

THE WORTH OF A SOUL

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark 8:36.

Matthew 16:26

Luke 9:25.

Our blessed Lord was drawing near to the end of His earthly life. Around Him were gathered the twelve apostles and many people. His disciples were grieved by His allusion to the death He was soon to die. They realized that continued loyalty to Him would prove to be very costly to them, that discipleship involved much that was hard and even seemingly impossible. While they were mentally disturbed by the thought of His departure, the Lord Jesus confronted them with this question, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

This is indeed a searching question. It is also an exceedingly important question. No more important question was ever asked. It is pre-eminently a personal question, one which ought to be carefully considered by every one of us. It is a question of profit and loss and has its application in the realm of spiritual mathematics. It is one of the greatest questions ever propounded to man. It demands your immediate attention and your most thoughtful consideration. This question of our Lord should be sufficient to arrest your attention, to kindle your interest, to deepen your earnestness, and to stimulate your enthusiasm. He most certainly challenges your reply when He asks, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Doubtless the objective of the question is to awaken in man a sense of the incomparable value of the soul. Some may contend that this is not the highest standpoint from which to look at this matter of the soul's salvation, that a man ought not to desire the salvation of his soul merely because it pays.

Jesus always adapted His address to His audience. To these keen business men, whose standard of values was wrong, and who were in great danger of bartering away their most precious possession for things which perish in the using, Jesus put this straightforward and business-like question, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" He thus appealed to their prudence and common sense. He would have all men come to their religion as to any other great interest, guided by reason and sound judgment, and accept or reject it on the ground of the world's great controlling questions, alike in His time, and our time, and all time, "Is it profitable?" "Is it worth what it costs?" "Will it pay?"

In the light of our subject and text, which ought to be very much in all our minds, I should like to make four observations.

I. Man Has A Soul.

Our Lord never argued about the existence of the soul, because the soul is one of the many self-evident realities. The Bible never defines the soul, just as it never defines God; it assumes both. So it was with Christ. He never gave any definition of the soul, but He lived and spoke as if the soul was the one thing of great value. If we had no Bible, if we had never heard a sermon or a song or a prayer, we would still know that there is something in us that will never die; there is something in us that cannot be

buried; there is something in us that will never perish. That is why the untutored Indians whom our ancestors found in this country would bury the tomahawk and other hunting equipment with the dead Indian in order that he might have them in the Happy Hunting Ground. That is a crude conception, but it shows that the untutored Indian believed that there was something beyond this life. In all the pagan religions of the world there is something which corresponds to what we call the soul. When the day came for the greatest of our Greek philosophers, Socrates, to drink the fateful hemlock and die, his friends asked, "Where shall we bury you?" He said, "Bury me? You will have to take hold of me first. What you may do with this house, this body, I care not, but the soul, the soul that lives, you cannot take hold of, you cannot bury." So, there is no argument on the question of the fact that man has a soul -- that is assumed. Every person possesses an immortal soul.

II. Man's Soul Is Invaluable.

Among the great lessons which Christ taught while on the earth was the transcendent and infinite value of the soul. Its infinite value is seen in its origin, its operations, and in its redemption. That the worth of the human soul is inestimable is obvious when we consider:

1. The infinite price paid for it.

That price was not "corruptible things, as silver and gold But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." No one, who thinks for a moment of what it cost God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit to redeem the soul, can doubt its infinite worth. The richest blood, the bitterest tears, the sharpest pains, and the deepest groans ever known were all given for the souls of men.

2. The intrinsicity of its worth.

Christ set a high value upon the soul. He made it, and He bought it back. It is the candle of the Lord in man. It was stamped with the likeness of the Eternal. The intrinsicity of its worth appears in its spirituality. It is spiritual in its essence, for it is a spark lighted by the breath of God. Genesis 2:7 says, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." It is spiritual in its object because it contemplates God and heaven.

3. The immensity of its capacities.

The human soul has measureless capacities and untold possibilities. Each birth begins a history, the pages of which are not written out at once. It can be a Saul or a David, A Nero or a Paul, a Byron or a Bunyan, a shadow or a star. The soul has marvelous susceptibilities. It is a pearl above all price. It can go to heaven, or it can go to hell.

4. The immortality of its being.

It is an immortal spirit; a flame that can never be extinguished; a light that can never be put out; it is unseen, but eternal. The soul is the indestructible part of man, that which exists when the body dies. Your spiritual possessions will be yours --

While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures.

The immortality of the soul is a subject on which men of all descriptions have agreed; on which the best and the wisest have had their testimony confirmed by the most careless and the worst. Martyrs have shown their sense of its value by their sufferings. The dying saint, Richard Baxter, said to some friends who visited him, "You come hither to learn to die. I can assure you that your whole life, be it ever so long, is little enough to prepare for death. Have no care of this vain, deceitful world, and the lusts of the flesh. Be sure you choose God for your portion; heaven for your home; God's glory for your end; His Word for your rule; and then you need never fear that we shall meet in comfort."

Our estimation of the worth of a soul differs from that of our Lord, because we do not know its potential, sublime heights and terrible depths as He does. In His sight, the worth of a soul transcends that of the world. And this is true in spite of the fact that this beautiful world is a grand and valuable piece of property. Its flowers are God's thoughts in bloom. Its rocks are God's thoughts in stone. Its mountains are God's thoughts piled up. Its valleys and plains are God's thoughts spread out. Its dewdrops are God's thoughts in pearl. Its rainbows are God's thoughts in falling raindrops, kissed by golden sunbeams. Its diamonds are God's thoughts in congealed drops of sunshine. God made this wonderful world that it might be used and enjoyed by man, but not that it should be enjoyed to the exclusion of the Maker of it. It is a sad fact that most men value material things more highly than they do spiritual things, temporal things more highly than they do eternal things.

However, let us frankly admit that the world has a real value. There is something in it worth having. Let us not be foolish enough to make light of worldly prosperity, of happiness, of friendship, of learning, of wealth, or of a place of power. It is surely nice to be above want, to have no undue pressure from without. And if we think of the blessings of learning, surely no one will care to despise the people to whom knowledge has unfolded her ample page, rich with the spoils of time!

To gain the whole world means to get all the territory there is, all the wealth there is, all the honor there is, all the fame there is, all the social position there is, all the pleasure there is, and all the power there is; in fact, everything that appeals to the senses. Regardless of how much of the world one may gain, three things are absolutely certain: --

1. No one can gain the whole world.

At best, one can only hope to gain a small part of it. The only things we can call our own are those things which become a part of us and which can never be taken from us.

2. The world does not last.

John 2:17 says, "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." Wealth does not last. There is no permanence of possession upon earth. Your most cherished possessions will soon revert to others. Pleasures are as temporary as a bubble upon a roaring flood. Robert Burns said, "Pleasures are as poppies spread, etc." Truly the cream of the world's pleasure cup is on the top. The first is the best.

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"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await, alike, the inevitable hour,
The path of glory leads but to the grave."

3. The world does not satisfy the soul.

Those who gain a portion of the world are not contented. Gain engenders a fresh craving for more. Wealth cannot make a person happy. I challenge the world to show me one happy rich person. Getting wealth is like drinking salt water, the more you drink the more you want and the less room you have to contain it. Riches take wings and fly away. If got, you fly away from them. Honor cannot satisfy the soul. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." Does power satisfy any man? Fame is as a vapor, for they that cheer you today will curse you tomorrow. How foolish then to forfeit your soul to gain what you know never satisfied anybody. Your soul is worth more than all the universe if every grain of sand was a diamond and every drop of water was a pearl.

III. Man's Soul May Be Lost.

1. Such a loss is possible.

- (1) By persisting in sin.
- (2) By rejecting Jesus Christ.

2. Such a loss is foolish.

3. Such a loss is deplorable.

4. Such a loss is irreparable.

Other losses may be repaired. Lost friendships may be regained or replaced. Lost health may be restored. Lost property may be recovered. But the loss of the soul can never be retrieved.

5. Such a loss is eternal.

IV. Man's Soul May Be Saved.

Since Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins and to provide salvation for you, then come to Him and accept Him as your own personal Saviour. Do not neglect the salvation of your immortal soul. Come to Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Won't you surrender your soul and life to Him now, and come forward, confessing Him as your Saviour during the singing of the invitation hymn? Accept His offer of salvation without delay. Who will confess Him now?