

The Preciousness of Your Soul

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Date: 23 October 2011

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[0 : 00] If one would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

Especially these words we have in verse 26. Probably better known for us and better understood for what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul, which is his life effectively, or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

What is it, I wonder, that makes our soul so important to us?

And why does Jesus focus in this area so often and in such a serious way? Do we really need to worry about it and about our soul when we can live here in the world quite happily and there are plenty of things to amuse us, plenty to keep our attention span, and plenty of things to keep us quite happy and to keep us occupied in so many different ways, perhaps far too much nowadays, with the way that we're living our lives in a constant rush and stress and so on.

[1 : 44] The point is that we all know that we're going to die someday. And the Bible tells us quite clearly that there is life after death, and also that even when the body dies, that the soul will live on.

And Jesus says here that the individual soul, it is so special, that it is more precious than anything and everything that this world could offer.

Your soul could not be exchanged for all this world has to offer, because your soul is so precious. And that's the emphasis that Jesus has here.

What I'd like to do is just to look at these words especially, and first of all to consider the origin of our soul, and we'll go back to Genesis to do that.

And then secondly to ask the question, why is our soul so valuable? And what's caused it to be so valuable? And thirdly, what are we willing to give in exchange for our soul?

[2 : 59] So first of all, to consider the origin of the soul of human beings. And humans are unique because, they're unique for two reasons really.

One, because we are made of Adam, and Eve, they were made in the image of God. And secondly, human beings, they were made to have a unique relationship with God.

Now when I talk about being made in the image of God, what I mean is that man has been made to be like God in a series of ways.

To resemble God in some of his attributes or characteristics. And human beings have been given the capacity that sets us apart from everything else, all the animals and everything else that has been created.

God has given human beings the capacity to reason, and to look at things morally, and in a proper and upright manner.

[4 : 09] And also, he's given human beings language, and also the capacity to enter into relationships that are based on loving relationships between each other.

And also, especially God's greatest desire is to have loving relationships with his own people. So humans have given that ability to have loving relationships with God as well as other human beings.

And also, human beings have been given the capacity to be creative up to a point. And these are just some of the attributes, some of the characteristics that we enjoy as human beings, being made in the image of God.

Now, Genesis tells us, right back in Genesis chapter 1, at the very beginning, and in verse 27 there, God created man in his own image.

In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them, and God blessed them. And in chapter 2 also, and at verse 5, then that's reaffirmed there, When no bush of the field was yet in the land, and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up.

[5 : 26] For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land, and was watering the whole face of the ground. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Man became a living creature. And when I talk about man, I mean male and female. And man became a living being, when God breathed life into him. And this was a divine in-breathing that gave life. And that's where and when the basis of human life began.

The body was formed from the dust, but the body was just a lifeless corpse, until there was this divine in-breathing by God himself.

Now, in that first chapter of Genesis, we're told there that there were other animals, and other creeping things, and other things created.

[6 : 38] God had created the sea creatures, and God had created the land animals, and all animate life. But the Hebrew translation of the Bible does not give the animals a soul.

It simply translates and tells us, tells us that they were beings that were created as living things. But God breathed life personally into man.

And that is where the difference is. And that's significant. And that didn't happen with the animals. And when God breathed his life into man, then it's that very breath, and that life from God, that has formed our being.

That is the spirit, and that is the whole person, and that is the personality of each one of us individually. Man lived for a time in perfect harmony with God.

And they lived in perfect fellowship with God, and perfect harmony with each other. In Genesis chapter 3, and in verse 8, we're given a glimpse of that fellowship that they had.

[7 : 55] The Lord came into the garden in the cool of the day to be with Adam and Eve. But of course, that was after the fall, and Adam and Eve had hid themselves from the Lord.

But it gives us a glimpse of that close fellowship and that close relationship that there was between Adam and Eve and the Lord himself. And that's the way it was.

God and man meant to have this close relationship in a perfect, sinless world. That's the way it was meant to be, and that's the way it was meant to continue.

So, it's our whole being inside our body, our mind, our thoughts, and our character, our inner heart, our feelings, and our will that makes up the soul of each one of us individually.

The body really is nothing more than an outer shell. No matter what we might like to think of the body, it is really nothing much more than an outer shell which is used to carry out the actions of the heart and the mind in a practical kind of way.

[9 : 18] But of course, in the garden, that relationship was broken into when Satan came and tempted Eve. And both she and Adam, they directly disobeyed God and they did so by eating of the fruit that he had forbidden them to eat.

And at that time that we understand the time of the fall, when man fell, then the image of God in him was corrupted because of sin.

That is when sin entered into the experience of human beings. And the Bible is really crystal clear in this.

It tells us that all sin is an abomination to God, that God cannot look at sin at all in any way, shape or form, and he will not tolerate sin in any way either.

Not even a sin that we might think is a tiny sin. Not even a sin that we might think it doesn't really matter, that's just a little sin, that's just a little bit, I've gone astray, just a little bit, but that doesn't really matter, God won't bother about that.

[10 : 35] God sees all sin as an abomination in his eyes. It does matter because God is a holy God and God is a righteous God as well.

So from the moment of the fall, then God also, he delivered a righteous judgment on Adam and Eve and really on the whole of mankind as well.

In Genesis 3, that chapter, in verses 16 to 19, we see that there are three particular judgments that God makes because of the fall, because of their disobedience.

First of all, he brings a judgment upon the woman, and that judgment is that in the blessing of childbearing, which is uniquely harsh, then God greatly increased the pain that she would suffer giving birth to children.

There was also a judgment given to the male, and that was that the work that was given to him to do by God, that it would now be a toil.

[11 : 44] There's working in the ground. It was going to be a continuous, painful toil, and the ground was going to be constantly springing up thorns and weeds and thistles, and he was to work the ground by the sweat of his brow.

And then, thirdly, there was a judgment put on both of them. And that judgment was that they were to die physically. God says, you were taken from the dust, and to the dust you shall return.

And that was a judgment that was put on them. And so the sin which Adam and Eve committed in the garden, that disobedience and rebellion against God, that is now imputed and applied to every single human being that has ever lived and ever will live.

And the reason for that is because Adam and Eve, they were the representative heads of humanity. Just as we have representatives in all different walks of life, for example, let me just mention our local councillors, they are representative of all the different communities and our whole area here, and they speak on behalf of us.

The same as it is in all the different levels of government, that there are people there who are representing us, and the decisions, and the actions that they take, then we have to suffer the consequences, good or bad, whatever it is.

[13 : 11] And there are many different issues in all of that. So in that way, then so it was with Adam and Eve. They were our representative heads, the representative heads of humanity, and so their decision and their action is now imputed or applied to each one of us, and we have to bear the consequences of that, and serious consequences they are as well.

The whole of the human race from beginning to end is included in this, including you and me this evening. Now the soul is distinguished from the body, and the soul continues to live after the body is dissolved in death.

the question this evening is, where is your soul going to exist in eternity? And that is the warning, and that is the question, and that is put by the Lord here.

So I'd like to now move on secondly and ask this question, well, why is your soul so valuable? Well, God saw the result of the fall, and he saw how it put the people, these unique people, humanity, that he had created, how it now put them immediately into a state of sin and misery.

They were cast out of the garden, and they were cast away down into a world that was now sinful. And Ephesians 2 actually gives us a very good description of what the way that we are born into this world.

[14 : 57] And Paul gives this description as he speaks to the church in Ephesus, to the Christians there, but he reminds them of how they were. And he says, and you were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

And then he says, he repeats it actually in the same chapter, and brings it more solemnly into their remembrance. He says, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision, by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands.

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Now that's serious, that's the way that because of the fall, because of sin, that is the way that we are all born into this world. We are born as alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, we are children of wrath, we are under God's wrath and curse, having no hope in this world.

God saw that that was the result of the fall and the result of sin. And God also saw that human beings were now his enemies because there was no longer this relationship, this close relationship.

[16 : 32] They were now far apart. Humanity and God were now far apart because of this breach caused by sin, caused by the fall.

every single human alienated from him as a consequence of Adam's sin. But God loved this world so much we're told in that marvelous verse in John chapter 3 that he gave his only son, Jesus

Christ, that whoever would believe in him should not perish but have eternal life.

God did was this. He put his plan into action, a plan that would offer salvation to the whole of mankind, the whole of humanity.

This is called the plan of redemption or the work of redemption. redemption. And as I mentioned in the morning, I think it's what's commonly understood by many, many of the commanders named as God's rescue plan.

His rescue plan for humanity, for poor souls like you and me. And he did this so that human beings would have an opportunity to get themselves right with him again, to get themselves back into a good and proper relationship with him again, to resume that loving relationship and to be restored into the image of God once again.

[18 : 13] That was the whole reason and purpose for the plan and it was all to be to his glory. But atonement had to be made of course and we discussed this in the morning that no ordinary human being could pay this price because perfect obedience was required.

And there's no human being, no sinner capable of perfect obedience. It had to be Jesus who came into this world, the sinless son of God came into this world and he took all our sins upon himself and he suffered the air at Calvary both physically and spiritually.

He had all of the hatred and venom of mankind around the cross there just thrust at him, directed at him and he suffered physically on that cross.

But not just that of course. He also had, as he hung on that cross, all the forces and the evil of hell were unleashed upon him in an attempt to destroy him.

But he endured that on our behalf and he overcame and he was perfectly obedient and he gave himself to death willingly because he loves us.

[19 : 46] Because he loves us. And he cried out these marvellous words at the conclusion of all that happened on that cross at Calvary.

It is finished. Into your hands I commit my spirit. The work was done and this new way was opened up. He overcame death and he rose from that grave on the third day, the glorious resurrection of the saviour of the world.

Our soul is so precious and so valuable that it required God in the person of his son to come and pay the ransom for it.

That's how precious our soul is. He could do nothing greater for us than to do that work.

on the cross. What an overwhelming display of love by God and all for us, for you and I and for the whole of humanity.

[21 : 00] That's how precious our soul is. And I want to ask finally now, what are you willing to give in exchange for your soul or to trade for your soul?

I think this word barter or trade is at the meaning of this word exchange. What are you willing to trade your soul for? And this is something that we need to look at and especially any who are in here tonight, Tim, who are still not in a saving relationship with the Lord.

Lord, then I want to just focus for the last ten minutes on this part and just ask what exactly it is that you're willing to trade for your soul when now you've been told how precious it is that it took God in the person of his son to come and to pay the ransom price for it.

Some people say, well, if Jesus, if his sacrifice was sufficient to make atonement for all, for all people and for all of God's just demands, some people say, well, surely my soul can't be lost now. But here is the difference now with this new covenant, new teaching, new way of salvation in Jesus Christ. And the difference is there is now a personal responsibility on every single human being to make sure of their salvation and to seek the Lord and to go to the Lord and to cry out for mercy and for forgiveness and to seek the restoration of that relationship with them.

[22 : 34] This personal responsibility on every single human being. That's the difference. to become this new creation, this new creature, the new creation in Christ Jesus.

It's been brought into a newness of life and just as God breathed into man at the beginning of creation to bring humanity into being, this divine in breathing.

Well, so it is here with this new life in Christ Jesus. It is a divine in breathing, a breathing of new life into the soul of a person. Life breathed into us by the spirit of Jesus, the spirit of God.

And that leaves that person totally reliant on the blood of Jesus for their salvation and the forgiveness that there is and the efficacy that there is in that blood to cover sins.

It's his walk by faith in this newness of life, a new spirit breathed life, being a new creation. The word I mentioned in the morning, being born again into this new life, this new creation in Christ Jesus.

[23 : 58] And what Jesus says in the passage here is, he says, you must deny yourself and you must take up your cross and you must follow me. That's what's required. Now, when he says deny yourself, he doesn't mean, just as we would understand it, just deny yourself something or deny yourself that or deny yourself this.

That's not what he means at all. What this phrase means, and we need to understand this, it means something much deeper. It's a fundamental reorientation of the principle of life.

These are big words. I want to try and explain it very briefly. What it means is, very simply, it means you stop putting yourself first and you put Jesus or God at the centre of your life.

That's the difference. That's where the change is. A complete 180 degree turn from you being the most important person and the most important thing in your life and everything that you can get and have.

It's a complete turn so that God becomes the centre of your life. That's what's required with this denying self. To believe in Jesus Christ because it's only then that your true self will be discovered in Christ.

[25 : 26] And that's priceless. And that's when you realise the value of your soul. And that's when you realise the price, the ransom that was paid for your soul personally by your saviour.

That's where the turning is. And that's how you understand the denying self. It's changed from the selfish self instinct to God being the centre of your life.

life. And what that clearly tells us is that if you don't have faith in Jesus, then your priorities are still focused on yourself and they're still focused on the things of the world and your own interests and desires.

And really, what you urgently need to do is to give real regard for what Jesus has done for you. And the thing is, if you remain in that state until you die, then your soul will live on, but it will live on in hell, in a lost eternity, in a place prepared by God for those who have not given their lives over to him, those who have not denied self and those who have not cried out to Jesus or sought after him.

Now, you know, it's a fact of life, I think, as human beings, we all put death as far away from ourselves as possible. Even as I'm growing older, I'm still putting it as far away as possible at times.

[26 : 59] I think it's a natural thing that we as human beings do from a physical, practical kind of manner. Spiritually, as the Lord's people, we long to be with him. But the physical aspects of death, we recoil from them and we put them as far away from ourselves as we possibly can.

And the point is as well, you know, we weren't meant to die. Adam and Eve weren't meant to die, but from the time of the fall, death came into their experience and so into our experience.

Our soul wasn't meant to be torn away from our body at all. But it's going to happen, and it's going to happen because of sin. And that's what I want to address this question towards.

To anyone here who is still out of Christ, I want to ask you a question here. What is more important to you this evening than Jesus? What is more important to you than the salvation of your soul that Jesus offers you?

There must be something or some things that are just so important to you that you will not give any of your time to Jesus in any meaningful way.

[28 : 17] Something that's holding you back and causing you to be willing to ignore Jesus and his teachings and what he asks you. And don't lose sight of the searching character of this question that I'm asking here.

What's more important to you this evening than Jesus? Because I want to put it in a particular way here. And I want to ask you to consider what can be accumulated in this life that you're going to take with you into eternity.

Because that's the question that Jesus is asking here. And this can come up in so many different ways. But I want to do it quite simply.

Because in some areas of life you have the kind of Del Boy character who's always this time next year I'm going to be a millionaire. And that's all that he or she lives for.

And that's their one goal in life and nothing's going to budge them. Not even Jesus. Not even the risk of losing their soul. Other people are into animals. Other people have their own dreams of all different things.

[29 : 21] Others dream of winning the lottery and so on. And that's what the focus of life is on. That's the idea I'm coming from here. And I want to put it in a very simple straightforward way.

In a simple profit and loss ledger. We have a debit account and we have a credit account.

Whatever's in the credit account is to your gain.

Whatever's in the debit account, that is total loss. So let's look at it this way with different things that we have in our lives. I think first and foremost as we're living our lives here we see that we have our relationships and families that are so precious to us.

But when the time comes for you to pass on, they go in the debit column, precious as they are just now, you go into death on your own, your family stays behind.

You can't take them with you. We have our neighbours, we have our friends, usually very good friends, good neighbours and we want to be with them a lot and our colleagues perhaps have worked and so on.

[30 : 25] But when we go to death, we can't take them to eternity with us so they stay behind, they go in the debit column. And then we have common day things like our jobs, our workplace and the careers that people have that we get caught up with, our work and perhaps the cars that we have or the money that you might be accumulating and it's very hard to move away from it and it's so precious to you.

But when the time comes to die, you can't take it with you. All that goes in the debit column as well. You go into death alone. We have homes, some people have land, they acquire land, it all becomes so precious to them and get wrapped up in this world and can't see past it but when the time comes to die, you don't take it with you.

It's in the debit column. And the same happens with people, you know there are people who live for the weekends? They live for the weekends and that's all they want. They go to work Monday, the Friday, once the weekend comes, that's their life.

They won't be taking any weekends into eternity. That goes in the debit column. As does people, many people, they have this great desire to be doing a lot of shopping and buying things and buying gifts and the clothes that they buy and all kinds of different things that they buy that they become obsessed with in this life and it becomes that God becomes an idol but you can't take it to eternity. All that goes in the debit column. people, they live for the lifestyle they have. They live for their holidays and they have exotic holidays and love. That's the way some people are. And I'm just going through a very general list here.

[32 : 10] All of these things don't go into eternity. They stay here. That goes in the debit column. All our dreams, all our hopes, all our aspirations, all the important issues in life that we fight for.

All of these things that are so important. The wisdom that we accumulate, the knowledge that we have, the status that we try and build up in this life. All of these things, when the time comes to die, they don't come to eternity with us.

Debit column. No matter how precious they are in this life, they are depreciating. And to the point of your death, they will become valueless to you.

And here's a serious one to consider. You have the offer of the gospel. the mercy of God and the hope of salvation. And if you die without Christ, you can't take them with you because it's too late. Worthless to you if you don't take advantage of that here and now in this life. Because it's only while you have life here that you have opportunity. And so if you die without them, debit column.

[33 : 22] You don't take them into eternity. And you know that that leaves you with only one earthly component, just one, your body.

And you can't take that into death with you either. At least not initially. Your body dies, goes to the ground. You're even stripped of the body that means so much to you.

At least for a time. Everything is taken from you. And it's all in that debit account. And it leaves one question, doesn't it?

What's in the credit column of your account? Well, let me tell you, my friend, there's only one thing that matters and that's to have Christ there. That's the one and only thing.

That is what's necessary to enter eternity and to save your soul to have Christ in your credit column.

[34 : 29] But if you won't face up to this right now, well, there is a day coming when you will give an account of all of your actions.

He tells us that here. The Lord says the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father and then he will repay each person according to his deeds.

but then it will be too late because it's only here you have the opportunity to cry out for mercy. It's only here you have the opportunity of salvation.

Too late to do anything about your soul then. No more opportunity for any of that. And it means to lose Christ and to lose God and to lose heaven.

to lose his glory, to lose his happiness throughout the endless ages of eternity. That's what's precious and that's what your soul needs to have Christ in that credit column.

[35 : 43] And Jesus wants you to share in his glory and his honour and for you to have the reward that he has personally prepared for all of his people.

love. How foolish it is to ignore this great offer of salvation. How foolish to trade your soul for the sake of gathering worthless materialistic possessions and treasures in this life.

life. Look, what Jesus is saying here and what he's saying very solemnly, he says, don't be a fool any longer with regard to your soul.

Because it's your soul that matters the most. Your soul is the most precious possession that you have. life. You're going to leave behind every material possession that you own on earth when you die.

And what Jesus is saying is, what I'm offering you, what I'm offering you, is his free gift of eternal life and a restored relationship with me, with the Father, through me.

[37 : 07] Jesus says, I didn't come into the world to condemn the world. but that the world through me might be saved. And you know that he's just longing for you to cry out.

He's longing to hear you cry out even right now. No matter what you've said, no matter what you've done, no matter what you've thought up to this point in your life, he's saying, come to me now, before it's too late.

Friends, this week in our community, we have seen deaths of people of all ages, tragic situations. is tonight or tomorrow promised to anyone here, there's not one of us can say it is.

Don't hesitate. And if you go to him and cry out to him, he will have mercy, he will pardon you, and he will give you exceedingly, abundantly, more than you could ever ask for or think of.

these solemn words of Jesus. What does it profit a man to give the whole world and yet lose his soul? Let us pray. Him and hell, and he will py everything.