

June 17, 2012 by Steve Brandon



Following Messiah

Mark 8:34-38

1. One Invitation (verse 34b)
2. Two Peoples (verse 34a)
3. Three Conditions (verse 34c)
4. Four Reasons (verses 35-38)

Our text this morning comes from the book of Mark, chapter 8 and verses 34-38. These words come right after Jesus has revealed Himself as the Messiah. Peter said (in verse 29), "You are the Christ!" In other words, "You are the Messiah!"

Jesus responds by giving His invitation to follow Him. This is the call of the Messiah. Or, as I have entitled my message this morning, "Following Messiah." I want to read them for you now, ...

Mark 8:34-38

And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

We see the invitation coming in verse 34. This is my first point. There is ...

1. One Invitation (verse 34b)

Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me." This the Messiah's call. It's a call to "follow."

Children love to play "follow the leader." This is a game where the leader goes, and the children seek to follow. If the leader goes around the play set, the followers go around the play set. If the leader goes up the slide, the followers go up the slide. If the leader ducks under the swing, the followers duck under the swing.

This is what it means to "come after" Jesus. It means that we "follow" Him. We imitate Him. We live as He lives. We walk as He walks. Anyone who wishes to trust in the Messiah must "follow" after Him.

Notice how universal this invitation is. He says, "Anyone". It's not merely to the Jews. It's for the Gentiles as well. It's not merely for those who attend church on a regular basis. It's not merely for those who have been born of Christian parents. It's for all who want to come to Christ. In fact, that's how Jesus puts it. "If anyone wishes."

Such is the call of Christ's kingdom. He coerces no one. He doesn't manipulate them. He doesn't force them. Rather, people come to Christ because they want to come to Christ. People come to Christ because they have the desire to do so.

You never need to force the gospel upon anyone. Tell them; invite them; beg them; plead with them. But, you do not need to force them. Doing so will negate the core of Christianity. We come to Jesus by faith. And you cannot force anyone to have faith.

There is the invitation. Now, I want for you to notice the ...

2. Two Peoples (verse 34a)

Notice the audience to whom Jesus says these things.

Mark 8:34

And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, ...

This is no longer a private discussion between Jesus and the disciples. Jesus also pulled in the crowd, "And said to them." This is a proclamation for those who are closest to Jesus. This is also a proclamation for those who are far from Jesus. It's the one invitation that we all need to hear.

Now, I make a point about this, because there are those who think that different people need a different invitation. Some say that this here is call to a higher commitment of discipleship. You are saved through faith in Jesus. You then commit yourself to deeper commitment to Him as a disciple.

Or, to use the terminology of some: your first step is to accept Jesus as Savior. And then, at some later point, Jesus becomes your Lord as you fully submit your life to Him. Those who say this would say that this is a call to discipleship, not salvation. To them, I simply point out that Jesus isn't merely addressing the "saved" in this passage. He is addressing everyone: the close disciples as well as the lost pagans in the crowd.

This is the message that we all need to hear. And it's a hard message: deny yourself, take up your cross, follow Me."

There are some who think that it's better if you bring a softer message to those apart from Christ. If you tell them hard things like this, they just might not believe. Apparently, this didn't bother Jesus.

Jesus often called people to such a commitment. When the Rich Young Ruler came to Jesus asking what he needs to do to inherit eternal life, Jesus said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Mark 10:21). When a willing man came to Jesus saying, "I will follow You wherever You go," Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Matt. 8:20). In other words, it's going to be hard to follow Me. When another man wanted to follow Christ, but said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father" (Matt. 8:21), Jesus us replied to Him, "Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead" (Matt. 8:22). In other words, Jesus wasn't accommodating to this man in attempts to get a disciple.

Jesus demands complete obedience and submission now! On another occasion, Jesus addressed the crowds when they were at their height; we know this because the Bible says, that "Large crowds were going along with him" (Luke 14:25). He says to the crowds, ...

Luke 14:26-3

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

These words in verse 34 are for all of us. They are for all who want to follow Christ. The one invitation was spoken to two peoples: Do you want to follow Christ?

Jesus gives them ...

3. Three Conditions (verse 34c)

You can see them right there in verse 34, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." I trust that you can see the three conditions. He must deny himself. He must take up his cross. He must follow Me.

You can't pick and choose which one of these you want to follow. Jesus has laid down the terms. Do you want to follow Jesus? Then, deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him.

Let's look at these three conditions, one by one. The first one is simply this:

a. Deny Yourself

This means that you renounce your life. This means that you give up your life. This means that you give up your self-reliance.

As Cranfield says, "The basic idea of [this word] is 'to say "No"'. ... To deny oneself is to disown, not just one's sins, but one's self, to turn away from the idolatry of self-centeredness." [\[1\]](#)

It means that your allegiance is no longer toward yourself. Rather, your allegiance is now toward the one you are following. Because, you are now following another.

This is what many young men in our country do when they sign up for the armed services. They go into the recruiting office, and they sign on the dotted line. They have denied themselves for the sake of their country. They have released all personal sovereignty. They are now under the authority of the United States military. The military will now tell him where he will be assigned. The military will tell him where he will go. The military will tell him how to act in society as well as in combat.

This is similar to what it means to follow Jesus. We deny ourselves. We say, "no" to ourselves. Our allegiance is now to king Jesus. We say, "yes" to Jesus.

We release all personal sovereignty. We are now under the authority of Jesus. We go where He tells us to go. We act as He tells us to act. We follow Him!

And it's pretty difficult to play "follow the leader" when you want to do your own thing. What happens when a child is playing follow the leader, but doesn't go around the play set, or up the slide, or under the swing? The child isn't playing follow the leader. Likewise, the one who hasn't denied self isn't following Jesus. This is what it takes to follow Christ. It takes self-denial.

This is at the heart of what Paul said to the Ephesian elders, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself." That's it! That's self-denial. Self-denial is hard. We have to deny ourselves when we diet; we deny ourselves the extra food that we don't need. Some of us practice self denial when we are trying to break an addiction -- to cigarettes, to the internet, to a certain way of speaking. We all know it is hard.

Now, this doesn't mean that we do things perfectly. Do you remember Peter? When Jesus told him and the disciples that they all would fall away, ...

Matthew 26:33-25

Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You." All the disciples said the same thing too.

Sure enough, when Jesus was before the Sanhedrin, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard and denied Jesus three times. In some regard, this should be a comfort to us, knowing that at our deepest time of trial, we can fail to live as we would want. It should also be a comfort to know that there can be a time of restoration. Peter, who once denied Jesus three times, became the Peter who gave his life for Christ. So, our self-denial might not be perfect. But, it ought to be the direction of our lives.

Do you remember what Peter said in his denials? "I do not know what you are talking about" (Matt. 26:70). "I do not know the man" (Matt. 26:73). "I do not know the man" (Matt. 26:74). And when it comes to ourselves, this is what we must say, "I don't know myself." In other words, denying yourself means that you die to yourself, which is essentially what Jesus is getting at in the second condition.

Not only do you need to Deny Yourself, But, you also need to ...

b. Take Up Your Cross

Jesus here pulls from a very common event in His day. He referred to the criminal, who received the death sentence for some crime that they committed. Although the Romans didn't invent crucifixion (the Persians did), the Romans perfected it. They knew how to bring about enough suffering that the victim would die slowly. And in the days of Jesus, many died by crucifixion every year.

Crucifixion was so horrible in the days of Jesus that Roman citizens were exempt from such punishment. It was reserved for foreigners and prisoners of war and the most violent of criminals. It was

"... considered it to be the most shameful, the most painful, and the most abhorrent of all executions. The Roman statesman Cicero called it "the most cruel and disgusting penalty" (Verrem 2:5.165) and "the most extreme penalty" (Verrem 2:5.168). The Jewish historian Josephus, who certainly witnessed enough crucifixions himself, called it "the most wretched of deaths." The Roman jurist Julius Paulus listed crucifixion in first place as the worst of all capital punishments, listing it ahead of death by burning, death by beheading, or death by the wild beasts. And from Seneca we have this quotation, which is one of the most unique descriptions of a crucifixion in non-Biblical literature:

Can anyone be found who would prefer wasting away in pain dying limb by limb, or letting out his life drop by drop, rather than expiring once for all? Can any man be found willing to be fastened to the accursed tree, long sickly, already deformed, swelling with ugly wounds on shoulders and chest, and drawing the breath of life amid long drawn-out agony? He would have many excuses for dying even before mounting the cross (Dialogue 3:2.2). [\[2\]](#)

The Romans would begin the execution by flogging their victim, weakening him to the point of fatigue. Then the criminal would be forced to carry their cross to the place of execution. Often it was just the cross-beam, weighing up to 300 pounds. Once the cross was brought to the place of crucifixion, the criminal would be nailed to the cross. Then the cross would be lifted high. And the criminal would hang until he died of suffocation. He may last a few hours. He may last a couple of days. But, when he took up his cross, his fate was secured. There were no appeals. There was no other way out. Once forced to pick up his cross, the criminal was on a death march.

This is the imagery that Jesus brings to mind. He says, "Do you want to follow after Me? Take up your cross. Start your death march." That's what it takes. We need to die to ourselves. We need to be ready to face our martyrdom. That's the picture they had in mind.

This "take up your cross" does not refer to unfortunate circumstances in your life. A sickness or your disagreeable mother-in-law is not "your cross to bear." A few years ago, a family in town decided that they would construct a large cross, and walk with it past all of the homes in Rockford, praying for them. It is a good thing to have the homes in Rockford prayed for, but it is not what this passage means by "take up your cross".

Now, this is Father's Day. One lesson that I have learned from my father is his often repeated saying, "Steve, I will never ask you to do what I haven't done first, or what I am not willing to do myself." Throughout the years, I have found this to be true of him. He never required of me what he hasn't first model, himself or was willing to model for me. Now, at this point in the narrative of the gospel of Mark, Jesus hadn't yet been crucified. Yet, He was willing. In fact, verse 31 hints at the crucifixion. If nothing else, verse 31 hints that Jesus is willing to die. It's what Jesus expects of all of His followers.

This was Paul's perspective. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;" (Gal. 2:20). In other words, "I have taken up my cross. I have already died. I have been crucified with Christ. I am no longer alive. Rather, Christ is living in me." This is the gospel. As we die to self; as we die to sin, Christ lives in us. He becomes our strength. He becomes our song. He is our joy. We entrust our eternal future to Him!

The third condition of following Christ isn't so much a condition as much as it is a repetition. Deny Yourself. Take Up Your Cross
c. Follow Jesus.

If you want to follow Jesus, then follow Jesus. Do what He says. Go where He goes.

If the first two conditions are met, this last one is easy. If you have denied yourself, you have done so for Christ. If you have taken up your cross, you have done so for Christ. Then, following Christ will be the result.

How about you? Are you a follower of Christ? Have you denied yourself? Can you say with Paul, "Whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ?" (Phil. 3:7). Have you taken up your cross? Are you ready to make whatever sacrifice is needed to follow Christ? Are you following Him? Are you an "imitator of God?" (Eph. 5:1). Do you "walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for you?" (Eph. 5:2).

Now, one of the things that I love about Jesus is that He doesn't merely call us to make such a radical commitment to follow Him without a good, logical reason why. And that's what He gives in verses 35-38. These are reasons why we should deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him.

We have seen, One Invitation (verse 34b), given to Two Peoples (verse 34a) with Three Conditions (verse 34c). And now, we see, ...
4. Four Reasons (verses 35-38)

Four reasons for why we ought to abandon our life like this. Each verse contains a reason. Each verse begins with the Greek word, "gar", which is usually translated, "for." If you look at your English translation, you should see this in verse 35: "*For* whoever wishes, ... Verse 36 says, "*For* what does it profit a man ..." Verse 37 says, "*For* what will a man give ... And verse 38 says, "*For* whoever is ashamed of Me."

Now, every single one of these reasons have the reality of eternity behind it. In other words, if you are sitting here this morning and have considered well the words of Jesus -- to abandon your life for the sake of following Jesus Christ -- and have found the words to be strange-sounding, it may well be that your vision is short-sighted. What I mean by that is that you are only looking at life for the sake of life here on earth. You are not looking beyond this life. Your vision is too short-shorted.

Think about it this way. What would induce a young person to give his life to the United States Military? In their youth, they are in the prime of their life. They have energy. They have potential. They have freedom to make of their life whatever they want. What would make them sign their life away? If you only look at the hardships of what they have signed up for -- the hardships of bootcamp. the hardships of giving up your sovereignty, the hardships of disciplined living, the hardships of the danger that may well await them in their deployment -- if you only look at this, then their willingness to volunteer for the military will make no sense to you whatsoever. But, if you look at their whole life, it may begin to make some sense. In the military, they will receive vocational training for future jobs. In the military, they will receive leadership training, for future advancement opportunities. In the military, they will receive scholarships to finish their schooling. In the military, they will receive job security.

And all of these things are worth it for them. They will willingly take a life of hardship and discipline and danger. They will willingly take a life of moving around the country every few years. They will willingly take their turn in foreign lands, because they have seen the benefits on the other side.

And so likewise with Jesus. He isn't calling us to a life of self-denial and cross-bearing for no reason. The reasons are good. The reasons have everything to do with eternity, with after this life. Jesus says, "You follow after Me, and it will be worth it all." No one who ever gave His life for Christ will ever regret that sacrifices made in this life. Because they all bear fruit in eternity.

Jim Elliot once said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep in order to gain what he cannot lose." And by earthly standards, Jim Elliot gave up what he could not keep. Jim Elliot gave up his life in seeking to bring the gospel to the Waodani tribe in Ecuador. He, and four other friends, were speared to death in Ecuador as they initially made contact with these people who made a habit of killing others.

And in eternity, I am sure that Jim Elliot in no way regretted his martyrdom. His death has made him an earthly hero. His death has made him a heavenly hero. His death was the catalyst to bring many in the Waodani tribe to Christ. His death has been the catalyst for many to serve Christ in foreign lands.

Jim Elliot was no fool. Rather, Jim Elliot understood clearly what Jesus was saying in our text this morning. Don't cling to what you cannot keep. Rather, labor for what you cannot lose.

Well, let's look at the four reasons why we should follow Christ in this way.

Reason #1: Your salvation (verse 35).

Mark 8:35

For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.

This is the way that God has made our lives. They consist in two parts. The life before we die. And the life after we die. Do you want to lose your life eternally? Then save your life here on earth. Do you want to save your life eternally? Then lose your life here on earth. Jesus told several parables to illustrate this truth. I'll share one of them:

Luke 16:19-31

"Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and *saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, ' Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house— for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' But Abraham *said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

The rich man was only living for the life upon earth. And in the end, it cost him his life in eternity. He was a fool to live for pleasures upon the earth.

In my office hangs a portion of calligraphy that my wife made for me. It says, ...

Only one life, 'twill soon be past.
Only what's done for Christ will last.

It's a constant reminder to me of what should drive me in this life. It's not this life. It's the life to come.

This concept is the reason why I'm in ministry today. As you all know, before becoming a pastor, I was in the computer industry. I loved (and still love) computers. I love how they work. I love programming the computer to do what I want it to do.

But, when God placed an opportunity for me to serve in full-time ministry, I jumped at the chance. Because I knew that the fruit of my labor would reap for eternity.

Through the years, I have had a great illustration of this. My first real computer job was working for Arthur Andersen and their world-wide training center in St. Charles, Illinois. I loved the job. I was a software programmer. I was often able to work from home. But, shortly after I left, things crashed at Arthur Andersen. They were the accounting firm hired to audit the books for Enron. Rather than highlighting the faulty accounting practices at Enron, they let them continue on. And when Enron crashed, Arthur Andersen crashed with them. Arthur Andersen -- the company that I worked for -- is gone.

My second computer job was working for Kishwaukee Community Hospital in DeKalb, Illinois. I loved the job. I was hands-on with the latest and greatest in computer technology. But, shortly after I left, Kishwaukee Community Hospital built a new hospital. What was once the building where I worked, where I laid cable, where I helped build our computer network ... was literally a pile of rubble.

That's an illustration of the futility of all labor in this life. Eventually, everything will be a pile of rubble. So, labor for Christ. That's the true labor that will last for eternity.

Now, I know that most of you are not (and will not) be in full-time ministry. But, that doesn't mean that you cannot labor for eternal wealth in heaven. Jesus said, ...

Matthew 6:19-21

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Long before I was in full-time ministry, I was investing in eternity. Oh, for grace to see more of this life in perspective.

There are four reasons why we should follow Jesus. Reason #1: Your salvation (verse 35).

Reason #2: Your soul (verse 36).

Mark 8:36

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?

Again, I illustrate this point with a parable:

Luke 12:16-21

... "The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry."' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

This man sought to save his life upon the earth, but ended up losing it in eternity. God called him a fool. And how many fools there are in America! There are many who have been rich in this life, but have failed to be rich toward God. Don't live for this life! Live for the life to come.

I read in the news yesterday of Allen Stanford. He was the chairman of the Stanford Financial Group. He and his father made a fortune for themselves by purchasing depressed real estate and selling it years later when the market recovered. He then became involved in investments and amassed a great fortune for himself, worth over a billion dollars. But, for the past few years, he has been under investigation for operating a Ponzi scheme, returning to investors the money that others have invested, rather than returning profit earned with the money. Just yesterday, Allen Stanford was sentenced to "110 years in prison for bilking investors out of more than \$7 billion over two decades". [\[3\]](#) During these decades, he lived a "lavish lifestyle that included yachts, a fleet of private jets and sponsorship of cricket tournaments". [\[4\]](#) Anyone who is involved in a Ponzi scheme knows that the doomsday is coming. The time when you can no longer attract the investors needed to sustain the scheme. And for Allen Stanford, his time has come. All the wealth that he enjoyed for decades is all gone. In exchange, he will live in a jail cell, where he will spend the rest of his life.

I ask you, what does it profit a man like Allen Stanford to live in luxury for a few years, only to live the rest of his life in prison? Perhaps one might argue that the 20 years of pleasure are worth the 20 years in prison. Now, what if he spent eternity in prison? Would the 20 years of pleasure be worth it? Twenty years compared to billions and billions of years in eternity? Nobody would argue that this is worth it.

That's exactly what Jesus is saying in verse 36, "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" What's more valuable -- billions of dollars or your soul? Your soul is more valuable than billions of dollars. This leads us to Jesus' third reason why we should follow Him, ...

Reason #3: Your soul (verse 37).

Verse 37 is merely an extension of the argument of verse 36. Jesus is talking about the same thing: you can gain the whole world and still lose your soul.

Mark 8:37

For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

This is a rhetorical question. What will a man give in exchange for his soul? There is nothing that a man can give in exchange for his soul.

A soul is worth more than a \$1. A soul is worth more than \$10. A soul is worth more than \$100. A soul is worth more than \$1,000; \$10,000; \$100,000; \$1 million; \$10 million; \$100 million. How much is a soul worth? How much is the earth worth? One man answered the question like this: "The United States has a gross domestic product of roughly 11 trillion dollars. As a guess, the total worth of all assets in the United States is rough 110 trillion, and that of the entire world roughly 1 quadrillion dollars. In other words, if an alien race came and offered to buy Earth piecewise, would 1 quadrillion dollars be a reasonable total for everything." [\[5\]](#)

What's important here isn't the number, only to say that the wealth on the earth is astronomically large. Catch this: Your soul is more valuable than this (verse 36). I believe that the reason for this is because your soul will last forever. Even if you were given only one penny each day, in a billion, billion years, even with no interest, you will have more wealth than the earth contains. Here's the point, since your soul is so valuable, no sacrifice for its benefit will be too much.

It's totally worth it to deny yourself, to take up your cross, and to follow Jesus. You will never regret your investment. Let's turn to the fourth reason why we should follow Jesus, ...

Reason #4: Your shame (verse 38).

Mark 8:38

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

With these words, Jesus looks again at life with an eternal perspective. There will be a day when Jesus returns to this earth. It says in verse 38 that He will come "in the glory of His Father." That is, He will come not as He did the first time -- as a humble baby born in a feeding trough in a small village in Israel. Rather, He will come for all the world to see. When Jesus returns to the earth, there will be no doubt as to what is happening.

It says in verse 38 that He will come, "with the holy angels." Jesus often speaks of the angels coming in His return. It is their job to sort the

wheat from the tares. It is their job to divide the sheep and the goats.

Mark 13:24-27

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.

And in that day, we will all stand before God to account for our lives. And Jesus will be there to testify. Those who believe in Christ and trust in His sacrifice will find Jesus as an advocate (1 John 2:1), who will plead our case before the throne. He will say, "Father, this soul shall come into our kingdom, because He trusted in Me. My righteousness has become His righteousness. Let him in."

But, to those who have not trusted in Christ, Jesus will say, "I never knew you, Depart from Me" (Matthew 7:23). Now, one of the ways we trust Christ is to profess Christ. Romans 10:9-10 say, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

The heart believes. The mouth confesses. And it's the belief that drives the mouth. And so, if there is shame in professing your faith in Christ, it is indicative of a heart problem. In other words, if there is no profession, then there is no belief. And the word of warning here is that ...

Mark 8:38

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

If you don't profess Jesus in this life, don't hope that Jesus will profess you in the life to come. But, I want for you to notice here that the profession here isn't so much what you say, as much as how you live. There's nothing here in this passage about speaking. Rather, it's about living. Your life professes whether or not you have denied yourself, taken up your cross, and followed Jesus.

Your actions, your life, your words, your activities, your attitudes -- everything you do is a profession of what you believe. Jesus demands our all. It will be totally worth it. Don't be ashamed of Him. Follow the Messiah.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on June 17, 2012 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Cranfield, Commentary on the Gospel of Mark, p. 281

[2] <http://www.orthodoxlutheran.com/html/crucify.html>

[3] <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2012/06/14/stanford-gets-110-years-for-role-in-7b-ponzi-scheme/#ixzz1y3F0ThRL>

[4] Ibid.

[5] <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20071029233836AAnbTnr>