own household who reject Christ." And so He goes on to say, "Who loves father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who doesn't take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it. He who loses his life for My sake will find it."

Jesus said the very same thing in Matthew repeatedly, Matthew 10, Matthew 16 and alluded to it elsewhere. He said it in Luke, Luke chapter 9. Verses 23 to 27 is a direct repeat of what we read in Mark. And then at the end of Luke 9, verses 57 to 62, Jesus basically says, "If you say you want to

follow Me, but you have any other agenda that is more important immediately than Me, then you can't be My disciple."

Remember a man said, "Oh I want to follow You but I need to go home and get my inheritance." "Oh, I want to follow You but I've got to go bury my father." "I want to follow You but I've got to go negotiate some things of my family so I make sure I have some money while I'm following You."

Jesus said, "Don't do that, don't start to follow and turn back or you're not worthy." He's always talking about the price of following Him. In the twelfth chapter of Luke, and Luke is particularly strong in emphasizing these teaching passages of our Lord with regard to invitations, he says in verse 51 of 12, "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you no, rather division. From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two, and two against three. Two become a believer and the other three don't. Three become believers, and the other two don't. They'll be divided, father against son, son against father, mother against daughter, daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." Again it is this emphasis that you pay a price relationally when you come to Christ.

In the thirteenth chapter, His disciples pose a question, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" Because they can't see the multitudes following Him. And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." This is not easy. Why? You have to say no to self, you have to say no to family, have to say no the things of the world, no to the love of sin. People want the Kingdom, it's attractive. They want forgiveness. They want eternal life. But the price is everything.

That's why later in chapter 14, another time, He said, "Anyone comes to Me and doesn't hate his own father and mother and wife and children, and brothers and sisters and even his own life, he can't be My disciple." He doesn't mean hatred in the sense that despise the people that you love. He simply means that you treat them as if they aren't nearly as significant as coming to Christ, so you're willing to say, "I'll go to Christ, I'll follow Christ, even if it costs me my family." And it might even cost you your life, He said.

And in the twelfth chapter of John, He said the same thing in verse 25, "You better be willing to hate your own life." So coming to Jesus was not easy. Coming to Jesus was not something that you could simply do because you wanted the pluses that Jesus offered. It demanded much more than that. Jesus' invitation was not easy, it was even severe because He threatened those who rejected it. It was hard because the cost was so high… so high.

Well let's go back to Mark and look at this passage which emphasizes this invitation and we'll break it down. The principle is winning by losing, it's a paradoxical principle. So we'll look at the principle and the paradox and then there's a final word about the punishment of those who reject our Lord. This

passage is also recorded in Matthew 16:18 to 28, Luke 9:23 to 27. It's so important that it's repeated in all those three gospels.

All right, let's look at the text and the principle is in verse 34. "He summoned the crowd with His disciples and said to them, 'If any one wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.'"

Now you have to understand the moment in which this happens. Context is so very, very important. The previous passage has been the critical passage to which we have been moving in the gospel of Mark since the very beginning. It is in verse 29 that Peter speaks on behalf of all of the disciples and says, "You are the Messiah, You are the Christ." In fact, the full statement was, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Matthew gives us that full statement. So they have all come to understand Jesus is God in human flesh, He is the promised Messiah. This is the high point. This is euphoria. Their doubts regarding His person have disappeared. The result of two years plus of seeing all His miracles, hearing all His teaching, living with Him 24/7, they now are convinced that He is God in human flesh and is in fact the Messiah. This is the great euphoric moment of divine revelation and clarity.

Now their view of Him as Messiah is that the Messiah is going to come and establish a Kingdom and He's going to save all Israel and He's going to make Israel the crowning nation of the world, the most powerful nation in the world. All the nations will come to Israel. All the nations will be beneath Israel. The Messiah will reign in Jerusalem over Israel and extend that reign over the world. They believe that all the promises to Abraham, all the promises to David, all the promises of the prophets, all of the descriptions of the glorious messianic kingdom given in the prophecies of the Old Testament are now going to come to pass. This is the euphoria for which they have been waiting for two years. And then Jesus says this, "The Son of Man will suffer many things, be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes," that's the Jewish Sanhedrin, "and be killed, and after three days rise again." And verse 32 says He said it plainly. But it was so contrary to everything that they believed and everything they hoped for and everything they expected that Peter speaking on behalf of them said, "No, no, no, Lord, You've got it wrong. That's not the way it's going to be, not that way." And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. Jesus said to him, "Get behind, Me, Satan. You have man's interest in your heart, not God's."

Man is interested only in the glory. Man is interested only in the Kingdom. Man is interested only in the blessing. But God requires the cross, right? God requires the cross. There will be no Kingdom, there will be no blessing if there is not a sacrifice for sin

So they have gone from the highest high to the lowest low. It was a low when Peter said, "No, no, no, Lord." It was a lower low when Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan." Their view of the messianic kingdom, are you ready for this?, was a satanic one. They were so wrong. There had to be

a cross before there would be a crown, there had to be pain before there would be gain, there had to be suffering before there would be glory. They felt the...they could feel, they could smell and taste the nearness of the Kingdom in the euphoric moment when they declared He was the Messiah and they had no room in their little theology for the cross. And so, Jesus says, “I’m going to die.” And then He says this, “By the way, if you follow Me, there’s a cross for you too...there’s a cross for you too. There’s no glory without suffering. There’s no crown without a cross. And here comes the invitation. “If anyone wishes to come after Me,” it’s an open invitation, isn’t it? If anyone wishes to come after Me? If anyone.

He is saying this to affirm the disciples who already believe in Him, and to affirm the nature of their true faith, and He is saying this is an open invitation to the crowd that’s surrounding them. It’s a reaffirmation of the original commitment of the disciples to follow Jesus, only to follow Him realizing that it’s going to require self-denial and a cross. And for the crowd, this is just a clear invitation of those who have not yet made any commitment of what that commitment requires.

Three responses. Number one, let’s look at it, self-denial. You want to come after Me, you do...then if that’s the case, you must deny yourself. If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself. What does that mean, what do you mean deny yourself?

Very strong expression in the original Greek in which this was written. This is where it all starts. This is where coming to Christ all begins, okay? For anybody and everyone who comes to Christ, you start here.

What it means is, to disown, to refuse to associate with, or to companion with someone. That’s what the verb means. What you are saying is, “I no longer want to associate with the person that I am. I realize my sinfulness. I realize I cannot earn this. I abandon myself effort. I abandon the works/righteousness system that dominated Judaism and dominates all religion in the world, you can be good enough for God to accept you. I abandon all self-effort. I abandon all self-confidence. But it’s more than that. I abandon all self-will. I abandon my own ambitions, my own agenda, my own plans.”

Later Peter denied Jesus by saying, “I don’t know the man,” and that’s exactly what the sinner says, I disown myself. I don’t want anything to do with that man anymore. The natural, depraved, sinful, fallen, selfish soul in whom dwells no really good thing is abandoned. When you come to Christ, you deny yourself. John even says you hate yourself. You reject all that you are. You see that all of your desires, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life, all your ambitions were all wrapped up in yourself. This is true conversion. This is the foundation of new life, the heart sees in itself only sin, only ugliness and realizes it must abandon itself if there’s to be any hope of a relationship to God. Giving up your independence, giving up your trust in self, your confidence in what you are by nature, you depend on Christ alone. You can say with Paul, “For to me to live is Christ.” You can say, “I’m crucified with Christ.” I no longer live and Christ lives in me,” Galatians 2:20.

You not only, when you come to Christ, are embracing the resources that He provides, the gifts that He provides, but you are bringing yourself under His sovereign lordship and saying, “You are the Lord of my life. You’re in charge of my life, Your will, Your desires, Your plans, Your purposes, that’s what I want in my life.” And no one can come on any other basis.

You know, in Philippians chapter 3, Paul gives his testimony...it’s recorded there. And he says in that letter, “Look, if you want credentials, religious credentials, I can roll my credentials out like few others.” You remember these words? “I was circumcised the eighth day of the nation Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, the noblest...one of the noble tribes, a Hebrew of Hebrews.” That means he was a traditional Jew in every sense. “As to the Law, a Pharisee, the most passionate observer of the Law. As to zeal for Judaism, a persecutor of the church, as for righteousness which is in the Law, blameless, I even toed the line on the Law.” But he says, “I thought it was all gain. It all went in the gain column, and then when I saw Christ, I realized it was all loss, it was all nothing and I counted it to be loss in view of the surpassing knowledge of knowing Christ. So I suffered the loss of it all and counted it rubbish.”

That’s self-denial. Nothing I’ve achieved is worthy of salvation. Nothing I could do or have done is worthy of forgiveness. I abandon all self-effort and with that I acknowledge Christ as Lord and I turn my life over to Him. His ambition becomes mine. His will becomes mine. His purpose becomes mine.”

This is a hard-hitting message that we find at the beginning of our Lord’s ministry when He preached that great sermon we call The Sermon on the Mount, starts in Matthew 5. And He opens it by talking to the people in Galilee, and He says to them, “Look, here are the people who go in the Kingdom, the poor in spirit.” What does that mean? The people who are bankrupt spiritually. Not the people who think they’re good. Not the people who think they’re righteous. Not the people who think they’re religious. Not the people who think they can achieve salvation by their goodness, their religiosity, their morality, but the people who are bankrupt spiritually. This is the foundation of all salvation. There’s a sense of wretchedness.

This is like Luke 18, isn’t it? The Publican who comes into the temple to pray, and you have a Pharisee in there who is saying, “O God, I thank You that I’m not like other men. I do this, I tithe, I give, I....” parading his morality and his righteousness before God. And then there’s a tax collector who was the outcast in Israel, they were the wretched of the wretched because they bought tax franchises from the Romans who were the occupiers of Israel. And he won’t lift his eyes. He’s in the same place, he’s got his head down, he’s pounding his chest saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” Claims nothing. I need mercy.

The Pharisee is saying, “All I need is justice, look what I’ve done.” And Jesus said it was the Publican who went home forgiven and justified, not the Pharisee. You have to abandon all of that.

Psalm 34:18 in the Old Testament says, “The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and He saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Psalm 51:17, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” It’s the spiritually bankrupt people, it’s the crushed people, it’s the people who had nowhere to turn. It’s the people who have reached the end of themselves. The word “poor in spirit” is the word for abject total poverty. Even the Law in the Old Testament was given to demonstrate the wretchedness of our own hearts so that we would, like the Publican, pound on our chests and say, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner, I have no good thing in my flesh to offer. I cannot earn my salvation, nor do I want to control my life. I want to disassociate with the person that I am and I want to become the person that You can make me to be.”

You see, you take Christ on His terms, not yours. The proud sinner wants Christ and his pleasure, Christ and his purposes, Christ and his possessions, Christ and his sin. The person who is crushed and bankrupt is so desperate, he wants Christ and will give up everything. Jesus told two little parables in Matthew 13, one about a man who found a pearl of great price, and in order to get it, he sold everything. Another about a man who found a treasure hidden in a field and in order to get the treasure, he sold everything cause the treasure was worth more than everything he had. That’s the picture of coming to Christ.

And this becomes a way of life, by the way, for a Christian. It is a way of life. You’re not just crushed and broken and humbled at the beginning, you remain that way. In fact, you grow that way. You might look at it like this, as you grow upward like a tree, let’s say, in knowledge, you grow up in your knowledge at the same time your roots go down deeper and deeper and deeper into humility. And so the more you know, the deeper you go, the more your knowledge increases, the more correspondingly your humility increases. Growth is downward.

True spiritual growth is downward. The roots of our lives go down. We have a continuingly lower estimate of ourselves, deepening realization of our unworthiness as we learn more and more about God’s glory and holiness and grace.

So, you want to come to Christ, do you? You start with self-denial. The second cross-bearing, verse 34, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, must deny himself and take up his cross.” Luke 14:27 is another occasion where Jesus said this similarly, “Whoever does not come after Me and carry his cross, cannot be My disciple.”

What do You mean take up your cross? Bear your cross? Well keep in mind, Jesus had not yet told the disciples He would be crucified. So they don’t have that yet in their minds. That comes later. Oh, He told them He’s going to suffer and die, but He hasn’t told them about His crucifixion yet. So when He talked about a cross, what would they think? When He says to them, “Take up your cross,” what would they think?

They would only think of one thing...death by crucifixion. Thirty thousand Jews were crucified by the Romans and others in that land around that period of our Lord's life. They were very, very used to seeing crucified victims and the Romans always put them along the highways for everybody to see. It was a very familiar sight.

There were occasions going back, even before the life of Christ, where the enemies of Israel crucified, for example, eight hundred at one time, on another occasion two thousand Jews at one time were crucified. They knew exactly what it meant when Jesus said you have to take up your cross, because the victims who were going to be crucified had to drag the cross to the place of their own execution. This is suffering beyond all description, suffering beyond all human compassion.

What was Jesus saying? Well, if you want to follow Me, you're going to have to follow My reproach. I'm headed toward death. And frankly, so are you. And don't we know that? All but one really, of the Twelve, were martyred because they wouldn't deny the faith, Peter himself being crucified upside down. John died in exile on an island in the Mediterranean.

What He's saying to them is, "Look, just how valuable is this gift I'm offering you of salvation? Is it valuable enough that you would give up everything even to death? This is a willingness to endure persecution. The cross here is kind of a metaphor for suffering. Not every believer who comes to Christ will die, but they're suffering along the way, rejection by family, by relatives, by the people we work with, and people we know, people we care about.

There is a serious hostility toward those who are faithful Christians, godly Christians living in the world because they are a rebuke to the world. If you come to Me, He is saying, you will endure persecution and certainly they did. You will endure rejection, reproach and shame. And in Matthew's account, he even adds that it would occur daily...daily. Paul said that, 1 Corinthians 15:31, "I die daily. Every day in my life I face death for the cause of the gospel." Yeah, they were very familiar with crucifixion, they knew exactly what they were saying. This is going to cost you everything. This is not yet going to be glory. This is not yet going to be the Kingdom. This is not going to be wealth and prosperity which will come one day in the glorious Kingdom of Christ when He returns. But for now, this is about suffering. We're going to be in a hostile world and it's still going on, folks, isn't it? Because Christ has not yet come back to establish the Kingdom and the glory.

So they're being told to say no to self, first, and then no to safety, second, willing to pay any price because salvation is so valuable. Is it a pearl of great price? Would you sell everything to buy it? Is it the treasure hidden in the field? Would you sell everything to purchase it? Is it so valuable that you would give up everything, even your comfort, even perhaps your relationships in many cases temporarily because you would be the instrument that would lead someone else to Christ, and then harmony and peace comes back into those relationships? But just exactly how valuable is this?

See, the gospel is never offered to people on the basis that why don't you take this because you get everything you want? It is offered to people on this basis, does this offer have enough value to you that you would give up everything for it? And if it doesn't? Then you don't understand it. You're caught up in the temporal passing world and have no sense of that which is everlasting. That's what He's saying. True conversion views Christ and the gospel and salvation and heaven so precious that no personal sacrifice is too much. People lay down their lives all the time for country, don't they? People lay down their lives for causes, is this a worthy one? Is this not the most worthy one? And should it come to that, would you not rejoice in what you would receive like Stephen? Would you not rejoice to fall into the crushing stones one day as your own life was taken to see Jesus standing on the right hand of God and to be welcomed into the glories of eternal heaven? How valuable is this?

This is not about what you get or don't get in this world. We're talking here about the kind of love for Christ, the kind of desire for a gift from Him that literally overpowers the instincts of self-preservation. One who is only content with what he wants now, here and now, sells eternity and buys time. And your life is a vapor that appears for a little time, the Bible says, and vanishes away. It's like steam off a hot cup of coffee.

And by the way, when you fact that moment, 1 Peter 4:12 to 14 says He'll give you grace. You'll receive grace for that moment. The greatest testimonies of Christians through the centuries have been recorded when they face death. Have you read Foxes Book of Martyrs? That great litany of profound testimonies of those who have died giving glory to Christ and feeling the grace that comes to the one who stands in the place of the martyr. It goes on today. People are dying today for the cause of Christ around the world, more today than perhaps at any time in the past, in countries where they pay with their lives. But theirs is a grace that is kept for that hour and like Stephen, they probably say, "Lord, don't hold this against the killers as they look to the fellowship of Christ that awaits them."

So, Christ bearing His cross leads all His followers bearing their crosses through suffering, a great procession through suffering, out the other side into eternal glory. This is a way of life for us. We will be faithful to the truth of Christ no matter what the cost. Look, we're living in the best of all circumstances when it comes to persecution, aren't we? Nobody is trying to kill us because of our faith in Christ. That is a very...a very great blessing. But I think we all understand what it means to be alienated and persecuted among the people that don't understand why we've committed ourselves to Christ. I haven't yet suffered unto blood, to borrow the words of Hebrews, but should it come, I would know the grace of Christ just like Stephen did and so would you. But whatever, life or death, whether I live or whether I die, Paul said, I'm the Lord's. Come life, come death, come more work, eternal rest, whatever God wants. I will tell you, I will rest in whatever He gives, whatever He requires because eternal life is worth any price, right? That's the message Jesus is giving. It's not about what you get in this world, it's about what you get in the next world.

So, self-denial, cross-bearing, loyal obedience would be the third one, and follow Me...follow Me. *Akoloutheo* is the Greek verb used here in the original text, it means let him be following Me, it's continual. So you deny yourself, take up your cross and you continue following Me. What does it mean?

Well the word actually means to imitate...to imitate. You imitate Christ. If you say you abide in Christ, 1 John 2:6 says, you ought to walk the way He walked. You want to be like Christ. Christ went to the cross because He saw the glory beyond the cross. In fact, He even called the cross a kind of joy path, He said, "The joy that is set before Me goes through the cross." Obedience then becomes the *sine qua non* of discipleship. Our lives are marked by obedience. We obey the Word of God. We obey it with joy. We obey it with love. We obey it with gratitude. We obey it gladly. If you continue in My Word, John 8 says, you're My real disciple, meaning to obey. You are My friends, Jesus said in John 15, if you do whatever I command you. We're not just hearers of the Word, we're...what?...James 1...doers of the Word. We don't build our house on shifting sand like those who hear and nothing more. We build our houses on a rock because we hear and obey the words of Jesus in Matthew 7. Our life pattern is denial of self, willingness to suffer whatever it is and loyal obedience.

Kind of simple really. If you're going to go on a trip, the first thing you do is say good bye. The second thing you do is carry your baggage. Third thing you do is proceed on your journey. That's all He's saying. Say goodbye to self, pick up your cross, let's go. Very simple.

Well that's the principle, now here's the paradox. Verse 35, the paradox, "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it." If you want to hang on to it, keep control of it, live it your way, hold your sin, cherish your sin, you can do that. You can save your life temporarily and you will lose it eternally. That's hell. "But whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's," we're not talking here about philanthropy, folks. We're not talking about giving up your life for the poor. We're not talking about giving up your life for some noble cause. And there are a lot of noble causes for which people give up their lives. We're not talking about that. We're not talking about dying as a soldier. We're not talking about dying as a hero, trying to rescue people, we're not talking about any of those kinds of noble, human things. But when you will give up your life, lose your life, here it comes, "For My sake and the gospel's," that's what we're talking about. In the cause of Christ, no other cause is in view here. You can die rescuing people out of the towers on 9-11 and that will not talk you to heaven. It's a noble act. You can die feeding the masses of starving people in India, but it will not take you to heaven. You can die working with AIDS patients by contracting AIDS yourself and die in a noble effort to help folks. That will not take you to heaven. It is only when you lose your life, give it up, yield it up for Christ and the gospel that you save it. Such willingness, such humble self-sacrificing willingness comes because you understand the desperation of your condition and you understand the massive glory of the gift of salvation.

So, verse 36, a question is posed. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? Did he make a good deal? Was that a good bargain? Was that a really astute decision? I'll tell you what I'm going to do, I'm going to live life any way I want here so I can spend forever in hell and forfeit heaven. Does that make sense? What good did it do?

Remember the man about whom Jesus spoke, the man who kept building bigger barns and bigger barns and bigger barns because he had more stuff, and more stuff? And he said, "Okay, soul, take your ease. Eat, drink and...what?...be merry and boom comes the divine voice, "Tonight you die." Then what? Then what? What are you going to profit if you gain the whole world? That's hyperbole, nobody can gain the whole world...nobody. But even if you could gain the whole thing, actually who would want it? But even if you could gain the whole thing, what would it matter if you lost your eternal soul? It is the common belief of man that he is the happiest when he has the most stuff? The most that the world has to offer and what a delusion that is, if he forfeits his soul? Because, verse 37, what are you going to give in exchange for your soul? How you going to buy back your soul? You think you can...if you owned the whole world, could you pay that price for your soul? If you had the whole world, all the money in the world, all the resources in the world, all the power in the world, with it could you buy your soul? No. What are you going to give in exchange for your soul? What is of equivalent value to your soul?

You want to look at this the other way? Your soul is worth more than everything in this world because this world will burn up. You will live forever. You say, "I don't need...I even rent my house, I don't own any of it. I lease my car, I don't own anything." You, my dear friend, are more valuable than everything material in this world. There is no price for your soul except the provision of Jesus Christ on the cross. He paid an infinite price because of an infinite value attached to you. That's the gift of salvation.

So the principle, we saw that, take up your cross, having denied yourself, follow Me. The paradox, it's winning by losing. The *parousia*, or the punishment, is the last point in verse 38. "Whoever...this is the warning part...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."

First of all, there is a coming judgment, right? That's pretty clear. There's a coming judgment. In 2 Thessalonians 1 it says that Christ will come from heaven with His holy angels in flaming fire to take retribution on those who do not obey the gospel. That's what this is talking about. This is a warning. This is the invitation. The invitation...I'm talking, this is a strong invitation, isn't it? This is a severe invitation because judgment is attached to it. This is a hard invitation because it requires total abandonment. Self-denial, cross bearing, loyal obedience, giving up your life to save it, and if you choose not to do it because you want to hang on to your own life and you're ashamed of Christ, and

ashamed to identify with His words, His teaching, and you want to fully embrace your place in the middle of this adulterous and sinful generation, if that's where you want to be, the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when He comes at His Second Coming in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. You take your place with the perishing world, with the doomed rejecters to whom the gospel is a shameful thing, to whom Christ is a shameful person, you will face divine judgment. When Christ comes, He comes to judge the world. That's what it says.

This is a powerful verse. I'm not sure that those guys that day were really ready to hear this cause He's not really talking about what they want to hear. They don't want to hear that He's going to die. They don't want to hear they're going to die. They don't want to hear that there's going to be judgment. They wanted salvation, glory, the Kingdom, blessing. But for those who will not embrace Christ and will not embrace the gospel, who hold on to this adulterous and sinful generation, there will only be judgment in the day when the Son of Man comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. And by the way, He'll say a lot more about that later when He gets to Jerusalem in the final week of His life and He preaches that great sermon on His Second Coming, He fills in the details. And Matthew adds that He will repay every man. There's a judgment day coming.

Well the question is a simple one, how valuable do you think your soul is? It was valuable to God so that He sent His Son to provide the purchase price, namely His own death, to buy your eternal soul. He was able to purchase souls that couldn't be purchased if you owned the whole planet and everything in it.

What's your soul worth? It will live forever, you consciously will live forever, you're going to live in hell forever in punishment, or in heaven forever in joy. How do you redeem your soul? By coming to Christ, denying yourself, taking up your cross, suffering as He requires for the glory that will be revealed in the future.

Father, we thank You for the wonderful time we've had this morning. We are greatly, profoundly, overwhelmingly blessed to live every day in Your presence for You live in us. Scripture says when we are believers, Your Holy Spirit takes up residence inside of us and You produce in us love, peace, joy, gentleness, goodness, faith, humility, self-discipline. You make us worshipers, You make us witnesses, You make us servants. Life is rich and blessed and full and this is only a foretaste, just a preview of the coming attractions of heaven. Thank You, thank You for Your kindness to us, Your mercy to us as unworthy sinners. That's why we're here. That's why we've sung with all our hearts and our voices to You because this is a way for us to express our love. And so is our obedience and so is our faithfulness. Sustain us in those things for Your glory, we pray. Amen.

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