I received an e-mail this week (maybe some of you did as well) from Microsoft advising that their terms and conditions of service had changed.

Attached were 30 pages of “I don’t care” for me to read and agree to…

Since I had not read the previous version of “I don’t care”, I wasn’t likely to read this one…

So I just clicked “agree”, otherwise you know what happens…

Your computer becomes your new boat anchor…

In Mark 8 we find Jesus laying down the “terms & conditions” for a crowd of people who had recently decided that they wanted to join His team and become His “disciples”.

The thing about Jesus’ terms however, is they never change, they’re never cancelled, and they’re never altered to accomodate anyone’s lifestyle or system of belief.

Agreeing to live by His “terms & conditions” results in hearing Jesus say at the end of their life - “Well done”… and He’s not talking about “no pink in their middle”… - Matthew 25:21

For those who disagree or never choose (which is a choice not to agree)… they have chosen to live eternally without God, and the Bible calls that hell… Where everyone is “well done”!

So… any ideas that we may have about following Jesus have to be brought under the authority of this passage… because they are His “terms & conditions” not ours.

It’s important to know that before we read it, otherwise some of us may go wrong in their thinking.

Some may believe that in order to be a Christian, you simply have to:

* Pray a prayer of forgiveness. And as a result of that
* You had better try your hardest to be good and hang in there until you die.

Which is upside down Biblically…

John 6:44 - It’s an act of GRACE that God draws people to Himself, thru His Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 1:2 – It is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit that makes it possible to obediently serve & follow Jesus.

So the distinguishing feature of a life that AGREES - believes, is a life that follows.

Earlier in Mark 8:27-33 Peter identified Jesus as the Messiah.

Then Jesus explained what that meant for Him to be Messiah.

Now He goes on to explain what it means for anyone to be His follower.

Basically He says, “the pathway that I must walk, is the pathway that you must walk.” (Kind of sounds like following…)

It’s the path of the Crucified Christ, but it’s also the path of the Conquering Christ. Never lose sight of that truth.

A pathway that eventually ends in GLORY, with a MANSION & a CROWN…

But first, Jesus must tread the dark and loathsome path of humiliation…

So as we read what Jesus says to the crowd it has to challenge any belief that one may have of simply “inviting Jesus into our hearts, and making a few minor adjustments to their lifestyle. Surely the Holy Spirit wouldn’t produce that…

For if we continue the way we were going, and add a little Jesus now and then, thinking we’ll be okay with God in the end…

Is like regularly eating a DOUBLE quarter pounder with cheese, a large fry, and a Oreo Mcflurry…, and believing that as long as you keep washing it all down with a diet coke, that somehow magically you won’t increase in size or that your scale won’t tell you the truth!

It’s silly… isn’t it?

Jesus starts His terms & conditions (of which there are only 2) with…

1. They must deny themselves. Mark 8:34
2. This isn’t for a select few, but for all who are being drawn to follow Christ.
3. Life is no longer about themselves and their agenda.

Which truly is proof that only the Holy Spirit can produce this in the life of a believer, because apart from God, mankind is all about themselves.

So the kind of transformation that’s involved here isn’t one that says “here are a couple of conditions that I’ll do my best to stick to.

No, the Spirit of God produces evidence in the follower, that by grace thru faith, we have been united with the Lord Jesus Christ. His Majesty!

And in that union with Christ, fruits of the Spirit begin to emerge.

Gifts and graces begin to reveal themselves as we give ourselves to discipleship and Spiritual growth!

So much so that friends, relatives & neighbors may be:

* Challenged by them.
* Annoyed by them.
* Maybe fascinated by them.
* THE BOTTOM LINE IS THEY OUGHT TO SEE THEM!

Because let’s be real… it would be one thing for the people in this crowd in Mark’s Gospel to:

* Hang on every word Jesus said. He was a gifted speaker.
* To follow Jesus physically.
* Marvel at the miracles of Jesus (as I’m sure they did).

They could do all of that, but never bow their hearts to Him as Lord.

You see life is all about us, until by grace, we discover that it’s actually all about Jesus.

That’s the whole idea behind V35 - “losing one’s life to gain life”.

“Giving one’s life for Christ”

Only by denying oneself can they find who they were created to be in Christ. Why does it seem so difficult?

I shared with the group on Wednesday that when I left for Chicago, I had to do a double take, because it looked like Billy Joel was in the First Class section!

Where else we he be? Certainly not with me in coach!

Whether or not it was him… some of Billy Joel’s songs came to my mind, one of which was “My Life”.

I don't need you, to worry for me, 'cause I'm alright

I don't want you, to tell me, it's time to come home

I don't care what you say anymore, this is my life

Go ahead with your own life, leave me alone…

Gee… I wonder why that was such a hit song?!!

Because it speaks to the very nature of man without God in their life!

It tells us we can have whatever we want! It all about satisfying ourselves!

Which is why Jesus’ terms & conditions may appear so RADICAL!

But denying ourselves is where we find the TRUE US…, who we were created to be in Christ.

The song we sang earlier by Geo. Beverly Shea – “I’d rather have Jesus”

I'd rather have Jesus than men’s applause

I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause

I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame

I'd rather be true to His holy name

What we seek in life and what our priorities are, reveals much about who we are following…

The second term & condition Jesus gives in V34 is…

1. Take up their cross.

Let’s begin with what Jesus didn’t mean here…

* Strained relationship one may be in.
* Thankless job one may have to do.
* Physical illness one is suffering with.

Self-pity & pride may make some refer to those things as “the cross they have to bear.”

But that’s not what Jesus meant when He said, “take up your cross”.

The people in Jesus day knew exactly what it meant for a person to “take up their cross.”

It meant only one thing… An individual was facing shame, humiliation, pain, being forced to carry part of the means of their execution on their shoulders, to the place of their execution.

People who “took up their cross” didn’t come back!

But isn’t that why we Christians sing – “I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back…”?

because that’s what happens when we agree to His terms & conditions… the old us fades away, never to be seen or heard from again and the new person arrives…

The only thing waiting back in the old life is shame, fear & condemnation…

And don’t let your mind get sidetracked because many of us have not been called to pay the ultimate price with our own lives like the saints that paved the way for our Salvation…

Don’t rest and get too lazy in that thought…

Because our life isn’t over yet… Yes we live in the safety & freedom of America, but as the book of Revelation points out, one day this is all going to change.

Revelation 20:4 – Who get’s rewarded in the end?

The one’s who “took up their cross” and lived faithfully by the terms and conditions of Christ, and did not take the mark or worship false gods/idols.

You see unlike Microsoft, Apple, and everyone else… Christ’s terms & conditions are not new, they won’t change or be rescinded.

It’s in light of this very fact that Paul wrote:

Romans 12:1-2

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Those are more defining marks of a follower of Christ.

Mark 8:34 ends with “and follow me” but personally I don’t believe that’s a third condition.

I believe it’s the result of denying one’s self and taking up their cross. Because what else is there to do at that point?

We commit ourselves to live in absolute allegiance to the person of Jesus and absolute adherence to the Gospel of Jesus…

The late Jim Elliot, missionary to primitive indigenous people in the jungles of Ecuador, was an AMAZING example of this.

He lived the quotation that he is so famous for… “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain that which he cannot lose.”

Another profound quote of His is…

Mark 8:38 goes right along with V35.

Often the problem with folks today is we live so much in the now, that it is difficult for them them to even consider the future & what’s coming…

Our oldest daughter (37) texted me the other day and said “Dad, I wish I had taken better care of myself when I was younger!”

We’re only 20+ years ahead of our children…

* We’ve seen the future!
* We know it’s real!
* We know you’re going to need your body, so cool it and take better care of yourselves.

Jesus is saying the same thing from a spiritual standpoint.

* “count the cost of what your chasing & who you’re following because it will impact where you spend eternity”…
* I’ve seen the future, I know it’s real!
* You can choose honor now and shame later, OR
* You can choose shame now and honor later when I return….

Jesus is coming back!

Ecclesiastes 3:11 reminds us that God has set eternity in every human heart. Everyone wants to go to heaven!

But you must first “agree” with the terms & conditions of Christ.

You’ve been sitting for a while now, so let’s stand and take advantage of the opportunity God is giving us today:

• Are you willing to give your life for Jesus if it means possibly losing some of your closest friends? He’ll give many more new ones…

• Are you willing to give your life for Jesus if it means possibly being alienated from your family? He’ll give you a new, much larger family…

• Are you willing to give your life for Jesus at the risk of losing the reputation you’ve worked so hard to create for yourself? Jesus has a better one waiting…

• Are you willing to give your life for Jesus if it means losing your job?

• Are you willing to give your life for Jesus if it means possibly losing your life here?

If you’ve never made that decision, I invite you to come to an altar to pray and give your life for Jesus.

Maybe you have already prayed, but you never really understood His terms & conditions and you want to truly give your life to Him today.

Won’t you please come to an altar and take care of that with the Lord today as we sing… Is your all on the Altar.