

Luke 17:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

Analysis

Jesus warns: 'Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it' (ὁς ἐὰν ζητήσῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν, καὶ ὁς ἐὰν ἀπολέσῃ ζωογονήσῃ αὐτήν). The term 'psychē' (ψυχὴν, life/soul) encompasses both physical life and spiritual existence. The paradox—self-preservation leads to loss, self-sacrifice leads to preservation—appears throughout Jesus' teaching (Luke 9:24, Matthew 10:39, John 12:25). The verb 'zōogoneō' (ζωογονήσῃ, preserve/make alive) suggests more than mere survival—gaining true, abundant, eternal life. This saying, in context of His return (vv.22-37), warns against clinging to earthly security rather than following Christ at any cost.

Historical Context

Jesus speaks about His second coming and the days of Noah and Lot (vv.26-30), warning against being caught up in earthly concerns. Remember Lot's wife (v.32) who looked back toward Sodom and became a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26)—an example of seeking to save one's life (clinging to the old life) and losing it. The passage warns against attachment to temporal things when eternal realities demand full commitment. Early Christians faced this choice literally—flee persecution and save physical life or remain faithful and risk martyrdom.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What areas of your life are you trying to save or preserve that Jesus might be calling you to lose for His sake?
2. How does the promise of preservation through loss inform Christian attitudes toward suffering and sacrifice?

Interlinear Text

ὅς	ἐάν	ζητήσῃ	τὴν	ψυχὴν	αὐτὴν·	σῶσαι	ἀπολέσῃ
Whosoever	G1437	shall seek	G3588	life	his	to save	shall lose
G3739		G2212		G5590	G846	G4982	G622
αὐτὴν·	καὶ	ὅς	ἐάν	ἀπολέσῃ	αὐτὴν·	ζωογονήσῃ	
his	and	Whosoever	G1437	shall lose	his	life shall preserve	
G846	G2532	G3739		G622	G846	G2225	
αὐτὴν·							
his							
G846							

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 10:39 (Parallel theme): He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

John 12:25 (Parallel theme): He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

Matthew 16:25 (Salvation): For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Revelation 2:10 (Parallel theme): Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

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