

The Paradox of Saving the Soul (Part 2)

Lose Now; Save Later.

What a tragedy it would be for God's children to live for themselves now, in this fleeting, vapor-like life, only to discover at the future Judgment Seat of Christ that they had forfeited many eternal blessings God had intended for them. Would it be worth it? Jesus warned on several occasions of the consequences ([Matt. 10:39](#); [16:25](#); [Mark 8:35](#); [Luke 9:24](#); [17:33](#); [John 12:25](#)).

In [Part 1](#) we studied the first half of the paradox of the saving of the soul. Those who "save" now will "lose" later. The paradox of Christ's teaching is that a believer loses his soul at the Judgment Seat by saving it here and now, in this life; that is, by refusing to deny self, take up his cross, and follow Jesus. Instead, he caters to self, avoids hardships and pays lip service to following Jesus, not counting the cost of discipleship. The result is deprivation of millennial rewards and eternal glory.

In this article, we are going to examine the other side of the paradox: those who "lose" now will "save" later. What does this mean? Let us again focus on the teaching of Jesus in [Matthew 16:24-27](#).

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Jesus is putting out the call for His children to "come after me" and "follow me." That is the essence of discipleship. Of course, there is a price to pay, here and now, but there are serious eternal consequences for those who do not heed His call.

"Coming after" and "following" imply continuation, an ongoing process. This obviously cannot refer to the initial salvation of one's spirit, that is, justification, regeneration and positional sanctification. Those wonderful theological truths occurred at a point in time in the past – like a transaction – for those who have been born again. They are not processes. That was demonstrated in the [previous article](#).

Rather, "coming after" and "following" are the expected *results* of initial salvation, the realm of practical or experiential sanctification, which is the aspect of salvation that continues (*I am being saved.*) until we meet

Christ at the Bema. Nevertheless, following Jesus is not automatic. God will never force His children to progress in sanctification. He will bring pressures to bear (i.e., discipline, [Heb. 12](#)), but God has left us with the choice to follow or not. As He does His part ([Phil. 2:13](#)), we must choose to do our part ([Phil. 2:12](#)), by cooperating with Him through our ongoing decisions of faith. Thus, Jesus warns of the consequences of not following, while clearly defining the costs and the benefits (rewards) of following. In other words, our Lord is encouraging His children to do a cost-benefit analysis and determine that it is worth it! Not to mention, as the apostle Paul points out, it is our “reasonable service” ([Rom. 12:1](#)).

The Costs of Discipleship

What are the costs of discipleship? Not surprisingly, they all involve restraining the passions of the soul. Because of indwelling sin ([Rom. 7:17, 20](#)), the soul must be checked to keep it from ruling the spirit of man. If left to itself, the soul will trump the spirit and lead the whole man. The result is carnality in the life of a believer. God’s will is that the spirit of man, where the Holy Spirit resides, leads the charge – spirit directing soul directing body, in that order.

Denying Self

To truly follow Jesus one must deny self. Thayer says it is “to forget one’s self, lose sight of one’s self and one’s own interests.” Watchman Nee says it is “disregarding one’s self or renouncing one’s privileges.” This qualification for discipleship goes against the grain of our natural desires and passions. Even after becoming regenerated, self is very much alive and well, desiring to be catered unto. But self must be subjected in order for Jesus to be Lord of one’s life.

The Holy Spirit always produces balance in the life of a believer by helping him to rightly divide and apply the Word of God. He will lead away from indulgence, on the one hand, and from asceticism, on the other. His way is moderation and temperance, control of self, as one depends on the Spirit for enablement.

The problem for most Christians is typically indulgence – loving the world – the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, the pride of life. These will all pass away, but the one who does the will of God abides forever. Constantly abiding in the vine is the opposite of routinely indulging in the world. Do you love shopping? Eating? Clothing? Possessions? Personal pampering and comforts? Sensuality? Entertainment? Relationships? Some of these matters are intrinsically evil, while others become evil when they get out of balance and become the love of one’s life. Fill in the blank with whatever your flesh loves and craves. It has to go in order for the soul to be saved.

Another realm of self to be renounced is a high and lofty opinion of one’s self, typically at the expense of others. Oftentimes, self manifests in the form of contentions (in its many varieties) – sarcasm, insults, verbal exchanges, derogatory speech, slander, clamor, physical fighting, etc. The

source of all contention is self.

Only by pride cometh contention ([Prov. 13:10](#)).

From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members ([James 4:1](#))?

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish ([James 3:14-15](#)).

Wouldn't it be a tragedy to forfeit rewards at the Judgment Seat because self could not be conquered? The beauty of salvation is that we have already been made righteous and positionally sanctified in our spirit by the Holy Spirit. He lives within, providing everything necessary for us to be participants in His divine nature and thereby escape the world's corruptions through lust ([2 Peter 1:4](#)). Our positional sanctification can be – and indeed, must be! – experienced in the soul in everyday life, to the extent we will depend on the Spirit to live the Christ life.

The first cost of discipleship, denying self, demands a high price. The stakes are raised even higher in the second cost of discipleship is found in v. 24.

Taking Up One's Cross

A cross is an instrument of torture and death. Jesus willingly took up his. He chose to leave heaven's glories, lay aside His divine prerogatives, and take on human flesh. He chose to endure the horrors of crucifixion, knowing it was the will of the Father.

I lay down my life ... No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again ([John 10:18](#)).

My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work ([John 4:34](#)).

He wants us to be willing to take up whatever He has for us in the way of suffering and perhaps even death. The apostle Paul prayed, *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ([Phil. 3:10](#))*. That is a heart that desires to take up its cross. In [Luke 9:23](#) Jesus specified that our cross needs to be taken up *daily*.

However, it is important to clarify that a "cross" is not something you bring upon yourself – suffering as the consequence of sin or as the result of making foolish decisions. A "cross" is some form of suffering that God brings along your path. It could be a major financial reversal or a serious health

condition or some form of persecution. Whatever cross God allows in your life, you must choose to take it up, which means to respond rightly to the crisis. Count it all joy when you face various kinds of trials ([James 1:2](#)). God promises His grace is sufficient to endure the trial ([2 Cor. 12:9](#)). Your responsibility is to take up the cross, not chafe at it or lean to your own understanding and try to sidestep it. Notice that “taking up” involves a decision of the will to embrace the cross – again, the realm of the soul. It does not come natural to us. We must choose to take it up.

Are you actively seeking by the power of the Holy Spirit to lose your soul now? It means letting go of that which your soul craves, the pleasures of life, the high opinion of self. It means choosing to suffer willingly for Jesus, rejoicing in your crosses. If you will deny self and take up your cross in order to follow Him, your soul will be lost now, but gained at the Judgment Seat. You will receive the true object of your heart’s affection: Jesus in all His glory.

To lose one’s soul now is far better than losing it at the Judgment Seat. Those who lose their soul at the Judgment Seat will surely regret it, no doubt to the extent of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth (consciously regretting). Better to lose now and save later.