

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 9- Luke 9:23-26

173- Saving Your Life by Losing It

August 12, 2012

Luke 9:23-26

23 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.

24 "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.

25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

26 "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.*

To the Glory of God

Now I have done my best to not to hurry through what is basically a simple and straightforward Passage. This is my sixth Sermon on this single Passage and the reason why I am taking so long in these 4 seemingly simple verses is because they represent the very heart and core of the Biblical Gospel that is so under attack in our day. There are hardly any leaders in the modern Church who are bringing out what Jesus brings out here in any of their evangelistic efforts and most try to hide or compromise or disguise most of what Jesus teaches here. These sermons are my attempt at correcting that problem.

To be honest with you- I could stay in this Passage for months and months and months- going deeper and deeper into everything that is both explicit or implicit in this radical Teaching of our Lord because it is just that important to our walk with God.

So when you ask about what Jesus taught and what part of His

Teaching was the most central and the most significant- you will find it right here in these four verses. And yet these are the very verses that the modern church has chosen to minimize and marginalize and to outright ignore. Jesus begins this Teaching with these words in verse 23:

If anyone wishes to come after Me...

And at this point we could stop and say that whatever comes next is absolutely *essential* to the Mission and Purpose of why Jesus was born of a virgin in the first place. Jesus said that He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to call people to Himself. And so here He says, **"If anyone wishes to come after Me, here's what that person must do..."**

So here are the conditions established for the most important Message ever given on this planet and that is the Message of coming after Jesus for Salvation. So just what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus? That question is answered here. Just what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? What does it mean to come after Him? What does it mean to be a Christian? What does it mean to be saved? That is at the very heart of this Passage. Now look again at verses 24&25:

24 "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.

25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

So here's the paradox. You want to save your eternal spiritual life? You want your soul to be saved? Then you're going to have to lose your earthly and temporal life. You want to lose your eternal spiritual life? Then hold on to your earthly temporal one.

And this explains what Jesus has been saying all along. From the very beginning- Jesus has been saying that in order to be saved and go to Heaven- you have to deny yourself. That is- you have to deny and reject that there is any "good" in yourself or any "noble" thing in yourself- but that you are entirely wicked; entirely evil; entirely corrupt; entirely fallen; entirely depraved; and entirely deserving of eternal Damnation.

And you must look at everything you have ever done in your entire life and everything you have ever accomplished- all of your dreams and all of your ambitions and you must count them as nothing but what Paul said, “skubalon”- which is rotting human excrement.

When you come after Jesus- you must come humble and broken and utterly unworthy in your own estimation and you must come begging God for a Mercy that you do not deserve and a Grace that you have not earned and are not entitled to receive and you are so ashamed of your sin and so ashamed of your wickedness that you cannot even look up into Heaven- but you beat your chest in anguish over your own repulsive self and you cry out in fear and trembling,

God be merciful to me a sinner

And as you stand trembling before an Almighty God- utterly unable to do anything without His Permission and Power- you hold back nothing; you are not negotiating; you are not are not making any deals with God- you are perfectly willing to give up your entire life; you are perfectly willing to start *anything* He would desire for you to do and you are willing to stop *anything* that you think might offend Him and you are willing to sell all and follow Jesus. You are perfectly willing to abandon everything you are and everything you have for Jesus Christ and His Cause. You are perfectly willing to follow Jesus with a heavy cross on your shoulders for the rest of your natural life and you are willing to do that with joy and humility and you are perfectly willing to struggle against the lusts of your flesh by the Power of the Holy Spirit to be found humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture- all to the Glory of God.

And what I am trying to get you to understand is that this is not anything special. This is the result of having Saving Faith. All saved people do this. Every single person who is saved has these qualities and characteristics about themselves. This is *not* something for the special super duper believers- but this is something for anyone who will come after Jesus.

Listen, you do not add Jesus to some area of your life- like Sunday Mornings- and then you are free to do your own thing the rest of the week. That is *not* what Jesus is talking about here. People like that are not saved and will not go to heaven. You do not add Jesus to your

already planned out life. No, you *abandon* everything about yourself. You completely pour out to the Lord- an offering of everything you are and everything you desire. You sell all. You surrender every area of your heart and mind and life. You willingly allow the Master to drill a hole in your ear so you can forever be identified as a bondsman of the Lord Jesus Christ- someone who goes where the Master tells you to go; someone who says what the Master tells you to say; someone who marries the person that the Master picks out for you. You spend your money in accord with His will; you eat and live and wear where He commands and what He allows; you suffer according to the Master's Plan; and you live or die at His Hand. That is what Jesus is talking about here.

And literally by this "self-suicide" or complete "self-denial" that we have been talking about over the last five weeks- that God has caused you to have- God then graciously gives to you the forgiveness of all your sins and rescues from the fierce Wrath of God- but God also grants to you an eternity in Heaven with the Lord.

And the reason why more people do not preach this today is because after you get past all the rhetoric and after you get past all the slogans- most people in the modern church from the Pastor down to the pew sitter really do not believe that God is *that* Sovereign. And they do not believe that Man is that bad. And they really do not believe that sin is that sinful; and they really do not believe that Grace is that Magnificent.

God did not ordain the Cross of Christ or create the Lake of Fire because it doesn't matter if we belittle His Glory. No, the death of the Son of God and the damnation of unrepentant human beings are the loudest shouts conceivable under Heaven to give witness that God is infinitely serious; and God is infinitely Powerful; and God is infinitely Holy; and Sin is infinitely offensive; that Wrath is infinitely Just; and that Grace is infinitely precious; and the brief little lives that every one of us lives is going to end very quickly either in everlasting joy or everlasting pain. And that concept has got to grip us. And that is why when Church after Church are cancelling their services for Super Bowls and parties and camping trips and barbeques- we must remain faithful to have even more services and preach even harder.

There is a weight to the office of preacher that is fast becoming lost. And if the ministry does not bear up under this weight- where will

the world feel the weight- In Vege-ables? Clown acts? Christian Comedians? Pottery Classes?

If men are not stirred to the seriousness of eternity from the pulpit- then where will they be stirred? If we do not preach this message- then who will preach it? If we will not prophesy to the bones to live under the preaching of the Word of the Lord- who will? If we, who say that we know; we, who say that we see; we, who say that we understand; if we do not live for Christ and unveil to the world the incredible Glory of God- then who will do it?

I believe with all my heart that God planned for His Son to be crucified and for Hell to be terrible so that we would have the clearest witnesses possible to what is at stake when we preach and the way that we live.

And so you must understand that if God is not that Sovereign and if Man is not that depraved and if sin is not that wicked and if Grace is not absolutely mandatory- then Who does God think He is coming off with all these demands on my life? God ought to be thankful that I even want to believe that He exists and now He's going around trying to run my life? I don't think so.

And that is the attitude of the unregenerate. That is the way that all lost people look at this Passage. So it is a precious gift of God, dear friends, that would allow you and me to see this today as Jesus actually spoke it.

So on the other hand- if you wish to save your own earthly life. If you wish to maintain your own ideas and dreams; if you desire to continue to do what is right in your own eyes and then to bargain with God about how much you are willing to surrender and let go- you will forfeit eternity and you will forfeit the forgiveness of your sins. And you will lose your soul.

So you want your sins forgiven? You want to go to Heaven? Then Jesus Christ demands that you lose yourself. That's the only way. And it is the gift of saving faith that empowers a person who is lost and sinful to even want this in the first place.

You want to lose your soul and remain lost and spend eternity in a devil's hell and suffer punishment forever? Then here is the best way to do that- hold on to your own life. Just keep doing whatever it is your already doing as a lost person and that terrible end is guaranteed. That's the simple paradox here.

Jesus has absolutely no desire whatsoever to forgive you of all your sins simply because you have asked Jesus to “come into your heart”. He wants to own you. He has no desire to visit you on occasion or by times or whenever you feel like it. He takes no pleasure for you to do whatever it is your heart craves to do all your life long and then call on Him when you are getting arrested or when you are sick and dying. Jesus wants you to abide with Him; to live with Him; to stay with Him; to co-exist with Him- every moment of every day. And to do that- you have to divest yourself of everything else. You must know that Jesus has either purchased you lock stock and barrel or else you still belong to yourself. And if you still belong to yourself- you will die in your sins- no matter how you pray or what you say or what you supposedly accepted into your heart.

Contrary to what many in the modern Church teaches- Salvation is not about God making much of us. Salvation is not about God giving us more of this world’s goods. Salvation is not about us being given whatever material wealth we can imagine. Salvation is not about you hitting more home runs or scoring more touchdowns or escaping unpleasant things or about you walking around immune from diseases and physical deformities.

Salvation is about us having the privilege and the honor of making much of God. Salvation is about us bringing honor and glory to God. Salvation is about our radical and humble and joyful service to God and to others. Salvation is about God graciously and Mercifully forgiving you of all your sins and of imputing the spotless Righteousness of Jesus Christ to you so that you may spend eternity in Heaven- so while you are there- you may give to God the worship and the praise that God is entitled to receive.

Make no mistake about it- Jesus said to “count the cost”. If you are not willing to do this- then God is not dealing with your heart. If you are not eager to do this- then Saving Faith is not your portion. And if you find yourself trying to hide this part of the Gospel or trying to make this part less offensive or less insulting or less requiring- then you are ashamed of the Gospel and you are a hireling and a very poor representative of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now keep in mind that Jesus said this same thing over in **Matthew 10:39**. And this is pretty much the standard way that Jesus preached the Gospel. In that verse He says:

He who has found his ¹life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

Another place that I think is actually an exposition of what this means is found in **John 12:25** where Jesus also repeats this same paradox,

He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

So here we see that the reason that people desire to save their sinful earthly lives is because they love their own lives. They love the way they already are as fallen sinful people. They love themselves; they love their own desires; and their own plans and their own dreams and their own ambitions and goals. They love their own honors and their own achievements. And they really love their own way and their own will. Lost people don't just sin- no, the Bible says that they love darkness rather than light. What is wrong with lost people is not what they do- it is in who they love. Saved people love God and the things of God and lost people love sin and themselves. And nobody has to learn how to do this- nobody has to be taught to do this- it is normal and natural for all lost people to do this- it is what being fallen means. And absent a Sovereign move of God's Spirit to radically change the nature of the human being- nobody would ever love God.

So loving sin and self is the natural and normal default setting of all lost people. That is what it means to be lost and fallen. It isn't that everyone is a mass murderer- or a child molester- but that everybody who is lost loves himself and his own sinful rebellious ways.

And the way you know that is true is right here in this Passage. These people stood in line all night long to be fed by Jesus and to be healed and to be blessed by Jesus. They followed Him all over the countryside to get what they could from Him. But as soon as Jesus opened His Mouth and begins to make demands of them- they overwhelming majority of them walk away very sad. As soon as Jesus has the audacity to interrupt their plans and to impose His Will on their lives- these people walked away insulted and angry.

So Jesus is teaching here that if you do that- you will lose your own soul. If you love yourself and your sin- you will forfeit eternal life

and you will forfeit the forgiveness of your sin.

Jesus says you have to hate your life. You have to despise your own wickedness. And that is where the great Reformer, Martin Luther came up with the term, "self-hate". Nobody gets saved without hating their own sinful rebellious self.

So if you love yourself- if you're in to self-love and self-esteem and self- fulfillment and the gratifying of self- if you are all about serving God as long as He meets all your little needs and as long as He keeps you entertained and as long as He allows you to continue to indulge all your self- centered fantasies and dreams and hopes and selfish ambitions- then understand that you're going to lose your eternal soul. You're going to lose your soul into eternal hell. If you love yourself so much to hold on to your sin and your own life like the rich young ruler- then you're going to walk away from Jesus angry and sad and disillusioned and you will be cast headlong into a lake of fire.

But if God has graced you with eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to believe that you are fallen and sinful and wicked and depraved and God Sovereignly empowers you to literally hate yourself and hate your sin and hate your rebellion and hate your disobedience- then Jesus said that you're going to receive the forgiveness of your sins and eternal life in Heaven with Him.

Now there's a little phrase in verse 24 that needs to be noted.

For My sake

So it isn't enough to simply lose your life- like a soldier loses his life on the battlefield or a sick man loses his life to cancer or a woman dies in a plane crash. No, you must lose your life- for Jesus' sake. You must hate your life for Jesus' sake. You must swap your sinful life for His.

So this is not talking about philanthropic self-denial. This is not about losing your life by giving yourself up to become a priest or a nun, or emulating yourself- lighting a torch to yourself like Buddhist priests in order to show your devotion to God or strapping bombs around yourself as a devout Muslims and think you're blowing yourself into a heavenly experience with 72 black-eyed virgins who are waiting for you on green pillows. Jesus isn't talking about that kind of losing of your life.

There's only one kind of self-losing here; only one kind of self-deprecation; only one kind of self-denial and that is "For Jesus' sake." There's no value or virtue in what those other people do. When a Buddhist burns himself up or when a Muslim blows himself up- they burn themselves and blow themselves right into eternal hell. There's no credit accruing to their account no matter how religiously devout they were, no matter how extreme that level of devotion was. Those people are deceived and damned.

What Jesus is talking about here is a man completely abandoning his self-centered; sin loving; rebellious; God hating life and surrendering everything about himself to the Lord Jesus Christ and God's Will.

The phrase, "for My sake" means: "Because of Me". You do this because of Jesus- for His Glory- to His Honor and to exalt His great Name. And so the only way a lost sinner will ever save their life eternally; the only way they will spend eternity in heaven in the presence of God, in the fullness of joy- is to voluntarily and joyfully give up your whole life to Jesus Christ. And if God has graced you with saving faith- this is absolutely no problem at all. And if you have not been graced with saving faith- you will argue and bicker and debate about this your entire life and you will never do it.

Now in look again at **Luke 9:25**. There Jesus asks a really amazing question:

For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

Now this is what is called, "Biblical Hyperbole". In fact, in the category of the illustration- this is the ultimate hyperbole. Jesus is saying, *"I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, 'But I'm a good person and I have accomplished some achievements and I have gained this much in life and I really don't want to give that up- but I don't want to hurt anybody and after all- I'm not a murderer and even though I periodically do bad things- deep down I'm basically a good person and I have a good heart and God sees my heart and He understands me and so all this really doesn't apply to me.'"*

"I mean really and truly, Jesus- this is asking a lot and I don't think I'm willing to live like this yet because I still have things I'd like to

do and I've got some of my own plans. And I've got some of my own relationships that I want to protect. And, you know, I've got a lot to lose here- You're really asking a lot out of me."

So Jesus said, *"Okay, here's a hypothetical illustration, what if you owned the whole world? How about that?"* That is the ultimate hyperbole- you can't go beyond that. *"Okay, let's say you owned the whole world, you have all of its possessions, you have all of its houses and cars and clothes and lands and all of its honors and all of its prestige, and all of its powers, all of its ability to provide for you and to give to you everything that it has in terms of material benefit, in terms of accolades, in terms of prestige, prominence, power, you name it. You have all of it. What profit is it?"* What is the totality of all of its benefit to you if you die and spend eternity in hell?"

The phrase here simply means *"what benefit is it?"* or "What good is it?" Or "What use is it?" Or "What help is it"? If you lose or forfeit your eternal self- of what value is all of this? Or as **Matthew 16:26** records:

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

How much is your eternal soul worth? It's worth more than the whole world and everything in it. You're all going to be dead in just a few breaths and yet you're going to live somewhere forever. But if you love your life now- you will lose your eternal soul. If you put more value on now than then- if you put more energy and time worrying about and planning here than there- if your heart is all wrapped up in the here and now as opposed to over there- you might have something here- but all you will have over there is pain and misery.

So the common belief of mankind that whoever dies with the most stuff wins or the more you get the happier you are- is all false, isn't it? Jesus says if you possess literally the sum total of all earthly riches and lost your eternal soul- you got a real bad deal. So what Jesus is saying here is that there is no benefit at all in gaining everything you could ever possibly dream of at the cost of your own eternal soul.

Now look at **Luke 9:26** again:

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.*

So then Jesus puts the icing on the cake when He says that everybody is going to stand before the Throne of Judgment, at the final tribunal and be judged eternally on how they responded to the Gospel. So self-love will send you to hell. Self-hate will send you to heaven. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is essential- believing in the Lord Jesus Christ tied to a genuine repentance is required. And both are a mighty Sovereign Work of God the Holy Spirit. And that's why we preach the Gospel. So that people can hear it and believe it. And you will know that you believe the Gospel because you will then do what Jesus says here that anyone who comes after Him must do.

You will quickly deny that any “good” thing is in you. You will gladly endure any hardship that God either allows or causes to come into your life. And you will struggle on a daily basis by the indwelling Power of the Holy Spirit to humbly and joyfully submit yourself to the Authority of God’s Word and Will- all to the Glory of God. That is the fruit of Salvation.

So Jesus puts some teeth into the Gospel in Verse 26. Here is the Force that He uses to cause these people to believe.

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.*

Here Jesus is identifying those who will not repent and those who will not believe as those who are “ashamed”. Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words; or whoever doesn't love Me and My Gospel- because you can't separate the two statements- they are the same.

A lot of people have admired Jesus for a lot of reasons- they admire His service; His Humility; His feeding the hungry and healing the sick or for doing all kinds of kind and loving things. But admiring some of the things that Jesus did is not the same thing as loving Jesus and it is far cry from loving His Words.

The Truth about this is- if you do not love what Jesus said- then you do not love Jesus- because you cannot separate between the Words

of Jesus and the Person of Jesus. Jesus is not distinct from what He taught and what He taught is not distinct from Who He is- they are both two ways of looking at the same Person.

So most of the people who talk about how much they admire Jesus do not love Him and they actually despise what He said. And since they hate what Jesus said- they really don't admire Him at all either.

Dear friends- it is very important that we understand what love really is. Love is probably the single most used word in the English language and it is thrown around to describe all kinds of things- mostly bad things. People who shack up say they love each other; people who engage in premarital sex say that they love each other. People who do not spank their children say that they lack of parental responsibility is due to love. And on and on we go.

But true love; real love is an act of your will. A man who truly loves a woman will not dishonor her; he will never abuse her and he will not disrespect her; he will never use her for his own gratification. Love will cause a man to set boundaries around his wife and he will teach her the Truth and he will work to provide for her and he will protect her from other evil men.

Love will make a father train up his children in the way they should go; train them to fear and obey God; train them to respect other people; train them to work hard and to pay their own way in life. And love will make a father correct and discipline his children to teach them that they cannot live in this world selfishly and self-centeredly.

Love will cause a man to work for a jerk everyday so he can provide for his family because a man who will not provide for his family has denied the Christian faith and is worse than an unbelieving infidel. Love will cause people to restrain their emotions and their passions. And because we are all fallen- love will say, "no" more than it says, "yes". Love will hate evil and cling to that which is good. Love will not excuse sin but will confess it quickly. **Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; (Love) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. And true genuine godly Love never fails.** And probably one of the most defining qualities about true Biblical Love is that it always and in all cases brings forth obedience. Jesus said in **John 14:15:**

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

And again in **Luke 6:46:**

Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?

So there are a lot of people who will spout off great admiration for Jesus- but who will categorically reject what Jesus said. Those people do not love Jesus. Now they may love the man- made; non-saving and non-biblical Gospel that they have just made up or that they have been deceived by- but not the true Words of Jesus rightly understood.

So Jesus says,

If you're ashamed of...

... that is if you reject; if you despise; if you find unacceptable,

"Me and My words...

... then Jesus is going to find you unacceptable. He's going to find you shameful. He's going to find you despised. If you think this Gospel is foolish- then Jesus is going to find you foolish."

Over in **Matthew 10:32&33**- Jesus said the same thing:

32 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

33 "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

So it comes down to that. Are you willing to trust and obey the Christ of the New Testament Who is the true Christ and are you willing to believe and love the Gospel which the true Christ proclaimed? Are you not ashamed of Jesus and His Words so that you will openly and publicly confess Him and it? Or are you ashamed of Jesus and embarrassed at what He said or you think Jesus as too hard or too soft and you think that your way is a better way and you think you can improve on the Gospel and so consequently you deny Who He is and you

hide or reject or disguise or change what He said? If so- then you must know that you do not love Jesus and therefore you are not saved.

So if you are a denier; if you are ashamed of Jesus; if the preaching of the Cross is foolishness to you- then you are among the perishing. You may admire Jesus from a distance; you may say, "Lord, Lord, we did many wonderful works in Your name, we preached in Your name, we cast out demons in Your name," but on that day- you're going to hear Jesus say to you, *"Depart from Me, I never knew you, you worker of iniquity."*

So this pseudo admiration is not enough. Saying that you appreciate Christ is not enough. There are many people like that in the Gospel Records- many...many. In **Matthew 7:13&14**- Jesus said:

13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

14 "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

And again in **Matthew 7:21-23**:

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*.

22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; *DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.*'

There are many on the broadroad who have admired Jesus, but they didn't come through the narrow gate. They didn't come with a broken and a contrite heart. They didn't come crushed under the weight of their own sinfulness that they understood from the Law of God. These people have not and do not come to Jesus with a penitent attitude- embracing their true fallen condition and as desperate and helpless people- they cry out for Forgiveness and Salvation and Mercy from the only One Who can give it- the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now please turn with me to **Luke 13**. Now in **Luke 13**- down in verse 22- Jesus is passing from one city and village to another. And He's proceeding on His way and someone said to Him,

23 ... Lord, are there *just* a few who are being saved?" And He said to them,

24"Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

25"Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.'

26"Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets';

27and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; *DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS.*'

28"In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out.

These are all admirers of Jesus; followers to some extent. Yes, they fellowshiped with Him; they were with Him; they listened to Him teach in the streets. He fed them and healed them and blessed them and yet here in verse 27 Jesus says:

... I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS.'

So, the Lord says, *"If you don't know Me on My terms- I don't know you at all."* If you haven't come through the narrow gate of repentance, and deep conviction and penitence over your own sin and unless you are broken over your own wickedness and unless there is a complete abandonment of self with such desperation that you cry out for salvation and righteousness and heaven- whatever the cost might be to you personally- then you didn't come through the narrow gate and that means that you were ashamed of Jesus and His Words and you'll find Him ashamed of you and He will tell you to depart.

And when will that finally be manifest? That time of shame? He says in this verse, and it's very specific, He says, "When He comes. So when Jesus returns- all this will take place.

Now when a lost sinner dies today- they lift up their eyes immediately in hell. No resting; no stopping; no soul sleep- they lift up their eyes immediately in a devil's hell. They don't have to wait for the return of Jesus Christ for that. It is like being in prison before your trial. Somebody commits a crime and they're caught in the crime- they're put in prison where they await the final Judgment and sentencing.

So people are in hell right now- screaming and in constant torment- ye the final adjudication of their sins won't happen until Jesus returns. When will that happen? When Jesus returns in His Power and Glory.

Jesus will come back to this earth in shining glory. And He'll come back to the amazement of the unbelieving world and to be admired by all His saints. **2Thessalonians 1:7-** turn there quickly with me- says that when Jesus returns He will come in His glory and also accompanied by the glory of the Father, and the glory of the holy angels.

7 when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed.

Jesus returns in His glory and the angels come in their glory and perhaps the flaming fire speaks of the Father- Who was manifest many times in the Old Testament as a flame of fire that led Israel by night, that dwelled over the Holy Place- the fire that Moses saw and the children of Israel saw on Sinai- represented God- a shining, brilliant, magnificent, blazing fire of the Presence of God.

So Christ returns; the angels come; and the fierce glory of God is put on display. **Matthew 24** says that Jesus is coming in glory, **Matthew 25**, Jesus coming in glory even **Matthew 26** toward the end of the chapter- again has Jesus coming in glory.

And when Jesus comes back- look again at **2Thessalonians 1:8** says,

dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

He will deal out punishment to those who do not know God and then Paul goes on to describe who those people who do not know God are- it is those who do not obey the Gospel. The Bible says that those who do not obey the Gospel do not know God- they aren't saved.

So those who obey the Gospel and repent and trust in the finished Work of Jesus are those who know God. Those who are arrogant in living contrary to Jesus ' Words; those who want Jesus to bless them and heal them but do not want to obey Him- those people are simply deceived and not saved.

The Bible teaches that those who don't obey the Gospel don't know God. So there isn't any other way to be saved. And what's going to happen is Jesus is going to deal out punishment when He comes back. And what is that punishment? **2Thessalonians 1:9:**

These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

And that means they will eternally be undergoing a non-terminal destruction. "Away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." They will be sent away from God's Presence- in hell- where there will be eternal weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

So when Jesus comes in His glory to earth at the Second Coming, at the end of human history as we know it, the end of man's day- there will be the destruction of all sin and all unrepentant sinners. All of the ungodly at that moment will be stopped. And they will be sent away into eternal destruction. And I would have you take a brief look at that from **The Revelation 20**- let's go there together- **The Revelation 20**.

John looking into the future at the end of our way of living and the final event in the universe as we know it- look down at verse 11:

Revelation 20:11-15

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life;

and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

13And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds.

14Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

15And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The moment John sees this, it says, "From whose presence earth and heaven fled away." That's the uncreation of the universe. It just disappears. "And no place was found for it." It goes out of existence, the entire universe. God will uncreate it faster than He created it. God took six days to create everything and yet in a moment of time- He will uncreate it. God rolled everything out like a scroll and He will roll everything back up.

And then there are the dead, great, small...that means significant, insignificant, "They all are brought before the throne, the books were opened," simply identifying the fact that God has a perfect accounting of everything in all our lives, "And there was another book opened, the Book of Life," that's the book in which those who are saved have their names written, "The dead were judged from the things written in the books, according to their deeds." That's tragic because their deeds are evil, all men. "The sea gave up the dead in it, death and Hades gave up the dead in them." The dead literally come with a resurrected body prepared for eternal pain and they're brought before this great throne.

Every single one of them judged by their deeds because that's all they can be judged by, and judged by your deeds you're doomed. "And death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of Fire, this is the second death, the Lake of Fire, and if anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire."

My dear friends- the only way to escape the Lake of Fire is to have your name in the Book of Life. The name in the Book of Life doesn't mean you didn't have any deeds of sin, it means your deeds were covered and paid for by the sacrifice of Christ. So when Christ comes in His glory, when He comes in the glory of the Father and the holy angels, you can read about that also in Revelation 19, picturing Him

riding out of heaven, as it were, on a great white horse coming to conquer and destroy, when He comes to deal with the ungodly to destroy them, to punish them with eternal punishment, to bring them before the final tribunal for their final sentencing, it is at that point that the Lord will manifest that He is ashamed of all those who were ashamed of Him and His gospel. It's a serious, frighteningly serious reality. And understanding what is at stake, what good is it, what benefit, what profit if you gain the whole world, fulfilling all the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, if you were to get it all, what would it matter when you lose your eternal soul?

So it is far better to come through the narrow gate and that's why Jesus says, ***"If you want to be in heaven, if you want to follow Me into the Kingdom, deny yourself. Take up your cross and follow Me."***

Let's pray