

Murder Self and Live for God, Part 2

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Well, we have had so much great stuff already this morning, but we're not skipping the sermon. If you have your Bibles, turn to Luke 9. [We are going to work through] part 2 of "Murder Self and Live for God."

Charles Spurgeon, in his sermon delivered on October 20, 1872, entitled "Saints Blessing the Lord," said this:

Remember, beloved, this one telling argument, that Jesus Christ will have of us all or nothing; and he will have us sincere, earnest and intense, or he will not have us at all.

I see the Master at the table, and his servants place before him various meats, that he may eat and be satisfied. He tastes the cold meats, and he eats of the bread hot from the oven, but as for tepid drinks and half-baked cakes he puts them away with disgust.

He will look on you who are cold, and are mourning your coldness, and he will give you heat; and he will look on you who are hot and serve him with the best you have; but of the middle-man, the lukewarm, he saith, "I will spue thee out of my mouth."

Jesus cannot bear lukewarm religion; he is sick of it. The religion of this present time is much of it rather nauseating to the Savior than acceptable to him. If Baal be God, serve him; but if God be God, serve him truly.

Now, you might be thinking to yourself, “Man, Spurgeon was kind of fanatical! Where did he get such extreme views of Christianity? How did it ever enter his head that being a Christian is all or nothing? I mean, who could live up to that? Besides, Christ is loving and compassionate, and full of forgiveness. Who says being a Christian is a call to such extreme fanaticism?” The answers to those questions are, for one, [in] the text before us. Spurgeon didn’t pluck these ideas out of the air in just some sort of imaginary thought [process] that this might be a good thing. He got it from the Word of God. We’re going to see that this morning as we look at Luke 9:23–27 some more.

Follow along as I read Luke 9 starting in verse 23. Jesus says this:

And He was saying to them all, ”If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.” [Luke 9:23–27]

This is the text we started to explore last week. We’re going to explore it some more this week, and some more in a week or two or three to come.

Last week, I pointed out that Jesus presents us here with four necessary truths that every Christian needs to know and needs to experience if he’s

going to get to heaven and have the hope of getting there, of being saved. Last week, we looked at the first of these necessary truths. We learned from Jesus in verse 23 that those who wish to be Jesus' followers—His disciples, Christians—must be characterized by three things. The first thing is [that] they must deny themselves, which means they must say “no” to their sinful selves, their sinful desires, their lustful thoughts, their desire to live their own lives in the way that they want to live their own lives. And, instead, [they must] say “yes” to Jesus in every area. Second, we learned that they must take up their own crosses, which means that every Christian must be willing to give his life in sacrifice to Christ, in obedience to God's will. [Christians] need to do this, realizing that, in following Christ, there is a sacrifice—often a painful sacrifice—and most certainly persecution to one degree or another that they will have to suffer in being people who take up their crosses. Third and finally, we learned that we must follow Christ, which means that we must obey Christ, submit to Christ, walk according to the Word of God and the example that Christ left us to follow after in the Bible.

When all three of these aspects are combined—denying self, taking up your cross, and following Jesus—they all get us [to] our first point: the death you must die. And so, this morning, we are now getting to point 2.

Dying to self is a hard call. I think everybody knows that. You know, when you start talking about denying self, taking up your cross, and following Jesus, everybody knows this is a hard thing. In fact, apart from the grace of God, it's an impossible thing. You *can't* do it on your own. We are so drenched in sin [that] our first inclination is to trust [ourselves] because we're closest. You can talk to yourself, “Self, what do you think we should do?” and immediately, self usually gives you an answer.

I've talked to people who are struggling with some sort of sin, and I say, “So, what are you doing about this?”

It's interesting to hear their answers. I often get answers like this: “Well, I've tried saying ‘no’ like the drug program—‘Just Say No.’ That doesn't work. I've tried distracting myself and doing other things, but that doesn't

work either. I bought a couple books at the Christian bookstore from people who are supposed to be Christians. I read them, [and] I tried to do what they said. That didn't work either. So then I got on the Internet and searched around, found some articles, got more educated [and] tried to apply that [knowledge to my sin]. That didn't work either. Here I am, last straw, pastor."

Then I like to ask, "Well, have you sought any other counsel before coming to me?"

They usually say, "Yeah, I talked to some friends at work who kind of struggled with some similar stuff, and to another friend of mine. But, you know, they really didn't tell me anything that I haven't already read and figured out that didn't work."

That, people, that little scenario [that] I just gave you, is the scenario of a person who has decided to trust himself, not Christ. It is a valiant effort to overcome sin in his own flesh, in his own strength. Believer, fellow brother and sister in Christ, when sin comes, and you're battling a sin, there is one place you go *immediately*: to Christ. You go to the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace [see Isaiah 9:6]. You go to Him in prayer, you confess your sins, you repent of the deed, you beg Him to change you and deliver you from this sin, which you know He doesn't want you committing, [and which] you don't want to commit. He has the power to change you and you don't. Sins are only conquered by grace. You're saved by grace, and you're sanctified, or made holy, by grace, and that's it. Only God can do it. You have to use God's resources, God's way, to change, to get over the sin that is plaguing your life. Christ sits on the throne of grace, and only He can change and deliver you. So you must *run* to the Word of God, read it, study it, meditate on it, and just keep going to God in prayer.

Christ is sitting on the throne of grace and He points to you, and He says, "Do you see the Book? This is the Holy Spirit's fuel to transform your life. Arise and devour much."

Some people might say, “I’m a baby Christian and I don’t know where to look.”

Or, “I’m an old Christian who has never been faithful in studying [my] Bible. I don’t know where to find the answers. I don’t know what to do. I don’t know where to go. Where do I go? Leviticus?”

Then Christ tells you, “Go to one of My servants who will open the Book to you. Don’t go to the World Wide Web. Go to the Book. The counsel you need—My counsel, the life-changing truth—is in the Book. The Holy Spirit uses the Book to change your life so that you can live for Me. Do not run to self, the world, [the] Internet, friends—even believing friends, unless they open the Book. You’ve got to know what God’s solution is.”

Jesus knows this. He knows this and He knows it better than we know this. That is why He is going to tell us what He is going to tell us in the text today. In order to motivate us to pursue the hard but right way—the way of denying self, taking up our cross, and following Him, the way of constantly going to Jesus, asking Him for help so He can change our lives, that hard but right way—He is going to do some reasoning with us. If you are one of those people who are tangled in some sin—you know it’s a sin, you know God knows it’s a sin, you’ve tried all the programs, and all the techniques, and drugs, and whatever, [and] you’re still the same old sinner caught in the same old trap—then Jesus has some words for you this morning.

[This] brings us to our second point, which is: the understanding [that] you must possess. Jesus, having stated the extreme sacrifice that a person must make—deny yourself, take up your cross, follow Me—now anticipates the objection. This is what’s great about Jesus: He knows what people are thinking before they even say anything. He sees this crowd, [and] He knows what people are thinking. When you start telling somebody, “Man, it’s all or nothing, it’s die to self,” He knows that some people are going to be thinking to themselves, “You know, this sounds too hard. This just sounds too extreme. This sounds so far beyond what I know I could ever do. It sounds painful to live for Christ—crucifixion analogies, being persecuted for Jesus, people thinking I’m weird. You know, I just don’t think

that being a Christian is worth it.” Well, this prompts Jesus to say what He does in [Luke 9:]24, because He knows there are people out there, just like there are people out here among you, who are thinking the same thing.

The first thing He says is: “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it”—verse 24. Now, just stop there and consider Jesus’ statement. Jesus says some interesting things here. [He] says there are some who desire to save their lives. What does He mean by that? Well, is Jesus saying, “There are people out there who don’t want to die prematurely”? No. Is He saying, “There are people out there that if they’re in the street and a car is racing toward them, they actually get out of the way”? No, He’s not saying that either. He’s not saying that there are people out there who try to avoid situations that might kill them and cause them to die prematurely. He’s not talking about that. So, what *is* He talking about? Well, think about it. If denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus is what Jesus calls us to do, and [saving your life] is the antithesis of that, then this is the person who does *not* want to deny himself for Christ, does *not* want to take up his cross for Christ, and does *not* want to follow after Christ. Saving your life would be living for you and what you want, being your own god, the master of your own universe. Jesus is saying, “If you think you’re going to save your life by living for you, I have news for you, pal or pal-ette. You will lose it.”

But you say, “Well, how is that? I mean, this doesn’t seem right. How could a person save his life and lose his life if he’s saving his life?” It seems like a contradiction. Well, actually, it’s what is called a “paradox.” A paradox is an apparent self-contradiction. It’s an absurdity, but yet, in fact, [it] is true. Jesus was a master of this [technique]. This is just one such instance [of Jesus using a paradox to make a point]. Jesus is saying here that if you try to save your life for yourself, you lose your life. You might [still be thinking] to yourself, “Jack, this seems like a contradiction. This seems odd. How can you, by saving your life, lose it if you’re saving your life?” Well, there are two ways in which those who choose to save their lives for themselves lose it.

The first way relates to this life. I want you to turn to Ephesians 2. We're going to look at a few verses so we can see why those who wish to save their lives lose [them] and in what way they lose [them]. [In] Ephesians 2, Paul [is] explaining the condition of all who do not know Christ, and he's going on to explain the power of God that frees them from this problem. [Paul] says in Ephesians 2:1[-3]:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Now, is that freedom to live for yourself? Is being dead free? Is being a spiritual zombie marching in the ranks of Satan freedom, to have things your own way? Of course not. But this is what it means to save yourself.

Turn over to Titus 3. After you get through the "General Electric Popcorn," or "Go Eat Popcorn" [a memory device for Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians], [and] right after 2 Timothy, [you'll find] Titus 3. Paul, speaking to Titus, says this [in] Titus 3:3, describing the state of everyone who saves themselves: "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another."

You have to ask yourself, "So, is that what it means to be free? To save your life for self?" Yes. [It is] to be enslaved to sin. Turn back to 2 Timothy 2:24–26. Paul, speaking to Timothy in the last inspired epistle he ever wrote, said this in 2 Timothy 2:24[-26]:

The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness

correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, [(notice this phrase, here)] having been held captive by him to do his will.

Is being captive, being a pawn and slave of Satan, being held captive by Satan to do his will, not yours, saving yourself so you can live for yourself? Well, that's what the Bible says. What you must understand is this: Everyone is a slave. God has not given men the freedom to be masters of their own universe. Everybody's a slave. You're either a slave of sin and Satan, or you're a slave of righteousness and Christ. Satan and Christ rule the totality of mankind. You're being ruled by one of them right now. Right before Paul speaks of walking in the Spirit and displaying the fruit of the Spirit [see Galatians 5:18–23], he says this in Galatians 5:1, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.” You could add in there, “to live for yourself, to save your life.” He goes on to say in verse 13 of Galatians 5, “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Believers are free to serve God, worship God, glorify God. Unbelievers are not free to do that. They are slaves of sin and Satan.

“So what does all this mean?” you ask. It means this: that living to save your life so you can have things your own way is a deception from the pit of hell. Many books and movies use this exact plot. Think about it. Let me just paint the picture. We've all been there. You know, you're watching some show, and in the story, there's a person, [the hero], who has some very important business—maybe a life-threatening situation. And, in the plot, [the hero runs] into somebody who just seems to be the gift of God. The [hero] thinks, “Could this person be as wonderful as I think he is?” And so, even though [the hero is] cautious, [he] begins to trust this person more and more. And you know what? You trust [the person] right along

with [the hero]. Pretty soon, that person is trusted more and more. Then comes the climax of the book, when all of a sudden, at the most critical time, when having that person be faithful is the most important [thing], and [the hero] puts [his] life in that person's hand, you discover they're a mole, a traitor, a spy, the bad guy, the axe murderer. And, I know what you're thinking. You're thinking what I'm thinking, "Ahhh! No, no, no, no, no, no." Then [there's a] commercial and "Come back next week." I mean, this is the classic plot. You put [yourself], with all good intentions, in the care of the bad guy.

And you know what? That is exactly what everyone does who tries to save their lives for themselves. They say, "Satan, you know, you've got a lot of nice stuff in the world, and I've tasted of your pleasures. I'll tell you what, here's my life. Take it. I trust you."

He goes, "I'm trustworthy. Thank you." And then you wake up in hell because you have placed your life into the hands of the enemy. Satan convinces you that God doesn't exist, and if He does exist, He doesn't require you to [pursue] that level of fanaticism. You don't have to live *all* for Jesus, you can dabble in Jesus and dabble in the world and be fine. [Satan] convinces you, "You know, if there is a hell, you're not going there. You're way better than most people. I mean, it's not like you're Osama bin Laden." When the grim reaper of death comes, swinging his scythe to reap your soul, you close your eyes in this world, and you wake up in the lake of fire. Why? Because you have been deceived into thinking that by living for self you are saving your life.

Second, Jesus teaches us that the person who seeks to save his life [is] not only unable to do so in this life, but he's also unable to do so in the life to come. Look again at the text [in Luke 9]:24: "But whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it." Now, you might be thinking to yourself, "What does Jesus mean by this?" It's another paradoxical statement. The point that Jesus is making is a point He makes over and over again in the Gospels. It's surprising how many times this appears in one form or another. [In] John 12:25, Jesus says pretty much the identical

thing, but He lets us know what He means by “saving your life” and “losing your life.” He says this: “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it,” and then he adds the little, helpful phrase, “to life eternal.” In other words, Jesus is contrasting how we live now with what’s going to happen after we die. And so, when Jesus said, “Whoever loses his life,” in other words in this world, you set aside your own will to let Christ reign over you, then you gain your life for all eternity in heaven.

Leon Morris makes an important observation when he notes that Jesus does not say “whoever *wills* to lose his life,” but “whoever *loses* it.” It is not enough to *want* to lose your life. It’s not enough to have good intentions to lose your life. You must lose your life for Christ. It’s not an option. You *must* do it. And so, it is easy to figure out what Jesus means. To lose your life for Christ’s sake is living your life for His glory and His honor, according to His Word. It is to put all of your wants and desires in submission to the Word of God so that Christ rules your life.

This is exactly what the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 12:1. Turn there. Some of you are saying, “Well, I’ve already got it memorized.” Then think about it. It’s a common verse. It’s a good verse to memorize. It’s one of those verses we need to remind ourselves of frequently. Paul has spent eleven chapters talking about doctrine—the doctrine of salvation, how we get saved and the consequences of that. Now in chapter 12, he begins the application section where he begins to tell us what to do about the doctrine he has told us about. And he says this in the first verse: “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”

There is Christ on the throne. There you are before Him, a sinner saved by the Holy One who is on the throne. And you have your sins confessed, you’re washed clean by the blood of Christ. You can actually be in His presence. And, between you and Christ is an altar that kind of looks like a giant stone barbecue, with a big golden grate [on it], and there is a fire coming up through the grate. Jesus looks at you, and He points to [you to]

get on the altar. You go over there, hesitant at first because you're not used to crawling up on the altar and you're kind of scared of the flames. You put your hand out there, but there's no heat. You crawl up there, and like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, the flames do not even come upon you [see Daniel 3:19–27]. In fact, it's pretty nice being up there. You feel close to God; you are energized; you're motivated. You're so glad [that] you're on the altar of sacrifice. You have become a living sacrifice to Christ.

Jesus says, "Stay there until you die." After being up there a while on the altar, you have a sinful thought. As soon as you have that sinful thought, the flames start hurting, so you hop off [the altar]. Jesus says, "Confess your sins, and if you confess your sins, I am faithful and just. I will forgive you your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness so you can get back up there." So you do. You go over there, you test the fire [and] it's cool again, and you climb up.

This is what it means to be a living sacrifice, to live for Christ. Your whole life as a Christian is nothing more than jumping down, getting on, jumping down, confessing, getting on again. I mean, how many times have we done it? Every Christian knows this. It's just life. It's what it means. There's always sacrifice involved. [You must] slowly burn up for Jesus. [If] you fall into sin, the fires of conviction come upon you, [and] you begin to feel far away from God, don't run away. Confess your sins, get on the altar, and do this your whole life until you die and enter into glory. That is what it is to lose your life for Christ's sake.

Those who live for sin, and Satan, and self, who want to save their lives for themselves and their own pleasures and their own sin, they're like those people in Luke 19:14—the people in the parable of the mina, [which is] kind of like the parable of the talents. We're going to get there [to Luke 19], hopefully. But in the parable, there's a group [of people] who do not like the king, and they say this scary thing: "We do not want this man reigning over us." Do you remember those people? "We do not want this man reigning over us" [Luke 19:14] These men defy the king, and so when he

comes back, he says, “Bring those enemies before me and slay them in my presence” [9:27].

For those of you who are saving your life, I would direct your thoughts to Christ. He is now this very minute watching you. He’s reading your mind. He knows your every thought. You may be sitting there thinking to yourself, “Well, yeah, I don’t need to do this right now.” You’re trying to find an excuse. You’re like a cornered animal trying to find a way out. Well, duh, there it is! Where? It’s Jesus. *He’s* the way out. He’s the only way out. He is the way of escape. He’s the good master, He’s the benevolent lord, He is your Redeemer [see Psalm 19:14], your Savior [see Luke 2:11], your King [see John 18:37], your Advocate [see 1 John 2:1], your Mediator [see 1 Timothy 2:5]. He is the way [see John 14:6]. But you’ve been hijacked by His enemy, and [Christ is] calling you to escape, but you refuse. He commands you to repent and believe. You say “no.”

He says, “I want you to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me.”

And you say, “Sorry.”

He offers all-sufficient grace. Nope, you won’t have it. [He offers] mercy. You won’t take it. He says, “I’ll give you eternal life [see John 3:15]. I will give you ‘THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM’ [1 Corinthians 2:9]. I’ll give you all of that for just being a sinner that’s repentant, a sinner who believes in Me.”

You say, “Take it away. I do not want it. I would prefer to live for myself and save my little, vaporous, fleeting life to do what I want to do now.” What is He going to do with such a rebel? Extend more grace, more time, more mercy? Amazingly so. *Amazingly* so. Every breath you take, every moment you exist and are kept from the fires of hell, you are sucking up undeserved grace and mercy from God. Every moment. Even though you deserve to be judged by this holy God, even though you insult Him with the very life He gives you, He is right now extending mercy.

I frequently hear the foolish argument put forth by infidels of all the ages: “How could God be a loving and just God if He allows evil to exist in the world? How could I trust a God like that?” You’ve heard it. *You* are the evil! *I* am the evil! You’re crying out for your own destruction!

Others quip, “I could never love a God and serve a God who is so angry with people [that] He would cast people into hell for all eternity.” Poor soul, awake from your slumber, your intoxication. Jesus came to save sinners [see Luke 19:10], not [to] damn sinners. He came that men might “have life, and have it abundantly” [John 10:10]. *Men* are the ones who choose hell for themselves. *Christ* is the one who offers salvation. Let’s get it right.

Let’s just say you’re caught speeding by the police. You look in your rearview mirror and you see the lights flashing. You just ignore them. All of a sudden, that little siren goes on, “Woo-oo, woo-oo,” and then you think, “I’m tromping on it.” So you blast off down the road. You run away from [the policeman], and in your flight you careen off of different cars, and kill mailboxes, and destroy property. You come around a corner, there’s a pedestrian there, [and] you just plow into [him]. [He] bumps off your hood and flies over the top of your car and lies dead in the street. And so, [the police are] chasing you through the [streets], they get the helicopters out, they get all the police cars, they corner you and force you to stop. All the policemen get out their guns, a whole squad of them.

They say, “Get out of the car!”

You roll down your window, and say, “No! Come get me out!” So they do. They drag you out of the car, they cuff you, they put you into the police car. You’re struggling the whole time to get free. You curse at them, you verbally insult them. They throw you in jail. While you’re in jail, every time they come to help you, give you some water, give you some food, you scream at them, you curse at them, you spit on them. Finally, they take you before the judge. You refuse to submit to the rules of the court. Instead, you fight the whole way to court. You won’t listen to the judge, you won’t listen to the lawyer [who] has been appointed to represent you. Instead, you despise authority, you revile the judge, you tell him, “I hate the court. I

hate the law and I hate you!” You tell the judge you’re glad you sped away, you’re glad you ruined the property, you’re glad you killed that person, you’re glad you resisted the police, and you’re glad that you aren’t going to listen to anything he has to say because you just want to live for yourself and you want to do what you want to do and that’s it.

Now, do you suppose that the judge is going to be lenient with such a villainous wretch? You know the answer to that question. The gavel will come down, and the death sentence [will be] placed upon [that wretch]. If God could only get you to see that all of us are villainous wretches compared to the infinite, holy God. We all deserve to have the death sentence brought down on us. We have asked for it. We have begged for it. Every time we have gone our own way like sheep and strayed, we have begged God to give us hell. So, don’t ever accuse God of being unkind when His offer to you is eternal life, not hell. It is insanity to live for yourself. That’s what Jesus is teaching us here. It’s wrong. It’s insane. It’s not logical; it’s not practical. It’s not good for this life; it’s not even good for the life to come. But some people just can’t bring themselves to believe that living for Christ is the wisest thing to do.

And you know what? I would encourage you to look at Christians around you who really love the Lord, who are reading their Bibles, who are studying, who are serving, who are giving, who are growing in the Lord. Ask yourself this question: “Am I more happy than they are? Do I have as much peace as they have? Do I have as much joy as they have? Is my marriage as blessed as theirs? Do I have as much contentment? Do I have such a hope for the future as they do?” And the answer is no, you don’t. So why is saving your life for self so superior [to] living for Christ? It’s not. That’s Jesus’ point.

[Do] you want to see how much your Savior loves you? Look at [Luke 9:]25. You know, Jesus could have just said, “Listen, I want you to take up your cross and follow Me, period.” But that’s not what He’s doing. He tries to reason with people in the crowd who are still having problems. He says this in verse 25 of Luke 9, “For what is a man profited if he gains the

whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?” Or, as Matthew and Mark have it, “his soul,” that is, the eternal part, the real you, the part that will live on forever and ever. There are so many people who try to accumulate wealth in this life, who want to store up and buy things, and accumulate things, and get more money, and more possessions, and buildings, and cars, and plasma TVs, and whatever—just more, more, more.

Don’t get me wrong here. God doesn’t want everybody to have a vow of poverty. God doesn’t want you to live in destitution. But listen, He wants you to use all that He gives you, whether it’s a small amount or much, in submission to His Word. [That] includes enjoying some of it, yes. In Haggai 2:8, God says, “The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,” declares the LORD of hosts.” In Leviticus 25:23, He says, “The land is Mine.” In Exodus 19:5, “all the earth is Mine.” In Job 41:11, God says, “Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.” In Psalm 50:10–12, God says:

For every beast of the forest is Mine,
The cattle on a thousand hills.
I know every bird of the mountains,
And everything that moves in the field is Mine.
If I were hungry I would not tell you,
For the world is Mine, and all it contains.

Do you know what that means? That means [that] everything you have belongs to God. And you say, “Well, I want you to know, I’ve worked hard for what I have.” Deuteronomy 8:18, God says, “I am the one who gives you the power to make wealth.” Paul, in 1 Corinthians 4:7 says, “For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” Jesus says in Luke 12:48, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.” Having an abundance, listen to me, is not a reason to boast and

think you're superior, or better than, or worth more. Having an abundance is having an abundance of accountability and responsibility to God. Think of that the next time you wish you could win the lotto. You're just asking for *huge* accountability and responsibility before the Lord God Almighty.

So many are [like] those Solomon speaks of in Ecclesiastes 2:18–19, where he says:

Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity.

You amass all this fortune, you amass all these houses, all these cars, all these things. You die, leave them to some fool who squanders it. That's smart. Not! No, you now, while you have control of it, now you use it, now for God's glory. Because I'm telling you this: everybody dies and stands before the Lord *penniless*. Everyone.

Do you see Jesus' love here? He doesn't have to reason with us. He doesn't have to do it, but He does. He's reasoning with us. He's pleading with us. He's trying to get us to come to the correct conclusion that even if you could get the entire world for yourself, you'd still leave it all behind.

Listen, I present you with a choice. Actually, let's bring a little five year old up, just in case. We've got the five year old, [and] we've got you. I say, "OK, here's the choice. I've got this red-hot poker here, glowing in the fire. Now, here's the choice: you either get a tap on the arm [with the poker] and then I'll give you anything you want [for] as long as you live; or, I'll give you everything you want for one second, and then I get to torture you for as long as you live. What do you think?" If you don't know the answer to that, then you ask the five year old. And yet, this is *exactly* what the person is doing who is living his life for himself.

He's saying, "I want my drop of pleasure for a sea of wrath."

The false theory of evolution and the world teach that we're just animals. There's no right, there's no wrong. God doesn't exist. Christianity [was] invented by people who needed a mental crutch, and it's just perpetuated by needy idiots. But there *is* a God. There's a God who created everything in six literal, twenty-four-hour periods. There is a Savior who is God in human flesh. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfect life, He died on the cross, He rose from the dead so that He could offer the free gift of salvation, purchased by His blood, to villainous wretches and [to] them only. He commands all men to repent and believe in Him. Repentance is the negative aspect of faith. [It] involves turning away from sin, and turning toward Jesus. Faith is the positive aspect of repentance. [It] believes in, trusts in, relies upon Jesus and what He did to save you. Faith grabs hold of Christ. Repentance lets go of sin.

If you are sitting out there right now, and you're thinking, "Ah, I'm living for self." Now is the time to side with the King. Now is the time to make the right choice, and that choice is always Jesus, for the way may be hard and narrow for a short time, but it gets really good for all eternity. Don't be deluded into thinking you can save your life by doing your own thing. You will not save it. You will be playing into the hands of the enemy, and you will take your years and give them to the cruel one who in the end will betray you. And then, you will enter into judgment.

"What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his eternal soul?" [see Luke 9:25]. Nothing. So I leave you here with this one thing. And that is: Leave here deciding to live for Christ because that's what God commands you to do. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You. We thank You that Jesus is so kind to us. He could have just said, "Follow Me," but He didn't. He is so very careful to reason with us, to anticipate our objections, to answer the need that we have to understand and know why. And, Father, I pray that if there is anybody here who has never repented of his or her sin, who has never made a commitment to receive Him as his or her Savior, to follow Him, to take up his or her own

cross and live for His glory, I pray that he or she would do that right now. That You would not let him or her escape, but by Your mercy, You would conquer his or her stubborn will. For the rest of us who know You, Father, I pray that we would marvel at Your grace, and Your kindness, and Your love, which tell us what it means to be Your follower, and the grace You give us to live like You want us to live. May we constantly be on the altar as living sacrifices for You. And, Father, we pray all of this in Christ's name, knowing it's His will, Amen.

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