
WHAT GOOD IS IT FOR A PERSON TO GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD, YET FORFEIT HIS SOUL?

SERIES: ANSWERING JESUS' QUESTION

Dr. Lyle Pointer

Professor Emeritus, Nazarene Theological Seminary

Scripture: Mark 8:31-38

Purpose: To adopt God's values

Introduction:

1. Pain causes havoc on the body, but also the mind and spirit.
2. No wonder we avoid what hurts us.
 - # We hate pain so much we take pain killers.
3. Jesus faced His pain.
 - a. He knew the suffering He would have to endure.
 - b. But Jesus informed His disciples in order to prepare them.

I. Jesus announces He will suffer, be rejected and die.

- A. Peter's reaction was an immediate rebuke.
- B. Jesus responded with the severest statement directed toward the men He loved.
 - “Get behind me Satan!”
- C. Why was the rebuke so strong?

1. The idea of the triumphant Messiah was attractive to Jesus.
2. He knew He possessed the powers to avoid this deadly encounter with the Cross.
3. Jesus was refighting the temptations first fought in the wilderness with the Tempter.
4. Jesus heard in Peter's rebuke the voice of Satan detouring Him from the cross.
The tempter's voice is never more convincing than when speaking through a friend, especially a good intentioned friend.
5. Jesus was fighting the inner battle of fear and rejection.
6. To Peter Jesus said, "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

II. Jesus saw the disciples were not getting the message.

- A. So He repeated Himself, saying, "The Son of man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise" (Mark 9:31).
- B. The disciples "did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it" (Mk. 9:32).
- C. Jesus continued to prepare His disciples for what would be extremely traumatic for them.
 1. Jesus could have benefited from their empathy.
 2. But the disciples were too into themselves.
In Mark 10:33-34 Jesus again tells them He will be betrayed, mocked, spit on flogged and killed. Certainly they would respond with love and concern. But, no! Instead James and John made the following request, "We want you to do for us whatever we ask."
- D. Seeing the disciple's self-preoccupation, Jesus invited the crowd into His teaching time. "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

1. Jesus honestly acknowledged the cost of following Him—no soft sell; no pretense.
2. Jesus did not come to make life easy, but to make us great.
3. Following Jesus means saying no to oneself.
 - a. Jesus does not ask us to do what He Himself did not do.
 - b. Jesus has the right to call us to cross-bearing because He carried one.
4. Self-denial means continuous following Jesus.
5. Self-denial includes a life of cross bearing—saying no to ease and self-interest.

III. Jesus causes us to determine what we really value.

- A. What are the priorities in our lives? What is most precious--indispensable?
- B. Will we give all to God?
 1. Or will we say we're too busy to pray, to worship and to learn about God?
 2. Will we clutch our money to our hearts, rather than give?
 3. Who or what do we most love?
- C. For those who spurn the cross, Jesus says saving your life results in the loss of life.
 1. Once life has been forfeited, how can it be bought back?
Parable of the rich fool (Lk. 12:16-21)
 2. Have we lost the value of a soul?
In October 2007, Hemant Mehta listed his soul for sale on eBay. Jim Henderson, president of Off the Map, a Christian organization, bought his soul for \$504.
 3. What can be given in exchange for a soul?
Esau sold birthright

- a. Jesus indicates that once a person sells their soul, they cannot buy it back.
- b. What value can be placed on an eternal and priceless soul?

IV. Jesus tells us those who give their lives for Christ's sake will be saved.

- A. We secure our life by letting it go, just as Christ gave His life.
 1. We find life by losing it.
 2. We know life possesses a dual characteristic of life—the outward and visible, the inward and spiritual; temporal and eternal.

- B. Jesus suffered, was rejected, killed and yet truly found life.
 1. God gave us life to spend it, not hoard it
 2. We might dodge demanding work, avoid sacrifices and resist depriving ourselves only to lose life.

- C. We are to give our lives for the Gospel.
 1. We can tell others the Good News of Jesus.
 2. Jesus said, “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words—the Son of man will be ashamed of him” (38).
 - a. God does not shame us.
 - b. Shame comes when God, whose ways are not the ways of the world, comes under attack.
 - c. God's ways of humility and sacrifice are contrary to the thinking of our age.
 - d. Selfishness appears to provide security when a relationship with God is discounted in our society.
 3. How does shame behave?
 - a. Shame causes us to shrink from open discipleship.
 - b. We fear identifying too strongly with Christ for fear of alienating others.

- c. Jesus said He lived in a wicked and adulterous (unfaithful) generation.
 - d. Jesus calls us to be faithful in our witness.
4. If we withhold our identity as Jesus followers; if we refuse to tell others of the grace of forgiveness; if we fail to encourage our fellow believers; we will not have given our lives for the Gospel.
 5. Obedience to Christ, or true discipleship, is found in these words: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).
Youcef Nadarkhani faced execution this week in Iran (9/28/11). Four times in court he refused to recant his faith in Jesus. Iranian officials arrested his wife and threatened to seize his children in an attempt to coerce him to renounce his commitment to Jesus.

Conclusion:

1. How does life’s balance sheet look in the eyes of God?
2. God is the auditor we all must face.
3. The most important question is: “How does God regard me?”