

The Value of a Soul

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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Cover Photo: Abby DeVries on hill overlooking Seoul, Korea

INTRODUCTION

Today's society is very much value oriented. The star running back on the professional football team is paid more than the second string player because he is supposedly worth more to his team. Gold is held to be more valuable than silver in the precious metal markets. Clothes produced under the name of a famous fashion designer are valued more than those made by a lesser-known designer.

To God, however, nothing is worth more than the soul of a man. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem souls and open the way for them to spend eternity with Him in Heaven. He would have all men come unto Jesus and be saved.

This is the Good News. When I realize this in my own life, then I should share it with others. It is vital that Christians have this attitude about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have the greatest message of all. It is the news that

Jesus Christ, God incarnate, came from Heaven and died for the sins of the world so that men would be saved from eternal damnation.

This booklet explains God's estimation of a soul and is intended to motivate believers to become involved with seeking and saving the lost.

Chapter One

WORTH MORE THAN ALL THE WORLD

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

“Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36-37).

In God’s estimation, there is nothing more profitable than a believer who is committed to sharing the Gospel with the lost. To such an individual, soul-winning is a constant willingness and readiness to share the Gospel at any place or time under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Even at times when there is not an opportunity to share, the true soul-winner has an attitude of prayer for those around him, recognizing that they are eternal souls who are of great value to God.

God revealed the plan to send His Son in Genesis 3:15:

“And I will put enmity between thee and the

woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The woman's seed speaks of Jesus Christ. The verse foretells of Satan bruising Christ's heel (His humanity) at Calvary. It also reveals that the Messiah shall bruise the devil's head, referring to how the whole of Satan's power and dominion shall be put under Christ's feet (Colossians 2:15). Of this verse in Genesis 3, Matthew Henry commented, "A gracious promise is here made of Christ, as the deliverer of fallen man from the power of Satan. It was said in the hearing of the first parents, who, doubtless saw a door of hope opened to them. Here was the dawning of the gospel day. No sooner was the wound given than the remedy was provided and revealed." God unveiled the promise of the coming Redeemer. He was committed to redeeming men's souls.

If there is one thing that much of Christianity is struggling with today, it is the truth that one soul is worth more than anything. God values the soul of the starving child in Africa more than all that money could buy. The soul of an alcoholic is worth more to the Lord than all of the oil in the Middle East. God esteems the soul

of the teenage runaway more than all the gold and diamonds in South African mines.

Every single soul is precious to the Father. More than ever, Christians need to comprehend the value of one soul. Every moment people are dying and going to hell. One soul is worth more than all the world.

Jesus as a Soul-Winner

What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth? It was not to build a great empire. He came not to establish a religious organization. No, Luke 19:10 says that Christ came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Through the entire chapter of Luke 15, Jesus illustrated the principle of seeking that which is lost. A sheep was lost from among the ninety-nine and the shepherd left the flock to find it. After losing a single coin, the woman dropped everything and searched throughout her house until the coin was found. When the prodigal son left home, the father waited, watched and prayed. At the son's return, the father welcomed him with open arms. Every time something was found, there was rejoicing. Likewise, there is great rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who is found through believing on Christ and receiving His

salvation (Luke 15:10).

This is the most tremendous truth in all of the Bible. Academics are important, and exegesis can be a very useful tool in interpreting the Word. But as necessary as those things are, James 5:20 declares that “he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” Some modern theologians have tried to rationalize it away, but the fact is that God sent His Son to earth for one purpose: to win souls.

Chapter Two

JESUS MEETS SINNERS

Jesus met the woman at the well in John 4. This woman had been married five times, and at this point she was living with a man outside of wedlock. Jesus offered her the living water—she received Him and was saved.

In Luke 19, Jesus entered Jericho and noticed Zaccheus up in a sycamore tree. He shouted, “Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house” (Luke 19:5). Zaccheus was a very wealthy publican—an occupation noted for scandal, and one that was despised in the Roman world. In his *Bible Dictionary*, William Smith wrote that the publican’s job was “the basest of all livelihoods. This was enough to bring the class into ill favor everywhere.”

When Jesus made the announcement, many in the crowd with Him murmured. But Jesus did not care about what was being said. Something far more important was about to take place. On

this day, salvation would come to the house of Zaccheus (Luke 19:9).

In John 8, the scribes and Pharisees caught a woman in the very act of adultery. They brought her to Jesus and asked Him what to do with her. He said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). Convicted in their hearts, everyone in the crowd departed, and Jesus was left alone with the adulteress.

"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

"She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:10-11).

Only a short time earlier, this woman was engaged in sin. However, Jesus reached her with His love. She recognized Him as Lord and received His forgiveness.

Nicodemus, one of the chief Jewish religious leaders of his day, came to Jesus by night, according to John 3. He had studied the Scriptures for years. Perhaps he recognized Jesus as the representative of all his learning. Nicodemus had questions and came to Christ for answers. In response, the Lord explained to him the ne-

cessity of spiritual regeneration to enter the kingdom of God:

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

Taking the Word to the Streets

“And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him” (Luke 8:1).

Jesus did not wait for people to come to Him. Keep this in mind—He came to “seek” the lost. Zeteo is the Greek work for “seek,” and it means “to pursue in order to find.” Christ went after the lost. He did not stand still. This passage records that Jesus “went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.” The phrase “preaching and shewing” is *kerusson kai euangelizomenos* in the Greek text. This phrase can be defined as “heralding and evangelizing.” And, Jesus took the disciples with Him. Why? So that they could learn from His example. In Luke 10, Jesus sent out seventy, two-by-two “into every city and place, whither he himself would come”

(Luke 10:1).

“Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

“Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

“Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way” (Luke 10:2-4).

These three verses clearly illustrate how a believer can stir his heart for souls. First, he must recognize the need. “Harvest” in the Greek text of Luke 10:2 is *therismos*. This word was used to describe a crop ready to be reaped. There are souls at the point of decision, ready to hear and to receive salvation.

Next, Jesus instructed believers to pray that God would move men to seek the lost. Then, He said, “Go your ways” (Luke 10:3). “Now that you have seen the need, do not stand still. Go out and begin to reach lost souls” is what Jesus was saying here.

Jesus told the members of this group that they would encounter hostility, for they are sent as “lambs among wolves.” In effect, He said, “Go as you are, and keep in mind your purpose. Do not become entangled in anything that

would hinder you from reaching the lost. The destinies of souls are in the balance.”

D.L. Moody said that the Christian’s purpose on earth is to “snatch men from a sinking ship.” Jude 23 says, “And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.” This world is faced with many crises. Daily, men and women struggle in search of solutions to problems in the environment, the economy, and international relations. Like never before, God needs believers who will comprehend the value of a soul and commit their lives to winning the lost and to glorifying God.

This does not mean everyone should quit their jobs and become missionaries, although God certainly will call some to do just that. Some will be called to be lawyers, doctors, waitresses. No matter what your occupation may be, the believer can be a full-time testimony of Jesus Christ. He can be disciplined, honest, and hard-working. Everything a believer does should make an impact for the kingdom of God.

Chapter Three

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SOUL-WINNING

In Acts 2, 120 people gathered to wait upon God. The promise of the Father was about to be fulfilled. Christ had ascended to heaven and soon would send the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower His disciples. Finally, the day of Pentecost came. Like “a rushing mighty wind” the Holy Spirit came and filled the room (Acts 2:2), and the disciples began to speak in other languages (Acts 2:4). People all over Jerusalem heard the noise. They were “confounded because every man heard them speak in his own language” (Acts 2:6-8). Peter then spoke out to the crowd and 3,000 souls were saved. The first manifestation of Holy Spirit’s presence resulted in souls being won.

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls”

(Acts 2:41).

The Spirit gave the Apostles boldness. The Pharisees and Sadducees implored them not to “speak in the name of Jesus” in Acts 5:40, but “they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42).

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

The unlearned Apostles simply testified of Jesus and of what they had seen Him do. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the disciples’ testimonies turned “the world upside down” (Acts 17:6).

Putting God First

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Why should Christ be first in the believer’s life? Why should he study the Bible? Why should he obey the truth and accept the plan of God for his life? The answer to all of these questions is because of John 3:16. God so loved the

world that He sacrificed His own Son upon the Cross to redeem men from their sins. The believer who does not have a burden to see souls saved has not really considered what this verse means. Think of the love that God had for men when He planned redemption. This should motivate Christians to be evangelistic in all that they do. The lost need someone to communicate to them the plan of God's salvation by grace. Certainly, every believer can remember the time when he was lost and how he was saved by receiving Christ.

Before the foundation of the world, the Father, the Son and the Spirit planned to redeem mankind (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20). Making a way for souls to be saved was a priority in the mind of God. Soul-winning should be a priority in the Christian's life. The late evangelist John R. Rice said that "soul-winning is the biggest job in the world."

Every day there are many who pass from this life and into an eternity in hell. Jesus has commissioned Christians to share His Gospel with the world. Nothing should be allowed to impede the progress of this purpose. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:12, "suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ." In the his-

torical context, the Apostle to the Gentiles was deliberately declining his right to receive money for his work in Corinth. Why? So that the Good News would not be hindered. To Paul, money was of no value in comparison to souls. He considered the Gospel to be a sacred trust: “According to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust” (1 Timothy 1:11).

CONCLUSION

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (Romans 13:11).

“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14).

As these two verses affirm, believers only have so much time on this earth. Thus, it is imperative that they do not waste it. Paul told the Christians at Colossi to “walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time” (Colossians 4:5). Proverbs 11:30b explains that “he that winneth souls is wise.” Satan would have believers occupy their precious moments with the cares of this world. God’s plan is for His people to make the most of their time by winning souls. Yes, the Christian should pray. He needs to study and hear the Word of God.

However, these things should increase his desire to spread the Gospel.

Missions organizations have released figures in recent years that show an alarming decline in the number of missionaries on the foreign field. The challenge before Christians today is monumental. Millions of lost souls need to be reached. God can touch these souls. But to do so, He needs believers who are determined to keep the Gospel from being hindered. These are Christians who will purpose in their hearts to be doers of the Word and to be witnesses unto Christ in their communities, in their nations, and in their world.