

# Lose Our Lives and Win

by Vic Zarley

***Mat 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.***

***Mat 16:25 For whoever desires to save his life shall lose it, and whoever desires to lose his life for My sake shall find it.***

***Mat 16:26 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?***

When our defenses go up, over minor or major incidents, we are attempting to preserve our miniscule egos, our personal forts. We are, in the above biblical sense, choosing to save our lives and die, rather than lose our lives (for His sake), and live.

Like the animals of the world, we have the tendency to either fight or take flight. But it is displayed differently because we are "civilized." Mostly, we use words to express our attacks (or our escapes) but sometimes we even go beyond mere words. We preserve our lives by defending our territory. And just what is it that we defend; our rights, our reputation, our stand on an issue or situation?



Jesus wants us to Follow His commands to love those who are hard to love. He said, when we love only those who love us back, we are no different from the heathen. He asks us to be different in this fallen world. This is a

type of death to us. It is death to our flesh nature and the flesh doesn't go down easy. Our bodies tremble with weeping, we no longer feel we are "ourselves," and our flesh mourns its loss. But by choosing to release the old ways of the flesh and embrace the new ways of the spirit, we are choosing to live.

The flesh is doomed to die physically and so we must separate ourselves from its goal of self-destruction. That self-destruction can happen suddenly or slowly, but eventually the goal of the flesh nature will be accomplished unless we submit to the life-giving spirit of Christ. Our souls are caught in this struggle for life between our spirit nature and our flesh nature. One of them IS going to die. We'll either die to self, or our flesh nature, by conforming to Christ, determined to follow His commandments. Otherwise, we'll die the sad death that occurs when the spirit nature is defeated and the Holy Spirit is grieved to the point of withdrawal. Our spirit nature will be like a firefly in a jar with no air holes, as we slowly suffocate, dwindle and die, our joy no longer pulsating and our light extinguished.

Sometimes we will become apathetic in order to preserve our selves. This is the simplest way to give into the flesh and kill the spirit. Jesus said he would prefer us to be hot or cold, rather than lukewarm. There are some who will choose to be martyrs for a cause they

believe is more valuable than their lives. These causes can be for good or evil. For the majority of us, however, we do not choose to give our physical lives for a cause. We trudge on slowly through this worldly maze, stopping to observe others on the road, while we pick the easiest road to meander. We may become enthusiastic for something for a time, then we return to drifting, like tumbleweeds blown by the wind, through this dry desert.

Besides physical death, which is inevitable, what kind of death are we going to choose? We certainly will choose one of them. Shall we conform to the ways of the world and die, preserving our world-built self, and be like those fireflies in a jar? Or shall we die the way Christ asks us to, in which there is a transformation by the renewal of our minds and a shedding of our old habit patterns? The second choice brings life to the spirit and the soul and releases us to a life that is rich and full in Christ, with His bountiful and eternal rewards.



Consider that these physical bodies are destined to live only around 80 years of age, more or less. Eternity looms ahead of us. What percentage of eternity is 80 years? It is a billion+ times less than a blink of our eye. It is a number that is no number. It is a million+ times less than .000000001%. It cannot be comprehended how small this meager life in the body is. And yet we hang onto it as if this is all there is. We hold onto it, like a dog latches onto a bone, not letting go for a minute, snarling and growling as we defend what is meaningless, in the long haul.

We will daily face decisions, concerning which death will occur in us. Remember, "no death" is not an option. One of the two deaths mentioned above IS going to happen. A part of either your flesh or your spirit will die in countless situations, depending how you chose to act or not act. Any choice that succumbs to the flesh nature causes us to conform to the ways of the world as we die a sad and pitiful, spiritual death. It is life to our spirits and souls to, instead, conform to the teachings of Jesus. Why not go against the wave of humanity's self-preservation, and be willing to die with Jesus's love and mercy embedded in our hearts and minds, and whispers of forgiveness on our lips?

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If we have received Christ as our Savior and have recognized what He did for us on the cross, giving His life in place of ours, we will be ushered into eternity to take our place beside our Lord, recognized as a true child of God. If we have not made a decision for Christ, we will spend the rest of eternity weeping and gnashing our teeth.

Much pivots on this brief time we spend on this carnal planet. All eternity rests on the choices we make right now.

Do we want to conform to the world and experience the death it offers, along with a strong sense of futility and purposelessness? This involves: hanging onto our pride, building our towers and kingdoms, being defensive and

antagonistic, living precariously as we follow the laws of the jungle, preserving our meager ways and trying to protect ourselves from rampant evil.

Or do we want to conform to Jesus and die to self, finding His abundant life and fulfillment in Him? This involves: loving our enemies; doing good to those who do evil to us (not resisting them); praying for those who persecute or hate us; recognizing that, though we are in the world, we are not of it; having a deep desire to share the fruit of the spirit with all who reside in the dark crawlspaces of the world, and who tremble uncontrollably in fear. Dying to self in Christ also means that we recognize that God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts and we are instilled with a desire to be perfect, even as our Heavenly Father is perfect.

The Lord has asked us to take a firm stand on living for Him. He wants us to live for Him, even unto our death. He says we defend ourselves trying to prove our points and we dig our graves with every shovelful of pride with which we try to bury others. Physical death is inevitable. But there is another death which occurs here on earth as we live. That is the death of the flesh nature or the spirit nature. Let us die to self and live for Him. Let us not die trying to preserve ourselves to live for the world.

If something stirs in you and you decide you want to die to self and live for Christ, please take a moment in prayer, confirming your choice. The Lord will accept this commitment and embrace you with His abundant love—which, of course, you will want to share. Give all your burdens to the Lord and stop trying to preserve yourself (which comes when we are offended or embittered or ready to tear our hair out for any reason). When you ask the Lord, "Take this from me, please!" He will do it.

Please pray:



***Lord, I want to choose the death that brings life. I want to choose to let the flesh nature, which seeks my destruction, die. I want to end all pride, aggression, self preservation, anger, rebellion, and everything that offends or grieves Your Holy Spirit. Instead I want to choose to nourish and encourage the spirit nature which is granted to me by Your salvation in Christ and Your indwelling Holy Spirit. Then I can be given life in the form of hope, love, joy, peace, kindness, gentleness and patience. I want to walk in those things so I can have the abundant life You have planned for me. Let me ask, in every situation of my life that calls for a choice, which response will bring life to my spirit and death to my flesh. That is the choice I want to make. In Jesus's name, I surrender my flesh and my will. Amen***



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which afflict and hinder her, especially in the west, so that the final harvest of souls can take place before the soon return of our Lord. To this end, we post the website:

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We want to encourage those of the Christian faith to be sure their lamps are filled with oil and pray that God will prepare their hearts, minds and souls for the trials and tribulations that must come to make us ready. The Church in the east and other persecuted areas of the globe is already walking in this fire, and we believe the western Church will also walk in this, in the very near future.

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Thank you, and God bless you.  
Vic and Eva Zarley

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