

LIVING IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

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Text: Mark 8:34-38

■ Billy Graham wrote in *Decision* magazine, “I find that I can preach on any subject other than the cross, and it does not seem as offensive to people as the cross does. I can preach on doing good works, on social improvement, on all kinds of things, and people will applaud me. But when I preach on the cross and the blood of Christ, there is an offense.

The offense of the cross arises chiefly from the fact that the cross condemns every other way of salvation ‘There is only one way,’ said Jesus, ‘one road, one gate to the kingdom; and that is the way of the cross.’”¹

The message of there being only “one way” to God, and that through Jesus Christ, has never appeared more repugnant and out dated than it is in our society today. I do not know all the reason for this but I do see the *results*.

In spite of all that we may hear, in what many are calling a “postmodern” society, I still believe that the message is still as powerful and compelling as it has ever been. Look with me at the characteristics of the message of the cross.

I. THE CROSS CALLS US TO SELF-DENIAL (v. 34).

A. The self-denial Christ spoke of is the bedrock of discipleship.

When Jesus speaks of self-denial, he is not merely speaking of denying oneself a pleasure or comfort in life; on the contrary, it goes much deeper than that. Jesus is telling us that we can no longer be the center of our lives.

B. The self-denial Christ spoke of leads us to follow Christ to .

■ Martin Luther, “A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing.”

II. THE CROSS CALLS US TO UNDERSTAND THE REALITY OF ETERNITY (v. 35).

A. If we love our lives more than Christ then we have no hope of salvation.

The idea here is that, if we were threatened with death unless we denied Christ, and we denied Christ to save our lives, we lose our hope of eternal life.

B. If we love Christ more than our lives then we have the assurance of salvation.

The other side of this verse teaches us that following Christ without reservation will lead us to eternal life.

III. THE CROSS CALLS US REALIZE THE VALUE OF OUR SOULS (v. 36-37).

A. Jesus explains that our souls are of more value than the entire world (v. 36).

We live in a society in which, as someone said, “We know the cost of everything and the value of nothing.”

B. Jesus then asks us consider what we can exchange for something that is priceless (v. 37).

■ In his book, *Living Above The Level of Mediocrity*, Charles Swindoll writes, “The world system is committed to at least four major objectives, which I can summarize in four words: fortune, fame, power, pleasure. First and foremost: Fortune, money. The world system is driven by money; it feeds on materialism. Second: Fame. That is another word for popularity. Fame is the longing to be known, to be somebody in someone else's eyes. Third: Power. This is having influence, maintaining control over individuals or groups or companies or whatever. It is the desire to manipulate and maneuver others to do something for one's own benefit. Fourth: Pleasure. At its basic level, pleasure has to do with fulfilling one's sensual desires. It's the same mindset that's behind the slogan: "If it feels good, do it."

--Charles Swindoll, *Living Above the Level of Mediocrity*, p.219.

Fortune, fame, power and pleasure. Are those really the things a person should attempt to exchange for their souls?

IV. THE CROSS CALLS US TO STAND WITH CHRIST (v. 38).

A. We must NOT stand on the side of the world, its system, and its values.

In I Corinthians 1:17 & 18 and 29 Paul writes, “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many

were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him." NIV

B. If we are to stand before God at the judgement with confidence, we must stand for Christ now.

At the close of life, the question will not be,

"How much have you gotten?" but "How much have you given?"

Not "How much have you won?" but "How much have you done?"

Not "How much have you saved?" but "How much have you sacrificed?"

It will be "How much have you loved and served," not "How much were you honored?"

-- Nathan C. Schaeffer.

CONCLUSION

“A young couple, fresh in the ministry, sat at their piano and composed the melody and words to this well-known and loved invitational hymn, ‘Room at the Cross.’

The husband, Ira Stanphill, went on to write many gospel songs; but, the bride who sat next to him that day, Zelma—herself a preacher’s daughter—soon began frequenting nightclubs. Five years after leaving Ira, driving with her manager after a late nightclub singing engagement, she was killed in an auto accident.

We don’t know if, in her dying moments, she made it back to the Cross, the place ‘where there’s still room for one.’ From all appearances, she stayed too long in the wrong location.”
(Wood, 179)

Her life and death stands as one more reminder of why we should always live in the shadow of the cross. Why not make the commitment today to live continually in the shadow of the cross and only follow Jesus Christ?

References

1Billy Graham in Decision magazine, Vol. 39., No. 4, April 1998. Minneapolis, Minnesota

Wood, George O. (1999). *A Psalm in your heart Vol. 2*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House.