

MESSAGE #3 - Spiritual preparation for the Lord's return – Daily Discipleship.

- Discipleship basic to our preparation for the Lord's return. Discipleship is linked to reward (recompense) at the Judgment Seat of Christ. (Matt. 16:24-27; 19:27-29; Mk. 10:28-30; Lk. 9:23-26; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Cor. 5:9-10).
- Always distinguish two great principles in the Bible. 1) Eternal salvation by grace through faith, apart from works. 2) Reward (recompense) is according to our works. Recompense is decided by Christ at His Judgment Seat.
- Eternal salvation is free. Discipleship requires us to pay a cost: self-denial and obedience. See Charlie Bing's chart. We must be willing to pay a price, to give up everything, in order to fully carry out the call of discipleship (Lk. 14:25-33).
- Two key principles of discipleship only will be covered this weekend due to lack of time.
 - 1) Self-denial and following the Lord in obedience. Matt. 16:24-27; 19:27-29; Lk. 9:23-26; 14:26-33; 18:28-30; Jn. 12:24-25. (Message 3)
 - 2) Remaining in God's word: Jn. 8:31-32. (Jn. 17:17; Jas. 1:21-22) (see Message 4)
- **Matt. 16:24-27.** Jesus' call to discipleship.
 - **Self-denial** is our voluntary agreement to stand against the desires of our soul. This is the first step to following God's will. We must take this step in order to discern God's will. (Message 4 will show us how to do this by faith and in God's power, not by our own will power.)
 - **Take up your cross.** This represents acceptance of God's will for us, just as Jesus denied his own choice in order to take up the cross, God's will for Him. "If possible remove this cup from Me, yet not My will, but Your will be done."
 - **Follow Me:** This is the follow through in obedience to God's will which is shown to us.
- **Matt. 16:25.** To "save his life." Life = soul, *psyche*. Our soul here means the self-life of the old man. To preserve our soul means to keep our natural soul whole, without loss, holding onto what our soul desires and likes. . Each person has things that he or she likes and wants, and wishes to keep in fulfilled in his life (and these desires vary by the individual). These desires can go beyond what we might consider "sinful" things, like sexual immorality, outbursts of anger, factions or drunkenness. We are mistaken if we think that the only things Christians need to overcome are blatant sins like these. A huge problem is those desires we have that "match" what the world system offers. The world system, run by Satan, can occupy the believer's heart so that he does not grow fully in progressive sanctification (being increasingly set apart to God and His will). Many morally neutral things can occupy us and keep us from full sanctification (examples: sports, entertainment, leisure time activities of all sorts, financial success, educational achievements, job aspirations, hobbies, house and yard projects, technology gadgets, TV, even family ties and family enjoyments). We must recognize the danger of the

world system and its pull on our soul's desires. See Mk. 4:18-19; Lk. 8:7, 14; 1 Jn. 2:15. (Note also the "worries" of life which occupy our soul.) If we are willing to give up what pleases our soul, then we can discern the Lord's will for us at any particular moment of time, and sense what He allows or calls us to actually give up. Following the Lord is not a matter of rules or absolutes (in non-moral matters), but involves sensitivity to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit desires to lead us onward in progressive sanctification – setting us increasingly apart to God, to His will, and to His service.

- **Matt. 16:26** "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" The possibility of our soul finding its utmost satisfaction in this world – gaining it all! – is calculated as a loss, if we must forfeit the full satisfaction of our soul in the next age. This forfeiture will be the loss of potential positive reward from Christ (at His Judgement Seat). Christ's positive reward for overcomers is being approved to reign with Christ, and it will also include the unconceivable enjoyment of the fullness of eternal life in the age to come (the millennium). Mk. 10:28-30; Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12. The next verse, Matt. 16:27, shows that our response to discipleship in these verses is linked to His return and His reward (recompense). The choice of Esau was to enjoy the pleasures of this life at the expense of forfeiting his birthright. See the handout on *The Birthright* to see how this worldly choice applies to loss for the believer in the age to come.

- **Lk. 14:25-33.** Self-denial is a willingness to die to our natural loves and entanglements that "grab our soul." Jesus is calling us to pay a full price in order to be His disciple and follow Him. We can do this by His grace (more in message 4). Note how the conditions for reward in the next age in Matt. 19:27-29 and Mk. 10:28-30 are similar to the conditions of discipleship in Lk. 14:26-27