

**Mark 8:35-38****“Living by losing”**

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**I. Introduction**

Having examined in detail the threefold process of discipleship we move on to the *motivation* and *expectation* behind making such a decision. As I said last week I for one am very thankful that Jesus is up front with His invitation as He never wanted people to follow Him under false pretenses. There was never any hidden fine print with regards to what was involved. No person who has made this decision will ever be able to say to Him, *“Hey, wait a darn minute here Jesus you never told me I wouldn’t be in control of my life, you didn’t tell me that I would be placed into daily situations where I will be reminded that I can’t trust myself and can only trust you and you never told me that we would be on this journey together going places that you want me to go even if I don’t.”*

Yet with that said there are untold millions who daily complain about these clear terms of being a Christian. As I illustrated last week these same folks don’t have the same expectations when it comes to the sacrifices they make to become physically healthier as they do with their spiritual health. This morning we shall finish with this convicting section.

## II. Vs. 35 Getting the most out of life

Vs. 35 This verse requires us to do some in depth research in the Greek to uncover it's meaning which can be clouded in the English translations. Up first is the phrase “*whoever desires*”; in verse 34 though the same English words are used in verse 35 they are different in the Greek. In verse 34 this phrase is in the *indicative mode* with the use of the conditional particle *ei*. What that means is that in verse 34 the expression assumes that SOME DO desire to come after Jesus. But the same phrase a sentence later is in the *future tense* making the “*whoever desires*” an ***as yet unfulfilled hypothetical condition***.

One of the great challenges in our English Bibles is the multiplicity of meanings with the use of the same word. Here is a clear example of this in verse 35 as Jesus says to these two groups “*For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.*” At issue is what specifically does Jesus mean when He used the word LIFE? In the English we use only one word for “life”:

- It can mean the physical life
- It can refer to the inner life of man which is often called the soul. This refers too the part of a person that thinks, wills, feels and reasons. It is this LIFE that our visible personality resides and interacts in our activities, hopes and aspirations
- It can refer to eternal life, life beyond what we know as our physical life

In the Greek there are different words used for each distinction and the word Jesus used is “*psuche*” which refers to the “*soul*”. Jesus is saying that the motive behind the threefold process of discipleship is that the person who so takes up this invitation will live life as God attended man to. But the opposite is also true, if a person desires to live life seeking self-gratification they will lose that which can alone make the activity of life worthwhile and satisfying. **God has designed man is that we can only find life satisfying and peace filled when our entire life is swallowed up in the pursuit of God's will for us!** Jesus is

not speaking in terms of our salvation for our self-denial can never change a sinning soul only trusting in Jesus blood can do that. Jesus is offering up the motivation for the threefold process of discipleship which **is not aimed at eternal life but rather getting most out of life!** Jesus' desire is that His disciples get the most out of life and He says that **there are two attitudes towards life that are possible and each of them has their own result:**

- a. *For whoever desires to save his **life** will lose it:* The first is described as “*saving your life*” and by this Jesus is saying that if you continue to live life by insisting to make yourself the center of your universe, holding on to being self centered as a means to achieve happiness you will only achieve the opposite. You will end up miserable and discontented if you make life about “*What’s in this for me?*” The world is full of examples of people who have lived narcissistic lives all about their own happiness and despite their protests they are the unhappiest people you have ever been around. The truth is all of us have first hand experience with this don’t we, as we have all at times lived self consumed lives where everything is about us and thing is no matter how much of us we have we are never content
- b. *but whoever loses his **life** for My sake and the gospel’s will save it:* The second attitude towards life is the exact opposite. Disregard any part of life that places you as the most important person and move out into total dependence upon God, live careless of what may happen to you. It is the attitude found in Paul as he said in Acts 20:24 “*But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy.*” Jesus says when you lose your life in Him for the pursuit of enriching others life for Him you will discover the greatest life. Martyred missionary Jim Elliot was found of saying, “***He is no fool who gives up what he can not keep to gain what he can never lose!***”

These are the only two possible results but there are still folks attempting to save their current way of living and expect to achieve different results. I’ve heard it said that this is the definition of insanity, “*To continue the same practice expecting different results!*” **If we continue to live life in pursuit of making life all about us we will discover that we may end up with everything we want but the problem will be that we won’t anything we have!** Jesus didn’t call us to a discipleship that is boring and barren, No He called us to LIFE, the riches of His continual presence and joy that all of His creation can never

contain. Saint's discipleship may begin in death but it ends in LIFE! This is the great paradox of discipleship and we are living by one of these two attitudes at any given moment but we can not live by both of them at the same time.

The world is full of examples of these two philosophies is action:

- French philosopher Voltaire said to his Dr. near his death, *"I will give you ½ of what I'm worth if you will give me six months of life."* The Dr. replied that he couldn't do so to which Voltaire moaned, *"Then I shall die and go to hell!"*
- Famed film producer Louis B. Mayer last words were, *"Nothing matters! Nothing matters!"*
- The suicide note of comedian Freddie Prinze written at the height of his success was *"I must end it, There's no hope left!"*

But when you compare them with the words of Christians you see something completely different:

- George Washington said, *"I die hard but am not afraid to go."*
- D.L. Moody's final words were, *"Earth is receding, heaven is opening, and this is my coronation day."*

### III. Vs. 36-37 The cost of compromise

Vs. 36-37 These questions of Jesus are designed to cause the applicant to search their heart and question the way they have been living. The word Jesus uses for "*world*" here is the word *kosmos* and it refers to the world system which satan controls and unsaved humanity is enslaved by. The word "*loses*" in verse 36 is a word that means to "*sustain damage, to receive injury or to suffer loss*". It is this world system promises you everything to satisfy your longing but never delivers and the only thing that it doesn't allow is God. The prudent investor will always ask this question, *"If I'm going to invest my resources, time and energy into this venture will I be able to enjoy the fruit of this investment?"* Jesus' point is that there are the majority of people in the world who have invested poorly having spent everything upon pleasure and possessions and once their life is gone they have nothing left. If asked many folks will tell you that they wouldn't be

willing to sell their soul for all the money in the world but in reality they are giving it away for far less than that, some cheap momentary pleasure, earthly relationship or worldly pursuit! You never see Hurst's pulling U-Haul's! Charlemagne was the emperor of France from 742-814. During his life time his goal had been to evangelize Europe. When his tomb was opened they found something very interesting, though the tomb was filled with treasures in the center of the vault seated on a throne was the skeletal remains and on his lap was an open Bible with his bonnie finger pointing at the words of Mark chapter 8 verse 36-37.

### **Vs. 38 No "Closet Christians"**

Vs. 38 Jesus says, *"for whoever is ashamed of Me."* this is not a statement about the future conduct of a person but rather their present attitude towards Jesus. Jesus final words point out that the conduct of the individual presently determines Jesus future action towards that person. The matter of discipleship has to do with the expectation of making or in some cases not making the decision to become His disciple. There is no such things as "*Closet Christians*", "*Secret Saints*" or "*Disguised Disciples*" every person Jesus has called He has done so publically and the way we live out our life's shows that our answer is equally as public! The very first thing He wants us to know is that it is a persons **WORKS** and not their **WORDS** alone that will tell their story of commitment. Jesus is talking about a person who expresses conformity to Christianity but in reality adopts and follows to the values of this world. To this Jesus says that this will be revealed in that day. Jesus said something very similar in Matthew chapter 7 verses 21-23 when He announced that, *"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of My Father in heaven."* And here in

we have the answer to the original question that this section brought up “*Can you be a Christian without being a disciple?*” A person can come to Jesus and all who do so will be given life if they really meant it when they came. But in coming to Jesus it is clear that we are coming to take up the work of discipleship as described in this passage! Now in saying this I realize that none of us are “good disciples” all of the time, there is much failure that surrounds our lives at times but Jesus is talking about our hearts and aim in life. Do we want to live for our self’s our do we want to live for Him?