

GAINING THE WORLD AND LOSING HIS SOUL!

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"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?" Matt. 16:26.

I want the seriousness of that question to settle down upon us. I read it again. "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?"

These words were brought out by the temporizing of Simon Peter, who when his Lord had declared His purpose of going up to Jerusalem to die, began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." And the Lord said unto him, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou art an offense unto me . . . For he that will save his life shall lose it, and he that 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?"

A Great World

Now, the phrase "the whole world" is a very comprehensive term. I know not how we can ever grasp its content. Some people's world is small. It reaches from their home to their place of business. With some it reaches as far as the county seat or as far as the state capital, but with most people the world is small. Yet when you undertake to estimate it and comprehend the content of the phrase, it is vast. It includes the cultivated areas of the world with all their possibilities of recurring harvest. It includes the mines, their deposits of minerals and metals, precious stones and gems. It includes its streams and seas, it includes its wealth already gathered, its gold, its silver, its coins, its currencies, its banks, its financial structure, its manufactures, its business, its commerce, its possibilities in wealth; it includes its people, their government and their mastery and rulership, their politics and their religion. It includes all that can be known in knowledge and possessed in possessions.

But He didn't simply say, "What if a man owned the whole world and lost his soul." He said, "What if he gained it"—that which no man ever did; that which no man ever can. But what if he could, by the wisdom of his plans and his genius, not only possess it, but get into possession of it by his own efforts so that he might add to the joy of its possession the joy of his acquisition of it, and then reign over it for a long life and then lose his soul, he would be infinitely and eternally swindled. Over and against the human soul God puts on the other side of the scales, the world. The soul outweighs it. Not the soul of a Milton, or Burke, or Shakespeare, or Webster, but the soul of the poorest little kinky-headed pickaninny that ever played in the back alleys. Over against the world a soul!

Jesus Knows Values

Jesus Christ was the only one who ever walked and breathed who had the real sense of values. He knew what anything was worth. He put that estimate on the human soul. There were people in His day who seemed to think more of a sheep than a man. On one occasion He said, "What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?" How much then is a man better than a sheep?

On another occasion men chose bacon to Jesus. When Jesus came into the country of the Gergesenes and found that poor demoniac dwelling among the tombs, He cast the demons out of him. The demons went into a herd of swine and the swine ran into the sea and perished, but when the people saw that, they made the choice between Jesus and bacon and chose bacon. They preferred to have a man filled with demons, fierce and terrible, and have their swine grunting peacefully on the side of the hill than to lose their swine and have the man filled with grace and a worshipper of Christ. That is not the only group that has made their choice between God and live stock. In the years that I lived in Iowa I found those who would give as high as \$20,000 for live stock and would not give one thousand dollars to train young people in the highest things in life. If you want to know what a soul is worth, better not ask your neighbor—he may be interested in hogs and corner lots. But Jesus put over against a human soul values that no aggregation of either creaturely or inanimate powers could reach. He showed that a soul was worth more than all. So I want to speak to you tonight on the value of a soul.

What the Soul is Worth

What is a soul worth? I argue it first from its cost. That is a fair estimate of it. What did it cost? I remember that Simon Peter said, "We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." We sing sometimes about the blood until we might just as well sing of something else. We don't get the depth of the meaning. It cost God all to redeem us. Not all the wealth of the universe could redeem a soul. Not all the angels that sing their songs around the throne could redeem a soul. Not all the efforts of mankind could redeem one human soul. It cost the blood of Jesus. They used to sing a song to the effect that just one drop of Jesus' blood would have been sufficient to redeem us, but if that were true, then one prick of the spear in His side would have been sufficient. It took the outpoured blood of the Son of God. When He had finished redemption His veins were empty. It was the heartbreak of God. St. Paul speaking about it later to the Church at Ephesus said that they were the church of God which He had purchased with His own blood and in some holy sense the blood that fell upon the rocks at Jerusalem, upon the hill called a Skull, was the blood of God. It was God stooping under the burden of redemption and He was so engrossed in the price He was paying for a human soul that He well nigh forgot the orderly course of the universe. The earth trembled and shook and it looked as if the earth and the skies would become one vast chaos as God in tragic out-poured life and blood stooped under the burden of a world's guilt. It cost God His riches. When He had paid for our redemption He was bankrupt. Nothing else had He to give. If He doesn't get your soul He is swindled. He invested all His riches in the souls of men. Therefore, He wants every soul to come back to Him in order that He may get that which His blood bought. We were redeemed at infinite cost. Don't ever hold yourself cheap again. That which cost the heartbreak of Deity and the outpoured blood of the Son of God is a thing too valuable to be slung upon a scrap heap of sin and hell. It ought to be given to God.

Immortality

Again, I argue the value of the soul from its durability, the possibilities within it of eternity. We live in a new land. America is new. Europe thinks we are barbarians. Even Boston thinks that possibly civilization extends as far west as Poughkeepsie, but beyond that is savagery. New York and Boston may learn some lessons, as they did in 1928, when they studied geography after the political campaign. Down in St. Augustine, Florida, are buildings a few hundred years old. In Europe there are buildings a thousand years old. Down in Egypt there are structures thousands of years old, but they are new compared to the human soul. In California are great trees that are lifting their branches toward the skies that were old when Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees, but they are new compared to the soul. I am talking tonight to beings who are looking at me out of eyes of blue and brown and hazel who will never cease to be. There was time when you didn't exist. That time will never come again. And until you can walk around in the graveyard of eternity and rub the moss off the tombstone of God there will never come an end to your existence. Somewhere out there ten thousand million years from now you will be existing in everlasting felicity or everlasting regret; your cup of happiness full and brimming, or your cup of woe deep and dark. You are healed there. I am headed there. My soul has kinship with eternity. I feel myself akin to that being that knoweth no calendar, the day that shall never know a sunset. A soul that is capable of endless joy or incapacitated for endless grief is too valuable a thing to lose.

The Soul's Capacity

Again, I argue the value of the soul from its capacity. Man is the only progressive being. Cattle graze in the pasture as they did when Isaac's and Jacob's herdsmen watched them. Conies build their nests in the rocks as they did when Solomon wrote the Proverbs. All the animal worlds are just the same as they were. Man has been progressive. He came from the Garden of Eden under a curse, it is true, but still magnificent in his ruins. He has conquered the forces of nature and has harnessed steam and belted electricity. He warms and lights his buildings with the lightning, and freezes his food and preserves it with the same power. He has dived under the Hudson and climbed over the mountains. Not content with the mastery of earth's forces, not content with his ocean greyhounds carrying a city in their holds, he has taken to the air and outflown the eagles. He has spanned the ocean with his wings and circled the poles of the earth and returned with greatness to his home to tell of the discoveries he has made. Such is man in his intelligence and capabilities. Think what a tragedy it is for a person to leave that mighty power uncultivated. God has put no premium on ignorance. God never intended the mind should go as an uncultivated desert. It is the most marvelous production in the realm of intelligence that the mind of God could devise.

(Concluded Next Issue)

Do not look forward to what might happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day. Either He will shield you from suffering or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it.—St. Francis de Sales.