

Mark Chapter 8 v 27 - 38

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[0 : 00] Let us continue in our worship of God as we come to him in prayer through his son Jesus Christ. Let us all pray. Our gracious and marvelous God, our loving Father, you who are almighty and you who are all gracious, we come to you because, oh Lord, you are the one who has made for us a living way, a new way, an open way, a free way, a way by which we sinful men and women may enjoy and delight in and rejoice in the blessings of God.

Oh Lord, we come through Jesus, your son. There is no other way for he himself has said, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one may come to the Father except through me.

And we thank you that we come to you, our God, because Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, came to us, came to us in our desperate situation, came to us in our brokenness, in our sin, as objects of wrath and judgment.

You came to us, oh Lord, not to judge or to condemn, but to rescue and to save. You came, oh Lord, to set captives free, to give sight to the blind, to break the chains of those who all their lives have been captive to the fear of death.

You came and you lived and you died and you rose again. We thank you that even this morning as we come to sing the praises of our God and Father, we know that Lord Jesus, you are enthroned at his right hand.

[1 : 44] You are the one who sits in glory and power and authority in the heavens, ruling over all things, bringing about in your time and in your way, your will and purpose for each of our lives and for this world that you've created.

Oh Lord, we thank you that we come to you, oh Lord, knowing that though we are sinners, our sins have been cleansed and forgiven totally and completely and eternally through the precious blood of Jesus shed upon the cross.

Our substitute, our atonement, our propitiation, the one who has taken upon himself the just anger of God against us so that we now are recipients, we are those who enjoy the love of God fully and freely and eternally.

No matter what our week has been like, no matter how we feel as we come this morning, we thank you that if we are in Christ, if he is the one in whom we've placed our faith and trust and him alone for our forgiveness and salvation, then we are loved of God with an enduring love, a love like no human love, a love, oh Lord, which is palpable, tangible, real, felt, known, experienced, and poured out into our hearts by your Holy Spirit.

Oh come, Lord, amongst us, we pray, and make us to know that we are loved of God this morning. Make us to know the wonder of your great grace to us.

[3 : 23] Make us to know, perhaps even for the very first time, or the first time in a long time, that you are our God, my God, my Savior, my Lord, my friend, my Redeemer, my King.

Oh come amongst us, by your Holy Spirit we pray. May he minister, and speak, and work, and bless, that we, oh Lord, your people, may give you the praise, and the glory, and the honor that you rightly deserve, and that our lives may live for the worship of Jesus, in whose name we bring to you our prayers now.

Amen. Amen. It's always a real joy to be with you, and to be able to bring my family with me this time.

I'd invite you to turn in your copy of God's Word to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 8, where we will be focusing on those final few verses, verses 34 to 38, where we'll be looking at what I have called a discipleship dilemma, a discipleship dilemma.

I want to ask you a question this morning, and it's this. Is the Christian life worth it? Is it worth it? Do you think maybe we take all of this just a little bit too seriously?

[4 : 55] Should we possibly relax the rules, relax the commands of the Bible just a little bit? Maybe be more flexible with our interpretation.

Maybe we could just live a little bit more like everybody else. We'd blend in better then, wouldn't we? We could be more accepting.

Can't we, as Christians, just keep out of trouble? Maybe keep what we believe to ourselves. Why make this harder than it needs to be?

Can you see the temptation to do that? This is the dilemma I want to explore with you today, because many people, and sadly many churches, compromise right here.

And our passage puts such a dilemma, such a temptation into crystal clear focus. And I want to show you this morning your responsibility from these verses, the motivation to live like this, the necessity of living as true Christians, the expectation on the true walk with God.

[6 : 13] And these verses that we've had read to us show us what is at stake here. And what we'll find is instruction, justification, warning, encouragement, hope, fuel for the fire, as we live as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in a fallen and a pressurizing world.

You see, here we're breaking into one small but very significant section in the ministry of Jesus in Mark chapter 8, verse 34 onwards. And in the verses preceding our passage, we see that Jesus has performed a wondrous miracle.

What a high the disciples must have been on. We don't know exactly how it happened, but right in front of their very eyes, they've just seen a great multitude of 4,000 people fed with just seven loaves of bread and a few small fish.

In fact, you can see from verse 19, if you glance back there, that it's something that he's done before. He's also healed the sick, like the blind man in verse 22.

He manipulates the natural elements he created. He restores on the spot with his word. It shouldn't surprise us because Jesus is God.

[7 : 34] Jesus is creator. But imagine the reaction of the people at the time. Just imagine how popular he must have been. We can see that a great crowd was following him.

But even among his disciples, there's still at least some confusion about who he is. As Jesus, during that private time away, asks that famous and critical question, who do men say that I am?

Who do you say that I am? And then Peter's confession tells us that he's the Messiah. He's the one that was promised. And it brings us to an encouraging climax in our few verses here on the subject of following Christ.

This beautiful paragraph, including exhortations and our dilemma, our questions starkly laid out before us. This is the turning point in the gospel of Mark.

They now know that Jesus is the one they've been waiting for. He is the long-awaited Messiah, but now the emphasis, now the thrust changes.

[8 : 45] As Jesus begins to reveal to them in detail what it actually means to be his follower, to be his disciple, Jesus here reveals his true mission.

And he tells them that it's a little bit not what you expect. And we find that it's hard to swallow. What kind of Messiah is he?

Is he what they expected? Well, verse 31 is critical here. He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed.

And after three days, rise again. And it's then that Jesus starts to clarify the shocking reality of his mission and the destiny of his followers.

You see, there is a divine necessity that Jesus must suffer in order to save. At the heart of his mission was and is sacrifice.

[9 : 55] He is the suffering servant. And Peter, in his ignorance, maybe even his selfishness about his own well-being, he rebukes Jesus, and Jesus rebukes him back.

This isn't how it's supposed to be, Jesus. Get with the plan. This is where it gets good, and we're on your team. We're along for the ride. Why would you talk about suffering and death and rejection?

You see, this is a problem. Because by following Jesus, their future would be tied to his. If you go down, we're going down with you.

They understood what he said, but it seems they're confused or slow to believe or slow to accept it. This is key. I want you to grasp this. You see, this demonstrates that a wrong view of messiahship leads to a wrong view of discipleship.

A wrong view of messiahship leads to a wrong view of discipleship. It's the same for us. If you have a wrong view of Jesus, his work, his person, his mission, if you have a wrong understanding of the Bible, it will lead you to wrong expectations.

[11 : 15] A wrong view of how to live the Christian life. A wrong understanding about why we live the Christian life. And it's in this context that we shift to another scene in verse 34.

They're in Caesarea Philippi, about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. Heathen territory. And what follows now is teaching from Jesus with short, pungent sayings about personal commitment, about following him, teaching that the true Christian life at the very heart is a life of sacrifice.

That our true Christian life, that the disciples' Christian life is anything but casual. It's a fully committed faith.

Reformer Martin Luther put it like this. He said, A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing.

Now as usual, we assume that there are a mix of believers and unbelievers listening as Jesus speaks. And if Jesus is looking to be popular, then what follows is the strangest recruitment drive in history.

[12 : 39] So let's break down these basic discipleship verses, 34 to 38, into two natural parts. One that flows out of, or one that explains the other.

Our first point is found in verse 34. And it's this, the demands of your Christian life. The demands of your Christian life.

And it says, And calling the crowd, or summoning to him with his disciples, he said to them, If anyone would, or wills to, or desires to, come after me, let him deny, or renounce, or disregard himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

This is the new section. This is the pivot point in the Gospel of Mark. Where we see a transition from that previous private retreat, where Jesus was with his disciples, out in the countryside.

And Mark introduces this with a summoning together, a calling to himself, of the crowd, with the disciples. And the original language here points to something important, points to something new.

[13 : 50] It's alerting us to something that's coming that's emphatic, that Jesus is about to say. He's going to reveal something, some new instruction. And it's a call to costly discipleship.

If you want to come after Christ, this is what is required. This is reality. Many of you will be aware of Winston Churchill's famous words when he took over the leadership of Great Britain at the start of the Second World War.

All that he offered his people were three things. Blood, sweat, and tears. He was honest. That was reality.

The future goal, though, was clear. And in the same way, we find three parts of discipleship. Three parts of the Christian life.

And it's difficult. But it's reality. How does Jesus, being the Messiah, and living in the light of this truth, translate into your everyday life?

[15 : 04] Well, we're told here that being Jesus' true disciple involves three challenges, three commitments, three Ds. Denial, death, and direction.

This is what he says. Let him. That's actually a command when you look at the Greek. So it better reads, he must, or you must, deny yourself, or deny himself, take up your cross, and follow me.

Let's look at each of those. All the time, thinking, applying this to your own heart, saying, am I a true follower, a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Do I have a true understanding of Jesus, his mission, and therefore, how I should live in that light? So this is our first sub-point under how we should live the Christian life, the blessings of the Christian life, a demanding denial.

A demanding denial. He says, deny yourself. We need to be clear what that means. Two years ago, I had a medical to coincide with my 40th birthday, and the doctor told me I've got to deny myself salty foods and foods with high cholesterol.

[16 : 16] That's not the picture here. It's not giving up something like you would for a diet. It's more radical, you see. It's denying yourself of your own personal interests or self-promoting ambitions.

It's denying yourself of all earthly, all personal security. One writer says, it requires the denying or saying to know to the self as the determiner of one's goals, aspirations, and desires.

You're not top of the tree anymore. The Lord Jesus Christ and His will and His desires and His kingdom are up there. We can look at the disciples' example here in chapter 10, verse 28, where Peter says, we've left all and followed you.

It's the word for everything. And it's interesting when you look at that language that you can see in the Greek that it's not just a one-off thing, a one-time thing.

It's a continual action of continuing to follow and continuing to deny yourself. The old Bishop of Liverpool, J.C. Ryle, said this, these words ought to ring in our ears like a trumpet every morning when we rise from our beds and every night when we lie down.

[17 : 38] May they be deeply graven into our memories and never effaced by the devil and the world. Have you had to deny yourself anything for your Christian walk, for your Christian life?

Does your Christianity cost you anything? Jesus is not extracurricular. He's not part-time. He's not something you tag on at the end.

Jesus Christ, creator and sustainer of the universe, demands the central place in your life out of which everything else flows.

No half measures. We must turn from our selfish ways and put God before everything. It's a revolution in our thinking, in our attitudes, in our values.

embracing this denial is the rock-solid bedrock of discipleship, of growth, of progress. It's goodbye to your old self.

[18 : 40] It's surrendering. It's giving yourself wholly to Christ as your first priority, sharing in his shame and death. Jesus is now the object of our lives.

Not me, not you. We need to live for something bigger than ourselves, a life of mortification, putting our sin to death that remains in our lives.

And this is where despite the earthly loss or cost, our main objective is God's glory alone. That's the demanding denial.

Then our verse, verse 34, goes and shows us a second demand. A demanding death, a demanding death. It says, take up his cross. This isn't a message that life will be a struggle.

People might say, well, this is a cross I have to bear like a burden. No, that's not the picture here. This is a picture of being shamed, being despised. Jesus, effectively here, after what he has just explained, is saying, join me as I head towards execution.

[19 : 55] It's horrifying, cruel, ugly, shameful torture. Method of punishment that was reserved for the worst of the worst. And we could look forward into chapter 15 and see prisoners carrying their crosses or part of it at least.

And it's building on. It's intensifying what it means to deny yourself. If you won't bear the cross, you'll never have the crown placed on your head.

Can you see how becoming a disciple of Christ is so much more than making minor tweaks in your life? There is danger and persecution and difficulty and grief and heartache.

And one writer says that to take up the cross means to identify with Christ in his rejection, shame, suffering, and death. In a parallel passage in Luke chapter 9, Luke tells us that this readiness for death, for surrendering control of your own destiny, is a wholehearted daily responsibility.

humility. We are to imitate him in this commitment because Jesus here, as he speaks these words, knows that he's heading for the cross. You see, today when we think of a cross, we think of Jesus, but not back then when this was happening.

[21 : 19] It hadn't happened yet. And so imagine what the disciples thought about this reflecting after his death. It must have been burned into their minds. So we have a demanding denial.

We have a demanding death. And then a third demand in verse 34, a demanding direction. Follow me. Follow Jesus. Wherever he takes you, wherever he goes, whatever he teaches, whatever he demands from you, whatever the consequences, it's a picture of attaching yourself to him.

Taking the same road, accompanying him, fellowshiping with him along the way. It effectively says, whoever will come after me must follow me.

It's kind of a tautology. It's emphasis through repetition. They're on the same path with the same fate, following his way, not their way.

And the message here is to command us to follow his example habitually, continually. The original language tells us to follow and keep following.

[22 : 32] It's called a present imperative. He sets the standard. He is our magnetic north. He takes first place. We need to passionately pursue Christ-likeness, follow his teaching, defining all we say, all we think, all we do.

We must be willing to leave all, give up all, so that we can follow him, identify with him, being ready to suffer for and with him. It's not easy, is it?

This is a challenge. When the world looks at us in our everyday life, not on a Sunday, we can all dress up nice on a Sunday and fool each other.

Do people see Christ-likeness? Do they see you following Christ? Do they see evidence? You see, these three evidences indicate true conversion and that we're growing, that we're killing our sin, that we're being sanctified, that we're being more holy, that we're being more Christ-like.

See, when we come to Christ in repentance and faith, we come to the narrow gate, but after the narrow gate, there's also a narrow way to walk. It's not just about praying that prayer the first time.

[23 : 52] We then demonstrate that it was an authentic, true heart repentance and faith that we then follow that narrow way continually. That's evidence, that gives us assurance. You see, this verse 34 is the foundation of all that follows.

It's a conditional statement followed by four explanatory clauses. We've seen the negative, we've seen the hard part, and now in the next few verses, Jesus begins to pile the positives on this enormous set of cosmic scales.

There are two sides, bearing the cross, self-denial, suffering for and with Christ, and we then get to the reason for these gospel commands, the implications of this call to discipleship.

There's the dilemma. This is hard. Is it worth it? all the effort? Why would you and I even consider signing up for something like this?

So we've seen the three expectations or demands of the Christian life or discipleship, but consider, think through this other side. Is the Christian life worth it?

[25 : 08] Jesus moves on and builds on this foundation with our second point, the blessings of the Christian life in verses 34 to 38. And this is where I want to leave us today because the beginning of the answer is that there is a bigger picture here when we rightly understand biblical truth.

We'll take these verses one at a time and what we're going to see are four statements, four justifications, motivations for denying yourself, taking up your cross and following fully.

what we find is amazing, jaw-dropping, immeasurable blessing because we don't get what we deserve.

We deserve to lose our lives. We deserve to lose our souls. He should be ashamed of us as verse 38 tells us. But look at what we get instead through pure grace and mercy.

These following sentences might be considered as presenting in a way the basis for that urgent command in verse 34. And this is our first point under the blessings of the Christian life.

[26 : 15] An undeserved life. An undeserved life. He says, For whoever would save his life or soul will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake or on account of me and the gospels will save or preserve or keep it.

This is a question for you. Do you trust God in every area of your life? See, Paul in Galatians chapter 2 tells us, I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live.

But Christ lives in me. It's a picture of his life being owned by Christ completely. Look at the paradox in verse 35.

If you save your life, you'll lose it. If you lose your life, you'll save it. We must be willing to lose our life for the gospel, for our faith, and our faithfulness in following Christ.

It's speaking of so much more than mere physical life. This is talking about our undying soul, our eternal existence.

[27 : 30] You see, this is what we really need to be concerned about, real life, beyond what we have here. Not clinging to this. Confident, though, of future rewards, not fleeting pleasures.

Many of you will be aware of C.T. Studd and his famous quotation. He had it all. International superstar in multiple sports but turned away from it to spread the gospel.

And this is his famous reason. If Jesus Christ is God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.

See, this word gospel or good news has an outward sense. This isn't a private religion. This persecution that we read of here in our passage, we can see it's as a direct result of the believers and disciples actively, proactively going out in mission to spread the gospel.

That should be our expectation. And if we lose our lives for Christ's sake, then we will be saved. That's the undeserved life for the Christian in verse 35.

[28 : 43] Now look at verse 36 where we find an undeserved prophet, an undeserved prophet, P-R-O-F-I-T. You may be familiar with Emperor Charlemagne, Charles the Great.

Well, there's a place called Aix-la-Chapelle near Arken, near the border with Germany. That's his burial place. Very powerful man, conquered much of the known world near the start of the ninth century.

Well, around 200 years after he died, after he had entered eternity, they decided to open up his burial vault. What they found was a dome with a place below it, with a marble throne, a coronation throne there with Emperor Charlemagne sitting on that throne in all his splendor, in his royal robes, and on his knee, on his dead body, was a copy of Mark's gospel, open with his finger resting on this verse.

Verse 36, for what does it profit or benefit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit or lose his soul?

He was a mighty leader who protected and spread Christianity by the sword, but the truth is we don't know if he was a Christian or not. But what a powerful question Jesus asks, which leads all but the one following blind, unreason or willful self deceit to an inevitable conclusion.

[30 : 25] The answer is that even if you gain everything, there is no profit if you lose your soul. The picture is the totality of the wealth of the world with all the pleasure, all the acclaim, all the achievements, the height of human ambition.

This is not some profit and loss that balances out. The picture is a contrast of utter spiritual bankruptcy or Christ.

There are many biblical examples. Mark 10 22, we've got the rich young ruler who in a sense had the world. We've got Nebuchadnezzar seeking honor and fame in Daniel chapter 4 or Ecclesiastes 9.

It talks about all the amusements, all the follies of the world. There's no profit there. One writer asks the question, what is it to lose the soul?

He says, five things. It is to lose Christ and all spiritual enjoyments, to lose heaven and all its joys forever, to lose all rest and peace to all eternity, to lose all hope of ever bettering your condition and fifthly, to lose the very world itself.

[31 : 49] Now that was presented in a negative way. Positively, the Christian has Christ, has all spiritual enjoyment, has heaven, has all its joys forever.

So we've seen the undeserved life, we've seen the undeserved profit. Now verse 37, an undeserved value, another question, for what can a man give in return or exchange for his soul?

It's a picture of a ransom price, it's a rhetorical question, you know the answer, nothing. There is no price high enough to pay for your soul.

It's valuable beyond all human comprehension, the Christian life is all in, all our hopes, attitudes, expectations, giving everything over to him as our Lord and Master.

What would you give in exchange for your life, for your soul? The question is between finding pleasure in this world apart from God or finding God in this world and all of our pleasure in him.

[33 : 06] Jesus illustrates this further, you know these verses in Matthew chapter 13, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up, then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls who on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

What truly lasts into eternity? Oh, you can have all your wealth buried with you like the Egyptians, it does no good. You can't even get a single coin to pay the ferryman in Greek mythology.

There's a story of a boat travelling down the Mississippi River full of passengers, many of whom were gold miners on their way back east from the gold rush out in California in the mid-19th century.

All of a sudden there was a bang, then screaming and confusion as the boat began to sink and go sideways. So the lifeboats were taken off, people got on them, some people could swim, some people could grab hold of something and propel themselves to the side of the Mississippi River and incredibly everybody made it safe to shore before the boat went down.

[34 : 33] Complete success. Then about 15 minutes later, one man appeared on the deck. While all the others had been saving their lives, he'd been down to the lower levels going through all the bags of the gold miners, filling his pockets with gold, wrapping it around him, putting it in a backpack.

You see, at that moment as he's standing on the deck of the boat, he was incredibly rich, holding gold worth more than most people earn in an entire lifetime.

He'd made it. And then he jumped into the water. Could someone really be that stupid? That foolish?

Could he not connect the dots in his brain? My friend, if you have not repented of your sins, you're more foolish than that man. This is the point.

get rid of the gold. Get everything out of the way. Let nothing stop you, nothing, until you rest in the Saviour's arms.

[35 : 53] Some come to a realization that they've had the balance wrong all their lives. It might be apocryphal, but Elizabeth I, apparently her final words were, all my possessions for a moment more of time.

We know how Shakespeare famously portrays this in his play Richard III, desperate in battle, a horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse.

There is no monetary value. Surely you realize that. Nothing can compensate if you lose your soul.

But Christian, look at your value to God, look at what he did to redeem you. How we need true life, true profit, true value. Then in verse 38, finally, an undeserved honor, an undeserved honor.

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

[36 : 58] It's a further rationale for what we've looked at already. It's setting the scene for the heavenly courtroom ahead. A judgment that leads to shame or to glory and nowhere in between.

The true Christian will not be ashamed to stand boldly with Christ and confess him before men publicly, regardless of mockery, regardless of ridicule.

You see, suffering here leads to glory. As a result, Christ will not be ashamed of you, Christian, when he comes. The contrast, the dilemma is staring us in the face again.

What if this is you? It's a solemn warning that if you are ashamed to confess Christ and his teaching publicly, or if you are rejecting him in favor of the world, you will give an account on that day.

This is evidence that you are not truly saved. As people have put it in the past, are you more concerned about the smiles and frowns of men than the smiles and frowns of God?

[38 : 08] My friend, this world is ripe for judgment. It stands in rebellion against our holy God. Don't stand with it. Remember, these four are blessings to the believers, but stark, terrible warnings to unbelievers.

They're in the context of verse 34, and it's urgent appeal that each of us, young and old, would deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him. There are costs to following Christ.

They are high costs, but they pale into insignificance when we compare them to the promises and blessings of God. You know that I cannot promise you an easy life.

Until Christ comes again, we will still have the effects of the fall, we have sin, we have pain, we have death, we have grief, and it's real, and it's hard. But the words of Christ in our passage today help us to lift our eyes to him because that's where our hope is, eternally, beyond this short life.

Unbeliever, do you see the discipleship dilemma here? There is a cost, a real cost, to following Christ, but no fair reasoning can get beyond the obvious conclusion that there is an infinitely higher cost in not following him.

[39 : 35] This is not like the Pepsi challenge where you decide which one you like the best. This is not hedging your bets. This is not judging on the balance of probabilities.

No, this is about you seeing your true sinful state as a sinner before a holy God and where that is leading directly. You don't deserve any kind of saviour, but he came for sinners like you and I.

There is no other person we can follow. Surrender yourself to Christ. This is a matter of your life and your death. Don't make a fatal mistake.

Avoid the tragedy of a wasted life and a wasted eternity without Christ. What are you willing to do to get in? Don't rest until this is resolved.

Christian, these are solemn and weighty words of Christ. The cross is heavy, but we are promised grace from Jesus Christ to carry it. We know that countless have gone before us and can testify that this life is gone in the blink of an eye.

[40 : 46] If you are a true disciple, you understand that. Your foundation is the truth of the gospel in Christ found here. It's our only comfort in life and death, as the Heidelberg Catechism puts it.

We belong to him. He is faithful. He has fully paid the price for our sin on the cross. He has set us free. We are preserved. We are assured of our salvation and therefore we live for him.

when we grasp this eternal landscape, then when troubles come your way, and they will, you are standing firmly here on truth, on Christ, on rock that cannot be moved.

We're not surprised because we understand that big picture. We know that God remains on the throne in full control. If you are a Christian, the truths we see overflowing from these verses are the motivation to persevere, to radical, passionate living for our Lord and Savior out of thankfulness regardless of the cost.

Have you got solid theology and truth to stand on so that when troubles and hard times do come, you won't wobble? We do not do these things on our own power.

[42:10] We have to embrace this suffering Savior, follow Him in His steps. He sets the example. He has faced this as He denied Himself.

He took up the cross to die as a substitute in the place of sinners, paying the price, taking the rightful penalty on Himself so that we can be saved, so that we can be welcomed into heaven and have that eternal hope.

I asked you some questions as we began and I want to answer them as we close. Is the Christian life worth it? Should we compromise?

Should we blend in more? There is nothing more important than living for Christ in submission to Him.

We should stand out from the world, not stand back. This is not a spiritual playground. It is a spiritual battlefield.

[43:16] But I can't offer you an easy life. But I can offer you a blessed one with the promise that in just a short time from now, we and all those who have gone before us will be together never to separate again with our Lord and Savior in glory.

Is the Christian life worth it? I'll let Martyr Jim Elliot, missionary to Ecuador, answer that in his famous words. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

My friends, there's no dilemma here at all. In fact, there's no comparison here. Live for Christ. Live for Christ. Let's turn to our hymn book.

So to the end of