

The Value Of A Soul

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From a general observation it would seem that life was never more cheaply esteemed than in our own age. Two great world wars within a quarter century, taking millions of earth's fairest manhood, not to mention the thousands lost through accidents from carelessness, and hundreds of deaths from malicious intent bespeak this fact.

While on the one hand, mankind has spent so much effort and resources seeking to develop methods and ways of destroying life, there is shown on the other hand an intense effort to learn how to preserve and save lives. This interest in preserving life, however, has pertained primarily to the physical and not to the spiritual life of humanity. While the great wars were being conducted we see the great destruction and carnage throughout the world and varied thoughts filled the minds of different persons. Some thought of the value of the property destroyed; while others thought of the sufferings endured; some were concerned about the millions being wasted on munitions and the debts being incurred. Some thought of the lives being thrown away, while a few, most likely very few, thought of the value of the souls being flung into eternity, forever --lost. And just one single soul is of greater value than all the millions wasted, property destroyed, and labor expended. It is upon the value of a human soul, your soul, my soul, that we wish to focus our attention in this particular study.

One of the striking differences between the Son of God and the rest of mankind is the infinite difference He placed upon values. With Jesus Christ the value to be considered above all else is life; with men it is things, material values. Upon one occasion when Jesus "began to show unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up; Peter took him, and began to rebuke him saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall never be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a stumbling block unto me for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited, if he gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" (Matthew 16:21-26).

Here is seen a wonderful contrast in values: the whole world on the one hand, and one soul, on the other. Also here is seen the divine estimate God places upon one soul, one life, when He reckons it to be worth more than all the world. Two words in the text need explaining: the words WORLD and LIFE or SOUL.

The word "world" is used here to sum up that which appeals to the five senses: (What we can see, hear, smell, taste, and feel) all that would come under power, wealth, or pleasure. Suppose one should gain all of these the world offers, which no person can ever acquire, yet lose his soul: Jesus says it is a foolish bargain. Great men of history testify by their own lives that power never satisfies. It is said that Alexander the Great

wept when there were no more nations to conquer. The rulers of our own age, living and dead, are testimonials to the failure of power to satisfy. As they gained much they wanted more.

Material things are not the object of life's quest. Of men and wealth, Carnegie, the great steel magnate, said, "Millionaires never sing and seldom smile." Wealth is a burden, a care to most people who possess it. And when we consider pleasure, I believe it can be safely said that beneath the pleasure-seeker's seeming happiness, usually there lies a heavy heart which he tries to keep covered by the frivolities of the world. Most suicides of our country come from one of these three groups.

When one comes to die, he comes to say "goodbye" to all these; he leaves them forever. Solomon is an example of one who sought all three: power, wealth, and pleasure, to which he added worldly wisdom beyond any man of his day. Yet, when he reached the evening of life he was constrained to say, "All is vanity and a striving after wind. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, all hath been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecc. 12:13). Friends in this listening audience, why will not the world be taught by these examples and words of wisdom. So many are striving after the vanities of life, paying for these worthless bargains with the price of their own soul, the most precious possession in the world.

The LIFE that we are talking about is that part of man which comes from God; that spirit that was made in the image of God. It is that part of man that reasons, thinks, loves, hates, knows. It comprises the intellect, the affections and the will of man. It is that part of man destined to eternal consciousness, either with God in heaven or with the devil and his angels in hell. Jesus described the latter as "outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth." The man or woman who loses his or her soul loses all; one who makes such a bargain, though he gain the whole world, is at the last a fool. Jesus Christ taught this great lesson that mankind needs to learn today. He taught it, not by mouth only, but also by His own example. As to material things, He recognized righteousness as true power and pleasure. His joy was in doing the Father's will. Although despised by others and finally crucified, no man ever lived a fuller life; no man ever lived a more perfect life, for His was without flaw; and no man left humanity such a legacy, for He left it an open and sure road to happiness here and heaven hereafter.

God's estimate upon the true value of a life is seen in the sacrifice made when He gave His Son to save one soul. So often we think in terms of the sacrifice of Christ for the world, which is certainly true and declared by the Word of God; but likewise we should think in terms of the individual; it would cost God just as much to save one soul as to save the whole world. Hebrews 9:22, states, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." This is as true of one, as of billions; as true of billions, as of one. Let us notice a few passages of scripture which discuss the sacrificial offering of Christ for mankind. "For God so love the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). "But

God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). And again, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son do be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9, 10). There are other passages which emphasize the individual aspect of Christ's sacrifice. Note Hebrews 2:9, "But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels crowned with glory and honor that by the grace of God he should taste death for every man." Here is revealed God's estimate of the value of one life; not only worth more than the world, but of such inestimable value that His own Son died to redeem and save it.

With the vast majority of earth's millions today, life is simply a combination of "shams." Far too many are seeking the things of this world. And they seem to be willing to lose their souls in search of these things. Many, many, many, have accepted the philosophy of the rich fool to "eat, drink, and be merry." But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" (Luke 12:19, 20). Someone has said, "A shroud has no pockets in it." My friend, we will take nothing with us when we leave this fleshly body. Does it not seem wise to make preparation while here so that when we answer the grim reaper our soul will be right with our Creator?? We must "deny ourself, and take up his cross, and follow Him." To follow Jesus means that we will be like Him in all things. Listen to the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2:21-23, "For hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

The whole of the spirit of Jesus Christ is set forth by the apostle Paul in Phillipines 2:5-8, "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." The spirit of Christ is the spirit of self denial and sacrifice, humility and obedience to the Father's will. And, this is the need of the world today.

As you think, my dear friend, about the world and your own soul, can you not realize its intrinsic value. When life shall have come to a close, and the spirit takes its flight from this sphere, of what value will all the material and sensual things of this world be then? None!. In the midst of a burning building you wouldn't think of things, you would think of life. In a world passing away, think of the value of your life, your soul.