



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Something worth the world and more.



A sermon preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church on Lord's Day 14th February 1999

There is more to becoming a Christian than many suppose.

The Saviour makes that clear in the passage before us. He is responding to Peter's rebuke, in which the apostle withstood the Saviour when He said that He was going to Jerusalem, where He would die at the hands of the elders and chief priests and rise again three days later. The Saviour calls Peter 'Satan' for he savoured not the things that be of God, but those that be of men, verse 23. Peter recoiled at the idea of Christ's rejection and death and the reproach that would surround such an event, and so protested in a sinfully strident manner. He was but acting in response to his fleshly understanding of what was the best way, by which the cause of Christ could be advanced. But Peter's thinking was not according to God's honour and glory.

What a terrible thing it is for a Christian to think like and act as spokesman for the devil! It is clear from this incident that the best of Christians may do just that. Those who do are an offence to Christ.

In response to Peter's outburst, the Saviour gives His definition of a Christian. *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*, verse 24.

We must deny the desires of our sinful hearts if we are to be saved. We must take up the cross of reproach and shame and follow Christ if we are to be saved. We must turn our backs upon the so-called delights of the world if we are to be saved. We are, in the eyes of the worldly man, to throw away our lives, to lose our lives. That is the Saviour's exposition of the way to heaven.

A powerful argument is required to persuade men and women to embrace the strictures that the words of Christ reveal are an integral part of being a true Christian. That argument is revealed in the Saviour's next words. *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* verses 25-26.

The incalculable value of the soul is what makes the denial of self, the embracing of the cross of Christ, and the apparent loss of a life of joy and pleasure worthwhile, since these things are necessary if we are to get to heaven. The path of self-indulgence will cost the sinner the eternal salvation of his soul. Its salvation makes whatever sacrifices the Christian appears to make worth it all. Did Lot feel he had made a loss when he left all his possessions behind and fled the city of Sodom? I would think that he counted the saving of his life more than compensation for whatever was lost in the flames of Sodom.



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The Lord Jesus would have us see the short-lived value of the treasures of this world. Its grandeurs will soon pass away. That was the lesson He taught His disciples when they invited *Him to join in their admiration of the architecture of the temple. Heed His response. And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*, Mark 13: 1-2.

All the treasures of this earth are as nothing in comparison to the eternal value of the soul. For the sake of our eternal souls we must be ready to part with all that would hinder us following Christ.

The supreme importance of the salvation of the soul and its unequalled preciousness is our consideration tonight.

I. THE NATURE OF THE SOUL

Here is a topic to which little thought is given. May we give it attention this evening as much as our understanding of God's Word will permit us.

1. The soul is that essence of life within our bodies. *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*, Genesis 2:7. This verse shows the physical body of Adam brought forth from the dust of the ground without a soul. Before the soul entered, the body was inanimate matter. It was the presence of the soul that communicated life to the physical body of Adam. *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*, James 2:26. The removal of the soul from the body brings physical death.

2. The soul is distinct from the body. In Luke 16:22-23, we read of the funeral of the rich man. While his body was being buried by his mourning family and friends, his soul was in the torments of hell. In like manner, the body of the thief who repented remained upon the cross where he died, while his soul was in paradise with Christ, Luke 23:43.

Man is more than a body. Man does have a soul. It continues its existence when the body sinks down to dissolution and death. Let us reject the ungodly views of the evolutionist who would have us believe that man is just as the brute beast. Death ends its existence. You have a soul that deserves your utmost attention.

3. The soul is immaterial and invisible. It cannot be touched or seen. We may be called upon to attend loved ones in their dying hours. We may see them declining. We may witness their last breath. But we will not see their soul depart from their body. It is invisible.

The Saviour's words to his unbelieving disciples after His resurrection demonstrate this. *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have*, Luke 24:39. The body is only the earthly tabernacle of the soul.

4. The soul is immortal. It cannot be destroyed. Sin will bring the body down to the grave where it will return to the dust whence it came. *For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*, Genesis 3:19. But not so the soul. The damned wish that annihilation



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would end their existence one day. It would give hope in hell if such a thing were possible. But no, the unredeemed soul will dwell forever with the consequences of its sin, which are the eternal miseries of God's wrath.

II. THE VALUE OF THE SOUL

Here is another reason why we should give urgent attention to our soul's salvation, irrespective of what is required of us to safeguard it for eternity.

1. The Saviour says that it is worth more than the whole world. The treasures of the world are incalculable. The value of its precious metals, stones and minerals already in man's possession and those that lie still in the bosom of the earth is beyond our comprehending, never mind calculation. The Saviour says the soul is of greater value by far than the whole world. The loss of his soul will wipe out all the profits that man may have gained from the world.

2. Its value stems from its creation. It was the last of God's creation and to it special attention seems to have been given. God spoke and the world was made. But He breathed into existence the soul of man, Gen 2:7. Man has within him that which came from the very mouth of God! Even upon the soul of fallen man there are those discernible marks which indicate something of its wonder when, before the fall of man into sin, it bore the perfect image of God.

3. Its value stems from its operations. Here is a subject of vast dimensions but let us endeavour to set forth something of the properties of the soul. It is the seat of personality - it is you. It is the seat of emotions--it perceives, reflects, feels and desires. It is the seat of the will. It determines, it weighs and decides. More than this, it comprehends the creation and, above all, communes with the Creator. The regenerated soul has the capability of fellowshiping with God and embracing Him by faith!

4. Its value is seen in its redemption. Would God have paid so much for its deliverance if it were not worth it to Him? He would not squander the coin of the blood of His dearly beloved Son on something that did not warrant such a price.

III. THE LOSS OF THE SOUL

Here is why the soul is worth more than all the world -- the world and all it contains cannot compensate for its loss!

1. Its loss involves the loss of all enjoyment of God. I am very conscious that if the Holy Spirit does not apply my words to your heart, then I will be as one that speaks in riddles. May it please God to bless His Word to you.

God is the fountain of joy and the lost soul is cut off for all eternity from God. He is the fountain of all peace and joy and delight. If you are cut off from God then you are embraced by the fulness of misery. *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*, Matthew 25:41. Here is what it is to be cast away from God and lose your soul. The soul that dies in its sin goes out into outer darkness where nothing of the comfort of God is to be found.



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Take heed tonight, dear sinner, for your soul's sake, lest you be lost forever. Better to lose the world by taking up the cross and following Jesus and submitting to the rule of His Word, than to lose your soul.

2. This is a loss many have suffered. The unrepentant man [Luke 13:3-5], the unbelieving man [Rev 21:8], the ignorant man [2 Thess 1:8], the unconverted man [Matt 18:3], the worldly-minded man [Rom 8:13], the negligent man [Heb 2:3], all these will lose their souls.

Some here in this meeting can recall with sorrow those who sat in gospel meetings, who were often the subject of solemn warnings, but tonight they are in a lost sinner's hell.

3. It is a loss many more will suffer. Some here are on the road to losing their soul. You are careless and disobedient. You give no heed to the warnings of God's Word. You follow on with others on the road to hell. *Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* Ezekiel 33:11.

I read of a man who met a flock of sheep, as he was walking across a bridge over a ravine with a fast flowing river. One sheep suddenly jumped over the low parapet of the bridge to its death. Without hesitation, others in the flock followed, not knowing the fate that awaited them. The Bible warns us of the fate of the soul that plunges down into hell. Heed its warning tonight.

Have we not all read of the avalanches in France, when suddenly, millions of tons of snow have swept down upon the unsuspecting skiers below. Beware, lest you be swept out into a Christless hell and your soul is lost.

4. It is a loss which can be averted only by striving to enter into the strait gate that leads to heaven.

Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able, Luke 13:23-24. These words of Christ, not a direct answer to the question posed, but rather the stressing of a more important matter, ought to be heeded by you.

The story is told of a fire breaking out in a house and the woman of the house rushing about saving what few furnishings she could and then suddenly remembering her child, only to be beaten back by the flames from the room where she had left it. What sorrow and grief were hers as she with weeping lamented the salvage of her furniture at the loss of her child.

Beware of losing your soul. *Seek ye the Lord while He may be found*.

What a blessing it is to know your soul is safe! That blessing may be yours today. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*, John 3:36.