

# Gaining or Losing?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we're going to turn back for a time to look at a reading in Mark chapter 8. Before we come to read some verses there, though, just take these words of Psalm 19, as we've just read them with us into this passage as well. Psalm 19 speaks there about God's law, the Word of God that's perfect, converts the soul in sin that lies. It speaks about how precious the Word of God is.

It says, they more than gold, yea, much fine gold to be desired are. That's how precious the Word of God should be. And the Word of God, as it says there in verse 11, warns us of how we should live, and that there's a great reward for those who keep God's Word. So there's the distinctions in that Psalm that we're going to be looking at this evening as well, of what's precious to us, what is the most important thing to us, what is our heart deciding? Is it the things of this world, or is it the things of God, the Word of God? And we see that as we come into Mark chapter 8, and we're going to look at verse 34 to 38 together this evening, where Jesus is here with disciples and a crowd with them. And he said, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would 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 life or his soul, as other translations put it? What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life or his soul? When you hear the phrase, it could be you, it's a phrase that we've maybe become familiar with. You hear it on your television screens very often, I'm sure. It could be you. There's that sense of putting something in front of you, putting a desire, putting a temptation in front of you, because it comes from the lottery. It's a phrase that the lottery has. It could be you. You could be the one to win all these millions of pounds that will completely transform your life. And it sort of seeks to fill people with that hope, that expectation, that anticipation that this life change is going to come to them. And it does happen. It happens on a fairly regular basis, sadly, in the sense of people winning large sums of money. Not too long ago, there was a couple who won 184 million pounds, a life-changing experience. But there was another couple who once thought they had won the jackpot, thought they had won the millions of pounds that was there. They had picked the right numbers. They had watched them come through. They had looked at what they thought was their ticket. They had all the six numbers. They were right. But they hadn't checked the account that was paying for the ticket to be put in to the draw.

It didn't have enough money, so it never went in. They didn't win. They lost out when they thought for a moment this life-changing experience was coming their way, they lost out what might have been for them.

And that's the kind of world in which we live, where these things are the important things that are put before us. But to think you've won and find out you have nothing. But the phrase, it could be you, could be applied to this passage that we're looking at this evening as well, because this could be you. In what sense? Well, when you look at these words, for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? It could be you. It could be you that ends up in this situation where you may gain everything that this world has to offer. But you forfeit your life. You forfeit your soul.

[ 4 : 25 ] And so what difference does that make to you this evening? Does it make any difference when you think of what are my priorities? What are my desires in this world? What should be really important to me this evening? Ask yourself just now, what is the most precious thing that you have in this world?

What is the most precious thing you have in your belonging in this world? You could maybe answer in different ways. You maybe look around and it's a person. They are the most precious thing to you in this world. A partner, a child, someone who's precious to you. It could be a material thing. It could be wealth. Whatever it is, there are many different things that we can think, these things are precious to me. But what is the most precious thing that you have in this world? And we all have it.

It's what Jesus is speaking about here. A soul. A precious soul. Something that God has given to us all. That is our life.

That is our being. And that is what has eternity ahead of it. The soul. And where will it be? Where will you find your soul when that day comes? And that's what Jesus is driving home to us here.

There is a difference. There's a distinction between finding that life in him and finding life in the things that this world offers.

What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul. Our soul should be the most precious thing that we see that we have. And when you look at what Jesus is talking about here and the setting of when he's talking about it, you realize how important he saw the soul of each one.

Here he has just spoken about what he is going to do for his people. In verse 31, he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, the scribes, and be killed and after three days rise. Again, he was speaking plainly as it says to them. He must suffer.

[ 6 : 52 ] He must die for their sins, but he will rise again. But who is that going to be precious to? Who is it going to be important for? Not those who seek to gain the things of this world, but those who seek to see how precious our soul is. And our soul is only safe with the Lord Jesus. And so he is saying to them here, this needs to be your priority. And he's warning us this evening too, this needs to be your priority.

But is it? Is your soul your priority this evening? Or are you still, as we're chasing after the things of this world, trying to find your way in this world first? Sort everything out before you come to Jesus? What profit is it if you gain everything but lose your soul? And we're reminded time and time again that age is no barrier. Age is no restriction when it comes to when our soul will be called home, when our soul will be required from us. And so today there is that urgency of your soul being right with the Lord. And Jesus here gives us instruction as to how we see how precious our soul is and what we can do in order to see where our soul finds that life in its fullness. Because the reality of life without Christ is we lose everything is we lose everything. And there is that phrase, it could be you. But it could be you who loses your soul, or it could be you who gains life in the Lord Jesus. And how do we come to know Christ in this precious way? Well, Jesus then goes on to speak about that in verse 38.

Sorry, verse 35 on it. For whoever would 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 life? For what can a man give in return for his life? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of when he comes in his glory. How can we find ourselves right with Christ at that point? Well, it's when you go back to verse 34. If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. There is that question put before us. How can we be right? Well, if anyone would come after Jesus, these are the things that they must do. We know that only Jesus can save. And this is where we find that clash, if you like, between the sovereignty of

God. Only God can save. And yet we have a decision, the freedom of our will. And here he's telling us, this is what you are to do. He can save, but you are to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow him. And so we're going to look at these three things, the denying, there's a desire, and there's a decision. The denying, the desire, and a decision. And the first thing we see is the denying. Jesus says we are to follow him, but there's a cost. If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. So there's a denying there. But what does it mean?

[ 10 : 49 ] Deny himself and take up his cross. What does he mean there? Well, they are both really connected. Denying yourself and taking up the cross, they are both connected. And they are all what lead us to that relationship with the Lord Jesus, where everything else is put to a side. To deny himself means to completely disown, to separate for someone. And it's the same word interestingly used when Peter denies the Lord Jesus. He denies him three times. He separates himself from Jesus. He takes himself away.

I do not know him. That is the seriousness of his denial. But here it's almost like the reversal. We deny ourselves, deny himself. So instead of denying Christ, having nothing to do with him, we're denying ourselves so that what we want is not the important thing. But our lives are turned completely towards Jesus. Too often we think of people practicing self-denial. Maybe for a time.

Fasting, for example. It's not a bad thing to do, to fast from time to time. But is it really denying ourselves in that sense? Lent is another time where people will go through a period of denying themselves certain things. But these are only for a short time. The denying ourselves here means an ongoing nature to it, day after day after day. It's much more intense, much more important. It means I'm not going to do what I want. I'm not just going to lean on my own understanding or on my own power.

As somebody once put it, when I truly deny myself, I have no will but his will. I have no plans but his plans. I have no wants but what he wants for me. When I deny myself, I give up all my rights and I relinquish all control of my life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Is that the way you are living tonight? denying yourself? Not wanting your will but his in your life. Not wanting your plans to prosper but his plans to prosper. Who is the most important person in this relationship? Is it you or is it Christ? [13:41] Christ just added in from time to time on a Sunday, on a prayer meeting, on an occasion when you have a need, but other times it's going to be your own way, your own plans, your own wills?

It's not like that. Jesus says he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow him. So do you live this out in your life? Because we live in a world where it's the very opposite that is true.

Where self is the most important thing. Self is the key for so many in society and even sadly it comes into some forms of religion as well. Where it's about us, how we feel and what we do. Just think of social media and how that plays out in our lives today and what people see as important. How many likes, how many followers, how many clicks. It's about our status. Self being promoted and not put down.

Not the attitude of John the Baptist who said, I must decrease and he must increase. That is what self-denial is like. Deny himself. Look to Jesus and him only.

[15:12] Because in Jesus only. We have everything that we need. We can do nothing without him. And so Jesus is calling on his people here to claim him for himself.

For ourselves. To deny ourselves and look to him. As our Lord and as our Saviour. That he would have control over every aspect of our lives.

Does he? Is he the most important thing? That relationship with him. Deny himself. Take up his cross.

Again, you think of what does take up his cross mean? The people Jesus that he's speaking to here, they've been very clear on the people who would carry their crosses.

This is before Jesus carried his own cross. But there would have been a familiar scene. Taking up the cross would have been making their way to their final day.

[16:19] Their final moment. Their moment of death. It's like seeing everything else has gone. Everything else has been taken away. All they have is this lying ahead of them.

Take up your cross. And so Jesus is making it that start to his followers. You are to die to the world and live to me.

Even though it looks like you are dying in so many ways. The way he speaks about it here. For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it.

There's that sense of dying to self and living to Christ. So to follow him we must deny ourselves and take up our cross.

Is that you this evening? Are you denying yourself for Christ? Or are you denying Christ for yourself?

[17:24] Well the second thing we see here is the desire. The desire in verse 36. Jesus asks this powerful question.

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Lose his soul? Have you ever thought of that in all its reality?

Maybe you've thought about what does it mean to gain the world? When you hear about others who have won millions on the lottery. There's always that sense of what if it was me?

What would I do? Whether when you hear someone getting a well paid job. Or coming into money. Or whatever it is. You hear someone who has gained, profited in this world.

And it comes to your mind. What would I do with that? How would that change my life? How much better would my life be?

[ 18 : 28 ] Because we think that's going to answer our problems. And that's why Jesus is asking this question. What shall it profit a man to gain the world?

What would you do if you had everything? But imagine at the end of this experience. In all that you've had.

In all that you've done. In all that you've enjoyed. Your day of your death arrives. As it must for all of us. You have had the pleasures of this world.

But no Christ. And you find yourself. In eternity. In hell forever. What then? What then?

Would those few years. Or decades of pleasure. Living with no thought of Christ. Be worth a lost eternity? Well that's the question. That Jesus puts before you here.

[ 19 : 27 ] What does it profit a man. To gain the world. And forfeit his life. Lose his soul. And Jesus told. A story about such a man.

In the gospel of Luke chapter 16. In verse 19 to 31. Where you read. The rich man and Lazarus. The rich man doesn't even have a name. But it says that man lived his life.

In the lap of luxury. He had everything. And then he died. And he went to hell. And when he arrived there. All the money. All the pleasure. All the power that he enjoyed in life.

Were useless to him. All he desired was that someone would come. And just put a drip of water. On his tongue. His soul was lost. He had lost everything.

For a few short years. Of pleasure. Well that's the very question before us here. As Jesus asks. What shall it profit ourselves?

[ 20 : 29 ] What shall it profit you? If you gain the world. But lose your soul. What then? Where is the profit in everything?

Same as the one in Luke 12. Verse 20. Who built bigger barns. Looking for wealth. Looking for gain. But was told full.

This night your soul. Will be required of you. And what then? You've gained nothing. But you've lost everything.

And that's why Jesus. Is speaking about these things. They are so important. They are important for ourselves. Today. Tonight. What profit do you have?

If you have everything this world offers. You have everything this world. And yet lose your soul. And then Jesus. That puts another question before them.

[ 21 : 29 ] In verse 37. For what can a man give. In return for his life. Or in return for his soul. What price.

On your soul. What can you give. In return for it. Can you redeem it. Can you pay the price.

Can you save your soul. No. It's impossible for us. But then what Jesus has done.

And what he's explained to his disciples. Is that he. Has come to pay this price. In verse 31. The son of man. Must suffer. Many things.

Be rejected. Be killed. And in three days. After three days. Rise. Again. He has come. To pay that price.

[ 22 : 25 ] As the psalmist says. To redeem. A life is costly. None. Sufficient price. Can pay. We cannot do it. You cannot do it. I cannot do it.

But he can. Because he came. As a redeemer. He came. To save. And so these two questions.

In verse 36. And 37. Are direct questions. For ourselves. This evening as well. What if we lose.

Our soul. Are you concerned. What can you pay. In return. For your soul. Can you give anything. No. So what then.

Are you willing. To trade. Your eternal soul. For short term. Gain and pleasure. In this world. Are you willing. To spend eternity. In hell. For a few years.

[ 23 : 21 ] Of living. As your own God. In this world. Because. If you are lost. If you are not listening. To the word of God. That is what you are doing.

You are trading. Your most valuable. Possession. Your soul. For these things. Is it worth it?

You have everything. To lose. And it could. Be you.

A preacher called. Walter Hinson. In America. He's an Englishman. But. Was in America. America. And a year. Before he passed away. He was told.

He was ill. And he was told. He had about a year. To live. And he says. I remember. When I was told. That by my doctor. I was told.

[ 24 : 18 ] You have an illness. From which you won't recover. And he said. I walked back home. Five miles. Back to my home. In Portland. Oregon. And he said.

There I looked across. At the mountains. That I loved. And I looked at the river. Which gave me such pleasure. And I looked at the trees. That were always God's poetry. To my soul. And then. In the evening. I looked up in the great sky. And I saw where God was lighting. His lamps. As he described it. As the stars. Were appearing. And he saw all these things. And he said. I may not see you. Many more times. But mountain. I shall be alive. When you are gone. And river. I shall be alive. When you cease running. Toward the sea. And stars. I will be alive. When you have fallen. From your sockets. Into the great downpouring. [ 25 : 14 ] Of the material universe. He was saying. All of these things. Are going to pass away. But I will be alive. How? Because his soul.

Was in the care of his saviour. A soul. That would live. Forever. What profit is there. In gaining everything. And losing. Your soul. It's to come. To Jesus. To see him. As your greatest need. Who can save. Your most precious. Possession. Your soul. That you might live. In him. Well the last thing. We see here. Is that there is that sense. Of decision. There is that sense. Of decision. As we see it. In verse 38. For whoever is ashamed. Of me. And of my words. In this adulterous. And sinful generation. [ 26 : 11 ] Of him. Will the son of man. Be ashamed. When he comes. In the glory of his father. With the holy angels. So Jesus.

Jesus. Jesus. Here. He speaks. To those. Who reject. His message. And he speaks. Of this shame. Being ashamed. And it's very similar. To that sense. Of denying. What nothing. To do with him. For whoever is ashamed. Of me. And of my words. In this adulterous. And sinful generation. Of him. Will the son of man. Be ashamed. It's really quite. Frightening. What these words. Have to say to us. Ashamed. Here is speaking. About an unwillingness. An unwillingness. To acknowledge. Seeing more of a. Shame. Or a ridicule. Towards someone. And that's what. Those who do not. [ 27 : 09 ] Accept Christ. Are doing. Ashamed. Often. Ridiculing. Disapproving. And it refers. To those.

Who will not come. To Jesus. Who want nothing. To do with Jesus. Who will not. Follow him. Who will not. Deny themselves. And take up. Their cross. And follow him. And so. There's a price. To pay. When you do that. He will be ashamed. When the son of man. Comes. In his glory. With the father. And with. The angels. Which side. Do you want. To be on. When you hear. Testimonies given. It's often the case. That when the spirit. Starts working. And striving. In your heart. You're torn. In two different directions. You've been enjoying. Maybe the things. Of this world. Been enjoying. [ 28 : 05 ] This life. But then you start. To feel that. Draw. Of the Lord. Convicting you. Of your sin. The word. Speaking to you. But there's still.

This conflict. Going on. Of being torn. In two different. Directions. But what you want. To find yourself. Is on the side. Of Christ. Because. This world. Offers nothing. At the end. Of the day. You can gain. The world. But lose. Your soul. Or you can turn. Your back. On the world. And give your soul. To Christ. There are so many. Who are unwilling. To do so. Who are just. Ashamed. Of Jesus. And his word. Who mock it. Who ridicule it. Who turn away. From it. Is that you? Is that where you want. [ 29 : 04 ] To be? When he will come. And he will turn his back. On you. One of the most fearful. Words. You hear. Are in Matthew 7.

Verse 21. And 22. Where Jesus says. I never. Knew you. I never. Knew you. That's when it comes. On the day of judgment. When we must all appear. Before him. And we can try and say. Well I've done this. I've done that. But Jesus might say to you. I never. Knew you. Because you were ashamed. Of me. You ridiculed me. You mocked me. All of these things. Are there any more. Frightening words. That you can hear. Than Jesus saying. I never.



