

Matthew 16:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Analysis

Jesus presents discipleship paradox: 'For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it' (Greek: ὃς γὰρ ἐὰν θέλῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν, 'for whoever wishes to save his life will lose it'). The word ψυχή means both 'life' and 'soul.' Those clinging to physical life, comfort, and self-interest will lose eternal life. Those surrendering life 'for my sake' (ἔνεκεν ἐμοῦ) - willing to die for Christ - will find true life. This is complete reversal of natural self-preservation instinct. True life comes through death to self.

Historical Context

Martyrdom was real possibility for early Christians. Within one generation, James was executed (Acts 12:2), Stephen stoned (Acts 7:54-60), and tradition records most apostles martyred. This paradox sustained them - physical death for Christ's sake meant eternal life. The principle extends beyond martyrdom to daily self-denial. Paul embodied this (Galatians 2:20, Philippians 1:21). Honor-shame cultures valued life-preservation and family legacy; Jesus radically reorders priorities around Himself.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does this paradox apply beyond literal martyrdom to daily Christian living?
2. What aspects of life are you clinging to that Jesus calls you to surrender?
3. How does losing your life for Christ's sake result in finding true life?

Interlinear Text

ὅς	γὰρ	ἂν	θέλη	τὴν	ψυχὴν	αὐτὴν	σῶσαι	ἀπολέσῃ
whosoever	For	G302	will	G3588	life	it	save	shall lose
G3739	G1063		G2309		G5590	G846	G4982	G622
αὐτὴν	ὅς	δ'	ἂν	ἀπολέσῃ	τὴν	ψυχὴν	αὐτὴν	
it	whosoever	and	G302	shall lose	G3588	life	it	
G846	G3739	G1161		G622		G5590	G846	
ἕνεκεν	ἐμοῦ	εὕρήσει	αὐτὴν					
for	my	shall find	it					
G1752	G1700	G2147	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.

Revelation 12:11 (Parallel theme): And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Mark 8:35 (Salvation): 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.

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.

Luke 17:33 (Salvation): Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

Esther 4:16 (Parallel theme): Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

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