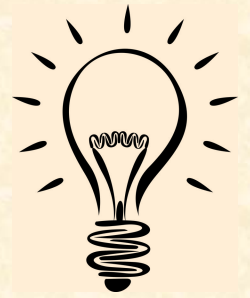


# The Christian Light

Editor - Mitch Sparks



“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

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## “WHAT SHALL A MAN GIVE IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUL” (Mark 8:37)?

*Billy Bland – Associate Director/Instructor at Memphis School of Preaching – Memphis, TN*

Man has a double nature consisting of flesh and spirit. He is more than animated life. He has a soul that continues to exist even after his body dies and returns to the earth (cf. Ecc.12:7). Paul said, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1). Paul knew he would continue to live, even after his body (earthly house) dissolved. James also explained, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26). When the spirit leaves the body, the body is dead, but the spirit continues to live.

While a person’s body and physical existence are extremely important, one’s spirit is more important. It is that part of man that continues to exist eternally even after we have put off the mortal bodies. God gave the soul its value in that He created man in God’s own image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). For one to live in fellowship with God here as well as in heaven, he must be holy, for God is holy. Man’s dilemma, however, is he is not holy due to personal sin. Consequently, God sent His only begotten son to pay the penalty of man’s actions and as a result man can be holy again. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

The value of one’s soul is seen in the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost boy (Cf. Luke 15). The shepherd left the ninety-nine sheep that were safe to search, find and return the lost sheep back to its fold. The woman who lost the one coin swept diligently until she found it. The father of the lost boy ran out to meet the lost boy who had come to his right mind and returned home. In each of these situations, there was great rejoicing when the lost was found (saved). Yet, in spite of the great importance and value of the soul, most neglect it. The Hebrews writer asked; “How shall we

escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (Heb. 2:3). Yet, man neglects his soul, and places mundane matters in front of his soul’s salvation.

Jesus asked a vital question when He asked; “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul” (Mark 8:36–37). Think about it – if it were possible for a man to “gain the whole world” yet in the process of gaining the whole world, loose “his own soul,” Jesus says he did not profit! Reader friend, your soul is worth more than the “whole world.” It is worth more than all the world’s wealth, fame and pleasures combined.

In the context of Jesus’ statement, Jesus had just announced to His disciples that He was about to suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again (cf. Mark 8:31). Peter did not wish for this to happen, so he took Jesus and began to rebuke Him. Mark records Jesus’ response to Peter’s rebuke – “But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:33–34). **It is in this context of Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection that He calls for discipleship.** He continues, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:35–38).

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What are some things for which people exchange their souls? Some trade their souls for the cares and the riches of this world. One can get “so busy” he does not have time for the Lord. He puts business and “making a living” ahead of his soul’s salvation. This seems to be a respectable sin, because he is a diligent worker, which is a good thing. However, it must not come before God. Others trade their souls for pleasures. Some of these pleasures are inherently evil while some are not sinful in themselves, but become sinful when placed in front of God and His Gospel (cf. Luke 8:14). Some can remember a time when children’s sporting events would not be played on Wednesday nights or Sundays because the players and their families would not be there. They would be attending church services. Unfortunately, this has changed. Yet God’s Word still instructs us not to forsake the assembly and to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (cf. Heb. 10:25, Mat. 6:33). Others trade their souls in trying to please others rather than God. And some allow their pride to keep them from obeying God. There is a judgment day coming and each of us faces an eternity. Let’s make sure we do not lose our souls.

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## THE FOLLY OF DISREGARDING THE WORD OF GOD!

*Brock Kendall – Harrisburg church of Christ –  
Harrisburg, AR*

The word *disregard* means “to pay no attention to or ignore”. For far too long, God’s people of the past ignored His Holy Word. At one time in the history of God’s people, He used the Babylonians to punish them. Therefore, Divine punishment is the result of living a life where the Word of God is disregarded. “So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel **had not done so**. And there was very great gladness” (Neh. 8:17). What a sad commentary on a people who God had delivered time and time again! How many times does God need to deliver us before we wake up and give Him the honor that He deserves? How many times does God need to say something before we embrace it as absolute truth? According to Biblical history, the children of Israel are not the only ones guilty of disregarding God’s Word. Evidently, some to whom the Hebrews writer wrote were “neglecting so great a salvation” (Heb. 2:3). The Greek word *ameleo* translated “neglect” means “to be careless of, make light of, to have no regard for”. The word is also used in Matthew chapter twenty-two verse five when the marriage guests “made light” of the invitation to attend the feast. One brother

noted, “It is significant that the apostle is here warning against neglecting, not rejecting God’s Word...One need not militantly take up arms against God to be lost. All one needs to do to be lost is simply neglect the salvation offered to him”. There is a real possibility for one who has obeyed the gospel to “drift away” from their salvation (Heb. 2:1). A child of the King can grow weary of doing good, a concern expressed by Paul in Galatians chapter six verse nine. As time passes by, a Christian can gradually lose the fervor of his/her devotion (Rev. 2:4). One may begin to rest on past accomplishments, and cease pressing forward (Phi. 3:13-14). The tides of modern opinion can easily induce an individual (1 Cor. 15:33). Because the Christian is bombarded by the secular humanism, false religions, and even plastic “Christianity” offered as “truth”, it can be hard to maintain the course! Such things can move one away from the simplicity and wisdom of the Master (2 Cor. 11:2-3). God, His people, and the rest of humanity **need** men like Nehemiah. One who will uphold God’s Word when it seems as if no one else will!

### CONFESS YOUR SINS

“However, You *are* just in all that has befallen us; For You have dealt faithfully, But we have done wickedly” (Neh. 9:33). Notice how forthcoming and open the people of God were in this affirmation. Their acts of disobedience had been at least equal to the punishment they received. God had the authority to destroy them. However, He did not. Instead, He extended His infinite mercy on them and preserved them as a nation. Why would God do this? The answer is that, not only is He full of mercy, but that He intended to fulfill the promises He made to Abraham. By confessing the crimes they committed against God, they admitted that they all had been guilty. What a wonderful display of confession. I submit, that for the Christian who has sinned, confession is the starting point in regaining favor with God. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). The Greek word *homologeō* translated “confession” means “to speak the same thing, to assent, agree with, to admit”. Thus, a confession is nothing more than our agreement with and acknowledgement of something that is already true. To confess our sins to God, then, is simply to say the same thing about our thoughts and actions that He already knows to be true! Confession is our agreement with God’s Divine verdict in our lives. The apostle John goes on to say that, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:10). These Scriptures make it abundantly clear that our forgiveness is partly based on our agreeing with God.

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(Quotes by Marshall Keeble)

We **must** say the same thing about our sin that God does, or the truth is not in us. For the Christian, confession is key. Without confession, one is on the pathway to eternal torment. Confession can be one of the most difficult commands to embrace, because it demands selflessness. The selfless utterances of David in Psalm fifty-one portray an amazing picture of how to accomplish true confession. The first thing David did in His prayer to God was he appealed to God's mercy and love. Thus, David sought forgiveness based upon God's "lovingkindness" and "tendermercies" (Psa. 51:1-2). Secondly, he acknowledged his sin (Psa. 51:3-4). He did not try to hide it. Notice his words, "my sin is ever before me" (Psa. 51:3). He admitted that he committed sin against God Himself. Notice his words, "Against You, You only, have I sinned" (Psa. 51:4). As the Christian confesses his sins, he should appreciate God's mercy and lovingkindness. He should acknowledge his sin without any mitigation. He should understand that all sin is ultimately a sin against God Himself! As did God's people in Nehemiah's day, God's people today should never fault God, His Word, or His messengers when their sins are exposed and condemned! May God help us to be a people of confession!

Brother Keeble knew that the Gospel was a guide, and when he spoke of that Guide, he would say:

1. "It took a light to lead the wise men to Christ – a light will lead wise men to Christ today."
2. "Don't follow your Momma. Follow Jesus. He knows how to get to Heaven. He's made the round trip. Your Momma don't know the way to Heaven – she's never been there."
3. "Jesus has given the Gospel as a signpost, directing the way. If you got the signpost, you got the light of the Gospel – no need running around in the dark. When you find the signpost, you don't get down and pray, you follow the sign."
4. "An insurance company pays only when there is a policy in effect. Not when the man says, "I think she was insured." They don't go by feeling or thinking, they must know...you'd better have the policy."
5. "A man don't get to the next town by getting out there and feeling of the highway. Why, he'd get run over. Now, don't try to go to Heaven like that. Get a roadmap. You'll get to messing around out there and feeling around, and you're going to get run over."
6. "Like cans on a shelf, you don't feel them to see what's in 'em, cause a can of lye and a can of beans feel the same. You read the label. The same is true of the Bible, you have to read the label."
7. "You have five clocks – all show a different time. What can you do? Well, we'll check Western Union. So you've got several different religions. What can you do? Check the Bible. The Bible is right."
8. "I used to sell watermelons. If I would let a customer plug the melon, he would buy it. A doctrine that won't stand "plugging" is not the Gospel of Christ. When the customer plugged the watermelon, it proved it was ripe. When we plug the Bible, that proves it is right – prove all things, then hold fast to that which is good."

By: Willie Cato



**From the Editor:** If you or the congregation where you attend would like to receive this publication, please send us an email to [thechristianlight1@gmail.com](mailto:thechristianlight1@gmail.com) and in the subject line "Sign Up for The Christian Light." Thanks, Mitch Sparks