

8th Week after Pentecost – Thursday

Matthew 16:24-28: Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. 28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

*ALWAYS *ANSWER** the questions posed in scripture. They are addressed to you!

How is it that it is so plainly stated that we will be rewarded according to our works, and yet so many supposed Christians do not believe this?

Is it not because man is naturally inclined to follow his own appetites (to "gain the whole world") and lose his soul)?

Is it not because we make excuse with excuses in sins regarding our bad behavior?

To believe that an emasculated faith, stripped of the action and purpose that faith has, and only containing the intellectual assent of belief, is plainly, wishful thinking, borne out of the selfish desire to appease ourselves.

What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

There are two answers: *Everything*, and *Nothing*.

We must give everything for our soul. That much is clear from no less a proof text than our Lord's recitation of the "Greatest Commandment":

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law? (37) Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (38) This is the first and great commandment. (39) And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”
(Mat 22:36-40)

And yet, there is nothing that we can give to earn our salvation. This "exchange for his soul" is referring to salvation. We cannot be saved by doing good, but we will not be saved unless we do good! The “exchange” we must make is to accept God's grace and become good, and do good. The Apostle, and those he taught, we in the true church understand this:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God:* (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. “(Eph 2:8-10)

Note how IMMEDIATELY after stating emphatically that, we are saved only by grace and not by works (we can give "nothing" in exchange for our soul), the Apostle tells us what we were created for - good works. He who through faith does good works IS good, and He who is good knows the only one that is good, God.

We are not saved because of our works, but we will not be saved without good works. The one who does not attempt to do good is not a Christian, and God does not know him.

“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”

This is a reference to the upcoming Transfiguration. We will celebrate it very soon.

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