

# “What Shall a Man Give in Exchange for His Soul?”

By Chris Ulrich

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Hi. Thank you, musicians. Appreciate that, everybody. Oh, that's great. Always good to have some energy in God's people, and that's one thing for sure, and, this month we are looking at the Book of Mark, chapter twelve, verse thirty-three. And, I'm going to read the verse, it says:

**Mark 12:33** *and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.*

But, what I really want to know, “Who prayed for all this snow?” Anybody out there? Me and Brent. So, we got it, I swear to God. That is an honest-to-God fact, so, the stoning can come later, that's fine, that's fine, but it just goes to show that God does answer prayer, and sometimes in ways that we don't really expect. That is for sure.

But, can anyone here really say that they've ever seen God? How do we really prove that God is real? This might come as a little bit of a surprise, and, maybe not even sound all that spiritual, but, I'm not trying to debate anybody about the existence of God. Does that mean I'm on the fence, as far as my personal belief in God? Well, I would say, absolutely not. And, I would say that there's never been anything more certain of, in my life, as far as personally speaking. I'd like to ask Mike Alford if he could come up and leave this in a prayer for the service this morning.

**Mike:** Bow your heads. Lord Jesus, we just praise your Holy Name, Lord God, and thank You for all your many blessings Lord God. For loving us, for showing us your truth, Lord Jesus, and placing Us in this ministry, Lord God. And, we just want to finish the course that you have for us, Lord God, in our life, and, help others to be saved, Lord. You brought us to this point, and here we are today, and Lord, we want to pray for a special blessing on the message, today, for brother Chris, Lord God, as he leads the message, Lord God. He's got a message on his heart. Open up our hearts, Lord God, so that we can be all that you've called us to be, Lord, so that we can help others to be saved, too. So that we can hear, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” Amen.

Amen. Thank you, Mike. You know, we live in a time of rampant immorality and corruption, and violence, and the condition of society seems to be worsening a little bit more every day. I'm not saying that the structure of society has completely crumbled. We're not in the middle of a World War. But, doesn't it feel like we have to be, physically and spiritually, on guard all the time? Doesn't it seem like everywhere you turn, there's—you're just not so sure what the behavior of people will be? What their ways are going to be? What they're going to say, what they're going to do? Now, I'm not saying that making those statements is particularly insightful, especially in this circle, knowing that we're among Christian, godly people, and really, it's a no-brainer. I get that I'm in the company of fellow Believers, and, who makes similar observations. So, it's not as though a debate is going to erupt on the floor, but, speaking of debate, I want to get back to that part about people challenging our faith and belief in God. We talk to people, we read about people that have lost their faith or claim to have never had such a thing. Or we hear about those that are looking for signs and art seeing enough of them. Not enough proof in God is what others claim. Or then there's the argument, how can such a loving God let so many good things happen to good people.? We hear that often enough. We're seeing more and more

television, radio, new shows, internet that take subtle attacks, and sometimes not so subtle attacks at Christianity, or God, or the Bible, or people of faith in general. I'm going to ask Rick Matczyk to come; he's going to read from us from the book of Hebrews, chapter eleven, verses twenty-three through twenty-seven. But, it's sort of an onslaught of public opinion against Faith, against Christianity, against religion, against God, against the Bible, and we just hear it, and maybe it's because we're in a time where the population of the world is just continues to increase, so you hear more and more opinions. But I'd like to ask Rick, if you could go ahead and read from that Passage.

**Hebrews 11:23-27** *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.*

Thanks, Rick. "...As seeing Him who is invisible." our steadfastness and testimony in God is definitely going to be a factor in changing other people's lives, but, ultimately, we have to make that decision about living for God for ourselves. And, that awareness has to change our life first. We can't be concerned about what everybody else is doing. Yes, I believe in evangelism. We as a Ministry, stand by the need to evangelize and share with people the Word of God. And, be instant in season and out of season. This isn't something where we just go about it, and, have a plan of a certain time or set period, or a set day of the week, or a set time of the month where we share the Word of God; the Bible talks about being ready to give an answer of the hope that lies in us. And, that's at all times. It could be at any time. It could be a call, It could be somebody that we run into, it could be a family member, it could be a total stranger at the airport, or wherever we come across different people. And, our belief is not something we can force on people. But, we have to see that God is invisible ourselves, and let that guiding light to be non-stop, and let that understanding sink deep into our souls; that this is our best option.

## Part One: As Seeing Him Who Is Invisible

And, it's an ongoing battle to be godly in a physical world that's contrary, but we can win that battle every day. So, what do we do to convince ourselves that God is real every day? I would say it varies from person to person. I would say it's a matter of whatever experience you have, as far as your background. It could be that you came from really religious, or not very religious background at all. It really doesn't matter. It comes down to knowing that in him we live and we move and we have our own being. And, that's something that it's an ongoing relationship. And, whatever methods you're using, keep using them. It's not a matter of deciding, "Well okay, this isn't working." If it isn't working, then we need to get back on track. But, I'd like for you to turn with me to the Book of Romans, chapter one, verse twenty. This is one that, for me personally, it's a pillar, it's a landmark, it's something that I like to go to, it's something that God reminds me of quite often. And, it says:

**Romans 1:20** *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

So, I want to ask some questions: Do you see God in the mountains and the rivers and the lakes and the oceans and the rain and the snow? Do you see Him in the trains and the planes and the automobiles and the great cities of the world, and the castles that are built, and the Great Wall of China and the Grand Canyon? Do you see Him in sight, sound, sense, taste, feel? Do you see him in the fish and the whales of the ocean? Do you see Him in the creatures and the beasts of the field? Do you see Him in other people? There was a movie that Bob Heitzler and I caught, not too long ago, it's a little bit older, it actually—John Wayne was a little before my time, but I know who he was, and, this happened to be a movie where, it was he and some other people, they were on a safari. And, they were out in a country in Africa, and, what they were doing, was, they were capturing animals for zoos. So, if you've ever been to the zoo, then you understand why, obviously, they have to come from somewhere. Or, if you've been to in aquarium, you understand that these fish have to be caught, and brought in. I'm not here to talk about a social commentary, whether you think that's just or unjust, or fair to the animals. That's not really my point. It's really more talking about, there was a part where they were trying to capture a rhinoceros. Now, I've never personally seen a rhinoceros; I don't even know that I've seen one at a zoo, but, it was pretty incredible, seeing how they were trying to capture this animal. And, they were using ropes, and they were riding along side, and the rhinoceros would come, and it would ram the jeep that they were in. This movie was made in the early 60's, but it was pretty well done. That's not my real point, but it's seeing God in the things that are made. It really kind of dawned on me, that creature is one of God's creations. And, for me, it was kind of enlightening. And, I'm not saying that—maybe that doesn't sound very enlightening to you, but, when you look around, and we're seeing these different things, we're seeing the things of the creation, when we even look out—there's a place out in Arizona, and, I was out there several years ago, and I remember, right around the city of Phoenix, which is, it's a pretty populated metropolitan area, but, it's surrounded by a lot of mountains, and, a friend of mine, and my brother, we were out there one particular night, and he said, "Hey, let's go up here." And, there's this one area where it's really dark, but, the roads do lead up to it, and, I remember, we went up to it, and, this was probably 9:30 at night, but it was probably late December or early January, that's not really that important, but, I remember, we were looking up in the sky, and there was just an innumerable number of stars. I mean, far beyond what you would normally see, in other parts of the country. I don't know if it had to do with how dark it was, right in that particular part of the country, but, to me, I'd see God. You see God in something like that, and it's just an incredible thing. And, it's something that keeps us going, it's something that gets us, to remind us that seeing God who is invisible, but we see Him in the things that are made. We're not just waiting for God to just come down, which He did, He did come down in the form of Man, but it's a matter of seeing God in the other things. Seeing God in the things that He's created. And, you know, there was a period in my life when I didn't believe in God at all. I wasn't opposed to religion, or Christianity, or anything like that, but, I would say it had to do with my upbringing, which really wasn't very religious. Be that as it may, I would say that my parents did a good job raising my brother and myself. But, I know there was a point in my life where I really started to search for answers, and I really started to search for some direction, and started to look inwardly, and started to wonder, "Well, what is the meaning? What is this meaning of life? What is it that we're supposed to do? What is our life supposed to be about?" Because we know that there's a termination point. There is an end to it all. And, we see that in signposts along life is journey. But, I know that point in time when I was doing that searching, I wasn't ruling God out, and I knew that I wanted to give God a chance. But, I know that when God really started to deal with me, and started prove to me His existence, it wasn't me that was giving God a chance, it was God that was giving me a chance. And, I think that when we have that relationship, and we start to know God, we understand that it's God's great love, and it's not us just saying, "Oh yes, sure, I'll give you a chance, God;" it's the other way around. It really is. But, because His love extends so far, and so great, sometimes we get to think that we're in the driver's seat. And, that's not really the case. I'd like to ask if you could turn with me to first John, chapter

three, verses one through three. But, you know, when the Holy Ghost did touch my life, it did show me these things, and I started to seek even more, and understood that I needed to be born again, and establish a relationship with God that was an ongoing thing, I also began to understand that God's not going to be invisible forever. And, in First John, three, one to three, it says:

**1 John 3:1-3** *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

So, I want to ask some more questions that might sound a little familiar: Can anyone sitting here say that they've ever seen their soul? So, how do we really prove that we have a soul? This might come as a little bit of a surprise, it might not sound all that spiritual, but, I'm not trying to debate anybody about the existence of my soul. Sound familiar? Because I know I have one. And, I know that everyone who names the name of Jesus knows that they have one, too. I'd like to ask Ed Kretzer if he could come up. He's going to read from the Book of Mark, chapter eight, verses thirty-four to thirty-seven. Go ahead, Ed:

**Mark 8:34-37** *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. 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?*

So, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Does anybody here really want to deny themselves? Does anybody really, here, want to carry a cross, literally or figuratively? Does anybody really want to lose their life for the Gospel's sake, or any other reason, for that matter? And, they're not trick questions; I'm not looking to get anybody to raise their hand, or blurt out an answer. But these are the things that we have to mull over in our lives, and these are the things that we have to think about on our own, and over the course of time, and over the course of our life.

## Part 2 How Much Is Your Soul Worth to You?

And, it's no mystery that this Christian life is a life of sacrifice, and suffering, and, yes, affliction. For anyone that was here last week, and, Parrish delved deeply into the purpose of our affliction. And, he also talked about a Scripture from Psalms 137. And, I want to do something here, just a little bit differently, I think I can make this work. I'm not going to be showing any videos, by the way. But, I do want to play a little clip.

("Rivers of Babylon" from Mad Men)  
By the waters, the waters of Babylon,  
We lay down and wept, and wept, for thee, Zion.  
We remember thee, remember thee, remember thee, Zion.

I can't think of any song that I've ever heard that symbolizes that passage so well, or anything that I've ever heard that even alludes to that. Has anyone ever heard a song that mentions that

Scripture? I wanted to play that clip, because it really struck me, when I heard it, and, you know, there's kind of a haunting beauty to it, but there's also a soul-searching element to it. And, there's a spiritual overtone to that passage in that song, about a sadness that overrides... And, there's an impact in hearing that, that I believe coincides with that verse. But, one thing that God really dealt with me about, was, and Parrish shared as well, was that God is not wanting us to dwell in sadness and depression. Our affliction is real, but God isn't intending for it to overcome us and to figuratively hang our harps on the willows. Yeah, this is a life of sacrifice, and it's challenging, and there's suffering, there's affliction, sometimes it seems harder than it should be. But, it's also an extremely rewarding life, and joy, satisfaction, peace, contentment. There's so many victories the God gives us each and every day. And, sometimes, when you reflect back on them, and, even one thing that Parrish had mentioned, about, I can't speak for everybody else, but, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And, that goes for all of us. We can't know every single situation, or every struggle, or every financial crisis, or every health emergency, or every difficulty, or every tragedy, or sadness, or you could just go on and on and on with a lengthy list of adjectives, and describe the bitterness, and the horror, and the struggle, and the frustration, and whatever else there is, without balancing it out with so many good things that God does for us. I thought, just as I was reflecting back on the day, reflect back on the week, and the month, and I'm not saying that we're always reflecting back on our entire life, but I think we reflect back a lot of times on periods that we go through. It could be a year, it could be a week, it could be a timeframe where we're going through a health ordeal, or we're going through or maybe a change of jobs, or whatever the case might be, but, we've got to constantly think about those things that God does for us, because, what's He really promising us except that He would tell us what His Word is? He said, "The grace of God which brings salvation has appeared to all men." (Titus 2:11) All women, everybody. How much more of a promise to be told that this Word of God will be showed to us? There isn't any guarantees after that, or whether you're going to have a great or a difficult life or somewhere in between, which, I'd venture to say, most people are kind of in-between. But, I think the way things have gotten nowadays, it seems as though anybody that's got an outlandish story of difficulty, or struggle, or turmoil, or whatever the case might be, gets propped up, and gets giving a reality show, or whatever the case might be, and, because it's extreme. Because it's something where, "Oh, yeah, this will sell. We can market this." And, after a while, it's like, you know what? I don't have any real harrowing tales of extreme difficulty from my childhood, or, you know, I came from the most abused home, and that's not the case. I mean, truthfully, you know what? I know people in this room that, they lost their parents at young ages, or people that have had bouts with cancer, or people that have had their own business, on the other end of the scale, and have done well, or... So, I mean, you have a balance of what we go through in life. And, it's not a matter of just focusing on the struggle, or, like, "Oh, well, nobody likes me. Nobody. I don't have any friends." We've got to make friends. God's given us this power. God's given us the hospitality. God's given us the spirit of love and of power and of a sound mind. And, even like what you mentioned, Sonya, about just, getting off your seat, and going out, and making things happen, and making things happen positively. You know, like Andy had mentioned, about, most of us here are aware, that our General Pastor, Pastor Paine, and our Associate General Pastor, Pastor Ulysse, aren't here today as you can plainly see. So, I would say that all of us that know them, are kind of disappointed with that, that they weren't able to be here. And, I'll tell you what, personally, I'm kind of disappointed from the standpoint of, I wanted to be able to take notes from it, to be able to revisit it next week. But, I also look at it—I want to tie some things in today's sermon, and preparation of their upcoming visit, which is going to be a couple of weeks? The week of the twenty-fifth? And, make a few statements about it. So, we enjoy their visits, and their company, and I think a lot of that stems from knowing them a lot of years, but, also seeing how much they care about the congregation. They care about us unusually. And, in turn, we care about them, and it's a marvelous thing in the Lord. And, that's the way it should be. So, it got me thinking a little bit about that, that relationship, and how that caring is a component of charity,

which, as we know, is the greatest gift of all. And, then, it got me thinking about how that care influences what happens to our soul. Which, for a lack of a better description, our soul is the nitty-gritty of our life. That's what makes us who we are. And, it got me asking these questions: How much is our soul worth to us? Is there anything worth anything more? And, how much do we care about our soul? And, do we have the same amount of care for our own soul, that those that watch over us have for our soul? Because, it's our soul that they're watching over us, more than anything. Yes, they're going to try to make sure that things are taken care of, if somebody has a struggle, or if somebody has a financial hardship, or if somebody's not able to make a payment on a bill, or whatever the case might be, and, you know, an illness, they're going to be there as much as they possibly can. But, how reasonable am I, or how reasonable are we, as far as my expectation of what they can offer? Because, ultimately, I've got to care about my own soul to the extent that, how much do I really want to be saved? How much is this really worth it? I mean, we look around, and think, okay, we talked about this a couple of months back, that our walk with God is a lot more than just Sunday morning at ten o'clock for a couple of hours. It's a great gathering, but, we look at it like that there's so much more to it. It could be just a gathering where me and Howard go out for breakfast somewhere. It could be something where me and Ed Howes and Jeff Interiano go out for coffee. Or, Rick Matszak takes me out for my birthday. Something like that. Or, somebody does something— we do things for each other that go beyond the walls of this. That is really what our walk with God is all about. It's not something where it's just, delegated to, "Well, I'm going to make the minimum effort, and show up, and then, that's it. After that, I'm just going to do whatever I feel like doing." Well, that just kind of defeats the purpose.

But, the title of the sermon today is, "What Shall a Man Give in Exchange for His Soul?" And, they that watch over us, do it, that they might do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for us (Hebrews 13:17). So, yeah, I'm looking forward to their visit, and I know that you're looking forward to their visit as well. It's something where you can see that energy, you can see that godliness, you can see that care. And, we look at what the Bible talks about casting our care upon the Lord, for he cares for our souls (1 Peter 5:7). That's going to be what's going to make the difference. That's going to be what's going to keep us going. That's going to be what's going to want us to stay in the race, and continue to grow. We've got to want to see the ministry prosper. But, it's not for the sake of any personal gain, or any strings attached. It's a matter of looking at it like, "Well, this is where I heard the gospel Truth. This is where God saved my soul. I'm going to stick with it." Do I like how everything is gone, over all the years—and I'm talking about logistically, I'm not talking about doctrinally, I'm not talking about the ways of people, or "They did me wrong!" or "I did them wrong!" and sometimes, I've got to say this: sometimes I think there's too much said about, anytime somebody does us wrong instead of thinking about, "Well, what about when I say the wrong thing to somebody else?" If I'm focusing constantly "well, no, I they did me wrong, they said this..." and after a while, it's like, "Well, did you ever do anything to anybody else in your life?" and, I'm not directing that as a personal attack, but, I'm thinking—I've shared this before, growing up, this might sound horrific—I mean, if the social media got a hold of this, "Oh, my God, put this guy in prison."—I bullied some kids, and I got bullied myself. It just happens. Am I justifying it? Am I saying, "This is right? This is where I'm making confession." That's not it at all. I'm just saying that as we get older in life, and we enter society, and the workforce, and these things like that, we make mistakes, and other people make mistakes at our expense at times, too. So, then it's a matter of looking at it like, "Well, I've got to be able to get over it." I've got to be able to have enough strength that God gives us to be able to be able to withstand, to be able to endure, to be able to continue and a look at it from the standpoint—again, it's not as though—you know, I shared just a few, a couple of things about, they're have been so many different things that people have done for me, and I'm talking about mostly in this ministry. Yeah, I've had other people, like from work, or family, that have done things generously, but, I would say that the things in my life, that people have done for me, I'm talking about, on the receiving end, a bulk of it has been things from people in this ministry. So,

if I don't look back and say, "Wow, that is God in operation." Now, have I done generously? Yeah. That's not patting myself on the back, and that's not for us to say, "We did so good. We did so great. I just—we've done that visiting," that's not it at all. It's not about bragging, or it's not about building up a list of all the good deeds, it's really about having good works. It's just a having a pattern of good works. Of having stewardship, and being well rounded in God, but, in the end, and I'm closing here shortly, nothing else is going to matter but our soul. And, we should care about it. I've never looked this up until now, but, the word 'soul' is actually written in the Bible 498 times. That, too me, kind of blew me away. I mean, really, I was thinking, it might be, eighty, fifty, a hundred, something like that. I mean, I looked at it, and, sometimes, God sort of throws a curve ball, but, I say that, because it's an indicator of how important it is. Our theme for the month is loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And, if we do that, absolutely we're going to be saved. You can't do that, God is not saying, "This is what you must do, this is what I'm asking you to do," and then leave us out to dry, or leave us out to hang in the breeze. It's going to be a matter of, we get baptized in Jesus name, we're born again, we live that life, and, I'm not saying we could do that, and say, "I love you, God, with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength," and secretly be living a double life. That's not going to cut it. And, that's not going to work. And, ultimately—and, in the Old Testament, it says this, it says: surely your sin will find you out (Numbers 32:23). So, it's not as though God doesn't know about it, even before we do it. It's just about, God give me the strength to be able to not do it. And, give me the strength to be able to do some things in life that are enjoyable. Again, we talked about affliction, we talked about sacrifice, we talked about struggling and hardship, but, if I look at—just, I'll take my day, yesterday. And, I'm closing, here, pretty shortly. I went out, I did some walking, which was pretty hard in the snow, but, I got through it. You know? The car started, I got to a place—I'm purchasing some cabinets for an apartment. Had the money to do it, thank God for a job. The lady, you know, "Oh, yeah, here," she even gave me, like, a birthday gift. It was just little things like that. Went to the grocery store, got a few things. Went home, did some shoveling. Watched a movie last night, an older movie, and, it's like, okay, so, over the course of the day, if I look back, and say, "Oh, I'm depressed," about what? I'm thinking the day went pretty good. I mean, was it the greatest day in my personal life? No. But, it was a pretty good day. I mean, overall. Was I tired after shoveling? Of course. Of course, who wouldn't be? But, you know, it's not going to matter in the end where we lived, what kind of car we drove, what kind of job we had. And, don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to—I'm trying to do the best I can with what God's given me. I'm trying to do the best I can, as far as—yeah, I want to live somewhere decent. I want to have a decent job, I want to have good health, if God gives us that ability to take care of ourselves, sure. But, while we have time, are we laying up treasures in Heaven? Because, Christ spoke about that thing, and feeding our soul with those things is what's going to matter more than anything else. Doing those things that God has said, "If you do those things, you will never fall." (2 Peter 1:10) Yeah, it's a hard life. Ultimately. But, it's a great life. I don't have any regrets whatsoever. In fact, sometimes I feel like, I just thank God. I don't want to turn back. I know, sometimes—I just turned fifty, not too long ago. But, I think, a lot of times, as people get older, and they think about, "Oh, yeah, I wish I was back in my twenties, or I wish I was back in my high school years," and, I'm thinking, "not me!" I mean, honest to God, I'm looking at it like, thank God that I've gotten to this point. Thank God has stilled me in the faith of God. Thank God I have my name written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Thank God that, one day, God is not going to be invisible at all. There's one last passage I want to share, and then I'm going to close finish up. It talks about, that, the things which are seen are made of things which do not appear (Hebrews 11:3), it's in Hebrews, chapter eleven, as sure as we're standing here, everything that we see was made of something we can't see with our physical eyes. And, ultimately, our soul is worth more than anything else. Thank you for your time. God bless.