

Walking Through the New Testament with Paul the Apostle by His Life and Pen

LESSON NO. 27 - Please read Hebrews 11 + Philippians 3.

Opening Question: Since salvation and eternal joy *is All About Jesus*, what exactly did Jesus say would be the cost required of His followers?

Answer: - Luke 14:33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

- Luke 14:25-33 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'? Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, **whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.**

Opening Theme: Since faith in Jesus Christ is the one essential requirement of eternal life with God in perfect joy, we should know how the Bible defines faith and declares what saving faith looks like in our everyday lives and actions. We need to begin by reading Hebrews 11. This chapter is where the Holy Spirit has determined to speak to a "partial definition" of faith. The majority of verses dealing with the "full definition of faith" are shown in the examples of faith lived out by men and women since the creation.

Question: *What is faith in Jesus?*

- Hebrews 11:1-3 **Now faith is** the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

- Luke 6:43-45 "For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For **every tree is known by its own fruit.** For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

- Luke 6:46-49 "But **why** do you call Me '**Lord, Lord,**' and not do the things which I **say**? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and **could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.** But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

What did we just learn?

Faith is simply believing all the Bible declares to be true about God the Father, the God-Man Son of God, Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit. This belief will then be evidenced by our actions which ALL OUR NEIGHBORS will be able to witness. This living as a Christ-follower will bring glory to Jesus Christ along with light and love for the people of our generation.

Walking Through the New Testament with Paul the Apostle by His Life and Pen

- John 5:24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who **hears My word and believes** in Him who sent Me **has everlasting life**, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

- John 14:23-24 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and **We will come to him and make Our home with him**. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

Questions to help frame our Theme: *How important is it to know the true value of all things? How important is it to put the word "eternal" in front of every desire of the human heart?*

- 2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be **burned up**.

- Mark 8:36 For what will it profit a man if he **gains the whole world**, and loses his own soul?

Truth No. 1: All human beings will be faced with making an eternal choice between things which pass away and those things which are of eternal value.

Truth No. 2: There has never been any person ever born or will ever be born who will possess eternal youth, eternal wealth, eternal health, eternal position, place or dominion.

Searching Questions which all Humanity must answer in their lifetime on earth: Where will you spend all eternity?

Paul, of course, like all our human beings faced these questions. Paul's clear answer:

- Philippians 3:3-11 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, **these I have counted loss for Christ**. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I **have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish**, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

There is a tragic misconception that some people proclaim about following Christ: Christ Jesus has paid it all! Come to Jesus - it will cost you nothing!"

The truth is just the opposite: Following Jesus Christ will cost everything! This cost will be evidenced by our willingness at our "new birth experience" to **give back to Jesus all that we have and all that He has placed in our hands for Him to do with as He chooses as our Sovereign Lord, Savior and Friend**.

Confirming Truths:

Walking Through the New Testament with Paul the Apostle by His Life and Pen

- Matthew 10:32-38 “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

- Luke 9:23-27 Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily**, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.”

What do Christians receive in exchange for this trade of all we are and have to Jesus?

Let us read what Paul adamantly declares by words which were inspired by God the Holy Spirit who cannot ever lie:

- Romans 8:12-17 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these **are sons of God**. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “**Abba, Father**.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that **we are children of God**, and if children, then heirs—**heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ**, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

- Romans 8:31-39 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, **shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord**.

What is Paul plainly declaring? “Dear Christian, it is worth it! You can safely and securely, with great rejoicing, trade that which you CANNOT KEEP to receive from Jesus that eternal treasure which you CANNOT LOSE!”

Question: *Why did Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and Paul choose to align themselves with Jesus?* **Answer:** For the joy set before them in this life and in eternity.

Do we truly realize that Joseph's and Nicodemus' choice to identify themselves with “Jesus: the Man on the middle cross” cost them everything which our human nature holds dear? It cost them their prestige, pride, station in life, family relationships, all their wealth and eventually their lives!

Walking Through the New Testament with Paul the Apostle by His Life and Pen

- John 19:38-40 After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.

Why were these men willing to make this costly trade of present things for eternal things?

Hebrews 11 gives us another answer. We read in that chapter of Moses.

- Hebrews 11:24 By faith **Moses**, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, **esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt**; for he looked to the reward.

Likewise, as with Moses, Joseph and Nicodemus, when the Christ-follower of our day identifies Jesus as his/her Savior and Lord, they do so because they are convinced that something supernaturally valuable will replace the temporal value of all their earthly possessions, dreams, goals and desires.

This great eternal truth was perfectly modeled by our Lord and Savior, Jesus:

- Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so **great a cloud of witnesses**, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, **who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame**, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Paul made another statement confirming that he gladly traded the present for the eternal.

- 2 Corinthians 4:14-18 knowing that **He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus**, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may **cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God**. Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a **far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen**, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but **the things which are not seen are eternal**.

Peter declared the same thought. The joy of becoming like Jesus Christ and sharing in His eternal perfect joy, far outweighed any temporary earthly loss.

-2 Peter 1:3-4 As His divine power has given to us **all things that pertain to life and godliness**, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been **given to us exceedingly great and precious promises**, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

After quietly "counting the cost", is your heart thrilled to recognize the truth of our opening statement? All human beings will be faced with making an eternal choice between things which pass away and those things which are of eternal value.

Walking Through the New Testament with Paul the Apostle by His Life and Pen

When we choose Jesus Christ, we trade everything we are and have to Him. For this trade we receive everything that He is and everything He possesses. [Romans 8:16-17]

My, my, my! How foolish would we “earth-dwellers” be to trade our ETERNAL inheritance for a few fleeting earthly pleasures?

At this point it might be good to close with an example of one who decided to “keep for himself” his life and his goods. Oh, what an eternally tragic trade this rich young ruler made on this day.

- Luke 18:21-24 And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.” So when Jesus heard these things, He [Jesus] said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and **come, follow Me.**” But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that **he became very sorrowful**, He said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!”

- Mark 8:36 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?

We have a “free-will” to choose what to keep clutched in our hands until death separates it from us. We are trading every day at all times. We can either trade our “human will” for Christ’s divine will and receive eternal treasure, or we can make a tragic decision to reject Christ’s claims on our lives and vainly try to hold onto what will certainly be burnt up in the regeneration of the new heavens and earth.

What trades will you make today?

Everyone is given a certain amount of life with time, treasure and talents. All of our eternal joy depends on our choice to believe Jesus Christ or reject Him. Jesus declared plainly and finally the simplicity of this truth: **It is all or nothing!** - John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*”

One’s belief and trust in Jesus or rejection of Him will be evidenced by our “fruit”. One’s fruit is determined by what one believes to be true about Jesus, Who owns our lives and all our possessions.

Will you give back to Jesus, as your Creator and rightful Owner of your life, all that He has generously placed into your hands? Jesus has placed life and possessions into our hands for only one blink-of-an-eye lifetime. This choice seals where we will spend all eternity.

May all of us wholeheartedly agree with Joshua: - “choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. But as for me and my house, **we will serve the Lord.**” [Joshua 24:15] This determines where we will spend eternity.

To conclude: Giving up our will and way for Christ, will definitely change us:

- 2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

We love to receive your questions. Your questions can be sent to:
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All our love to you in Christ - Jon + Philis