

OLD-TIME RELIGION
12 Fervent, Soul-Winning Sermons

By

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CHAPTER SIX

THE PRICE OF A 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?" (Matthew 16:26).

I think the Lord JESUS never spoke more solemn and meaningful words in all His ministry. In that brief statement the Lord places a value upon the human soul that is beyond all the wealth of this world, in terms of things men count of value. Yes, the value JESUS places upon a human soul in that statement far exceeds the wealth of the world.

The word He uses is, in the Greek, *kosmos*, which means all of GOD's material creation. Think of it!

The myriads of stars and solar systems and planets and worlds, the entire world system - JESUS said that one soul is of more value than them all! Why did JESUS put such value upon a human soul? There are many reasons. I think we could stay here all night and recount the reasons why JESUS said one soul is worth more than the whole universe, but there are some outstanding reasons that I wish to consider prayerfully tonight.

I. A Soul Is So Valuable Because of What Man Is and Because of GOD's Purpose for Man

When GOD had spoken the worlds into being back yonder in the beginning, then when GOD had prepared this earth with all of its living creatures and with all of its swarming life in the seas, and the birds that fly in the air and animals and creeping things that live upon the earth, GOD looked upon it all and said, '**It is very good.**'

But GOD was not satisfied. GOD is love, and love wants an object like unto itself upon which it can bestow its affection.

GOD's great Father-heart was hungering for a family of children. So GOD said, "**Let us make**

man in our image and in our likeness," and so, the Scripture says, **"In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."**

The crowning work of all GOD's matchless creation is a being from His own hand into whom He has breathed the breath of His own life and who has become a living soul in the image of GOD, with a capacity:

- to love like GOD and return the love of GOD;
- to respond to and receive that matchless love of GOD;
- with a capacity to think the thoughts of GOD,
- to live the life of GOD,
- to hold fellowship with GOD,
- to walk in communion with GOD,
- to live with GOD.

We see GOD coming down in the cool of the day to walk with the man whom He has made, and there is a blessed and holy and wonderful fellowship between the two.

The purpose GOD had in the creation of man was not only to have a being like unto Himself who could appreciate and respond to His love and upon whom He could lavish His affections and with whom He could have fellowship, but GOD's further purpose was that this man should be the lord of creation and that one day he should reign with Him and share His glory throughout an endless eternity. What a glorious purpose GOD had in the creation of man!

In the face of that, many men will deliberately turn their backs upon such a destiny, deliberately defeat the purpose of GOD in their lives, and choose to follow the Devil instead! They will be deceived by him and be dragged from that glorious purpose of GOD into endless night, separated from GOD; they will be defeated in their lives and rob GOD of the glory that rightly belongs to Him in every life!

That is why JESUS said, **"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"**

He misses that infinite, loving, glorious purpose of GOD in his life, and forfeits the opportunity to share with Him His glory through eternity.

II. Again, the Reason JESUS Placed That Value Upon a Soul Was Because That Soul Is to Live Forever

It is because of the fact of eternity and the immortality of the soul.

Did you ever stop to try to contemplate eternity? Have you ever silently and quietly, in your own mind and soul, tried to grasp the thought of eternity? I confess to you that I have never been able to do it. My mind, being finite, literally staggers like a drunken man and breaks down as I try to comprehend the meaning of eternity.

Oh, the thought that I shall be living somewhere forever! Forever! Forever!

There was a time when I was not.

- when Job watched the stars from the plains of Shinar, I was not.
- when Abraham heard the call of GOD and started out seeking a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD, I was not.
- when Columbus turned the nose of that ship out into the vast expanses of the Atlantic to discover a new world, I was not.
- when Washington crossed the Delaware with his barefooted men to purchase the liberty we enjoy, and when they spent that winter in Valley Forge where they left their Bloodstained tracks in the snow, I was not.
- when Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House, I was not.

But listen, friend: there will never be a time any more but that I will be living on somewhere. When the sun has burned itself out in the sky and the material that composes its substance and gives its heat and light has all been consumed and gone back to nothing from which GOD called it into being, then I will still be living on.

When the stars have worn themselves out with the passing of the ages and have crumbled and decayed and gone back into nothing, I will still be living on.

When the whole created universe has grown weary in the cycles of the ages and worn out and passed back into nothing, I will still be living on.

When there is not an atom of it left, I will still be living on somewhere.

Somebody has said that if a tiny sparrow were to take in its little beak a grain of sand from off this planet on which we live, and carry it yonder to the moon and leave it, then come back and get another grain and go again to the moon, making one round trip each thousand years, that when the little sparrow should have succeeded in moving the whole planet on which we live, one tiny grain of sand each thousand years, it would just be daylight in eternity; eternity would have just begun! Oh, I tell you, when I think of that, I stagger at the thought and am overwhelmed with the reality of it as revealed in GOD's Word!

Then when you link that up with eternal night; when you link that up with death and it becomes eternal death: when you think of a soul banished from the presence of GOD forever, forever; when you think of a soul lost in the blackness of darkness forever, as Jude said, like "**wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever**" (forever! forever! - it is an awful thought.

Listen to that cry from Hell, "**Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame.**"

For nineteen hundred years that poor, tormented soul has been crying for one drop of water: not a

drink of water, mind you, and not a full rounded drop of water - just that which would cling to the tip of the man's finger! What does it mean?

Just for the tiniest bit of relief from the tortures of Hell! And for nineteen hundred years he has been crying for that drop of water to cool his tongue which has been parched in that flame, but he has not gotten it yet. But oh, that is only the beginning!

Throughout all eternity, forever, forever, forever, he will be crying for that drop of water and he will never get it.

Oh, the tortures of Hell are terrible enough to contemplate if they were for but one day. If they lasted a thousand years, then the human mind could never comprehend the terrible torture and awfulness of the fact of Hell. But when you add eternity to the doom of the soul that JESUS says is accompanied by weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, then you can understand why JESUS would say, "**What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?**"

If you would get a conception of what it means to be lost, of the awfulness of Hell, you must look to Calvary. There is no other place in time or eternity where you can get a proper conception of what it means for a soul to be lost.

Oh, my friend, hear me tonight! It must be an unspeakable tragedy to be lost, for the Son of GOD to be willing to die in order that men might be redeemed, for the Son of GOD to be willing to empty Himself of His glory, and take upon Him the form of a slave and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that men might be saved!

Yes, the Son of GOD was willing to make His soul an offering for sin.

See Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. In His agony of soul His sweat is great drops of blood falling down to the ground. His whole body, every pore open, is bathed in His heart's blood. Hear Him say, "**Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.**"

For three hours of that awful night in Gethsemane, three hours the Son of GOD prays that one prayer. He isn't shrinking from the cross. His soul is being made an offering for our sin. He is saying, 'If there is any other way, Father, if there is any other way; if there is any other way to save a soul, O Father, let me take that way! Friend, GOD took the hardest way that could have been taken. That means what? That means there is not only an awful Hell out yonder awaiting the soul without GOD; not only does it mean that the doom of a sinner is an unspeakably awful thing, but it means there is absolutely no other way that it could be done.

If there had been another way, GOD would have answered that prayer in the garden that night. But JESUS, looking into the face of the Father, said, "**Not my will but thine be done.**"

Oh, the price He paid for a soul! My friends, listen; that is GOD's estimate of the value of one soul, and yet that same soul for which He died men and women will throwaway for nothing! They place no value whatever, seemingly, upon it. Yet they will tell you that they believe they

are immortal; that they believe the Bible; that they believe there is a Heaven and a Hell out yonder; that they believe there is an eternity; and yet for a little mess of this earth's pottage, they throw their soul away!

"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?"

III. What Would You Give After Your Soul Is Lost Forever in Hell?

And then the other half of the text is this:

"What shalt a man give in exchange for his soul?"

When I first started preaching I made a sermon on that and called it "*SOLD OUT TO THE DEVIL.*"

I pictured that part of the text as a soul in the market place and GOD saying, "What will you take?" and GOD making His offer, and then the Devil saying, "What will you take?" and the Devil making his offer and the man selling out to the Devil.

I pictured certain things for which men sold out, and that is Scripturally true, but it isn't the proper interpretation of that text. JESUS did not say, "What will you take?" but "**What will you give?**" "**What will a man give . . .?**"

I remembered that when I go into a market place to buy a suit of clothes, the man who sells the suit puts a price on it and I give that price in exchange for the suit. What does JESUS mean here? I think He means that after a man has lost his soul, after he has forfeited his right of salvation, after he has waited too late, after he is in Hell and realizes its awfulness, what would he give if he could just get back those chances he had to get right, and for just one more opportunity to make the right decision!

What would the rich young ruler give tonight if he could kneel one more time at the feet of JESUS and hear the Son of GOD say, "**Young man, one thing thou lackest.**" Oh, what would he give if he could hear the Lord say, "**Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor**" - wouldn't he be glad to do it tonight?

After nineteen hundred years of the tortures of Hell, to remember that one day he stood so near to the borderline of Glory, just one step over. Oh, what would he give to stand there again!

And the myriads of souls in Hell tonight, what would they give to sit here tonight and hear one more Gospel sermon, one more Gospel song, one more invitation from the Lord; to feel once more the tug of the Spirit at their hearts! What would they give if they could have just one more opportunity!

O soul, listen: if you forfeit your chance and go to Hell, you would give ten thousand worlds to hear one more Gospel sermon, one more song, one more call; to hear that still small voice at the

door of your heart just one more time. **"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"**

The thing, my friends, is not to think about what you would do after it is too late, but what are you going to do about it now?

IV. What Satan Offers for Your Soul

What does the Devil have to offer you, my unsaved friend?

You are a man. You are a thinking, reasoning, intelligent human being. GOD gave you ability to think. GOD gave you ability to think logically, intelligently.

Now is the time to settle this question. Face it honestly and seriously. Think with me tonight! What does the Devil have to offer human life?

Oh, the Devil offers the satisfaction of our lower nature. But suppose we revel in it; we are then living on the plane of the beast of the field; we are not living the life of man as we turn ourselves over to satisfying the lower desires of life.

The Devil offers a good time. But remember that all that the Devil offers in the end biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder. In the end, you will curse the day that you put your feet in the primrose path; you will curse that day you listened to the Devil's lies.

The Devil offers what he cannot deliver. He is the father of lies. He tells you it will be easy if you follow him.

You will not find a soul anywhere who has found happiness following the Devil. GOD has made man with such a capacity and with such a nature that he will never be satisfied nor happy until he rests in GOD. The abundance of things that a man possesses will not satisfy human life.

What does the Devil have to offer you, my friend? Look down. the path a way and see what Satan has brought those that followed him. He has wrecked hearts and ruined souls. Look at the tears; listen to the sighs of the suffering; listen to the groans of the dying; listen to the weeping and the wailing and the gnashing of teeth!

Paul was right when he said, **"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain."**

Put your ear to the ground and you will hear the signs of the suffering; you will hear the groans of the dying; you will hear the mourning of the sorrowing; you will hear the splashing of tears of the heartbroken that have followed the Devil.

Why can't people see? Why can't we learn from observation without having to learn by experience?

V. What GOD Offers for Your Soul

What, then, does GOD have to offer you? He offers you His love. He offers you the Blood of JESUS CHRIST to cleanse you from all sin, to break the fetters that sin has forged upon your soul and about your life, to set you free like a bird turned out of a cage. That bird has been beating itself against the side of the cage of confinement, but one day the cage is lifted and the bird goes back where it belongs.

That is what JESUS meant when He said, **'You will know the truth and the truth will make you free,'** and **'whom the Son shall make free, is free indeed.'**

That is what Isaiah meant when he said at His coming the Son of GOD should **"proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound"** (Isaiah 61:1).

He offers you the peace of GOD that passeth all understanding. He offers to make your sin-stained soul as white as snow. Hear it! **"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"** (Isaiah 1:18). **"And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"** (I John 1:7).

When I was a high school lad, one afternoon after school I walked downtown.

There was a man on the street corner selling some kind of cleaning fluid. He claimed he could take out any kind of stain. Back in those days they didn't make Skrip ink which will wash out. I knew when I got ink on my handkerchief or my clothes how hard it was to get out. In fact, it was there to stay. So I stood there and watched him as he stood in the back of a truck.

A comedian was singing and the crowd gathered around. He took out his handkerchief and took two small bowls. In one of them he poured a bottle of black ink and in the other some sort of fluid. I saw him take the handkerchief and dip it down in that bowl filled with the black ink and turn it over and over until every thread was saturated a midnight black.

Then he lifted it out and held it up. It was as black as ink could make it. "Now," he said, "watch." Then he put it over in the bowl of cleaning fluid. He dipped it down, turned it over a few times and took it by the corner and lifted it out. To our utter amazement it was as white as the driven snow.

That is exactly what JESUS did with my poor sin-stained soul one day. Though it was black with sin, He dipped it in the Blood, in the fountain filled with His precious Blood, and when it came up it was as white as the driven snow. Oh, what does GOD offer when He says He will put my sins behind His back and remember them against me no more forever?

GOD offers to make me a child of His, a son of GOD, an heir of GOD and joint heir with JESUS CHRIST. GOD offers me the privilege of one day being like JESUS, when I will see Him as He is.

GOD offers me and offers you, my sinner friend, the privilege of being an heir of GOD and a joint heir with JESUS CHRIST.

He offers you the privilege of reigning with Him. Listen! **"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne"** (Revelation 3:21).

We shall reign with Him forever! Forever! Forever! Think with me tonight:

"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

VI. Your Soul Is Worth Too Much to Go to Hell!

But you say, "I do not intend to go to Hell. I intend to be a Christian sometime. You are not talking to me, preacher."

If that is what you are saying tonight, my unsaved friend. I want you to see this. How can you say that? How can you have the audacity to say, "I am going to trifle with GOD a while longer. I am going to trample under foot His Blood awhile. I am going to slam the door in His face awhile longer. I am going to crucify the Son of GOD now. I am going to insult the Spirit of grace"? For that is what it means.

You say, "I believe that CHRIST died for me, but I am going to close the door in His face. I will have my way awhile, and when I get ready I will trust Him."

Unsaved friend, how can you have the audacity to so trifle with GOD? How can you hope, with the shortness of life, the uncertainty of life that hangs by such a brittle thread - how can you dare to presume upon the mercy and the longsuffering of GOD? How can you hope for another chance? Don't trifle with GOD! Don't trifle with GOD! **"Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation."**

My unsaved friend, Saul, the first king of Israel, trifled with GOD. GOD said to Samuel, **"I have rejected Saul."**

All night long Samuel, that great prophet of GOD, lay on his face and prayed and cried to GOD for Saul, but to no avail. GOD said, 'I am through with him.' GOD said, 'He has trifled with me long enough.' So Saul was set aside as king.

"He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Proverbs 29:1).

You say, "I am going to someday." What about now? What are you going to do now? Think with me tonight. Whatever sin may give you, whatever the world has to offer you, friend, it perishes with the using. Is it worth the price? **"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"**

Do you know why people go to Hell? Because they will not think, because they will not follow their own better judgment; not because they do not believe in the Bible, not because they do not intend to be saved sometime, but because they will not do what their own reason and their own

better judgment tell them to do. Think of a soul in eternity without GOD, without hope, and without the Lord of glory. Hear me!

Suppose there is no certain place called Hell where there is fire and brimstone. I believe there is, but just for the sake of argument, suppose there is not. Think of a soul flung by the power of GOD beyond creation's boundaries, blighted by the curse of Almighty GOD throughout all eternity, withering and dying under the curse of GOD, doomed to wander in infinite, boundless, bottomless darkness where the soul sinks in that bottomless pit, where the soul never finds a place to rest its weary head, for there is no rest day or night forever; where the sound of a friendly voice is never heard, nor the touch of a friendly hand is ever felt; where the only sound that ever reaches your poor, doomed ears is the hiss and jeering of the demons and the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth of the damned!

Think of such an eternity when, by a moment's decision, when in the twinkling of an eye, yea, by one moment's resolution, you can be saved.

Think! GOD gave you reason and power to think and you know what you ought to do. Think of spending eternity in Hell when GOD gave you the will to act and you could have, in a single moment's decision, settled your salvation for time and eternity; when, with one eternal yes to GOD you could have been singing around the throne with the Blood-washed throng of the redeemed of GOD; when, by holding out an empty hand of faith, in one second, yea, one instant of time, you could have received as a gift of GOD eternal life! What is a man profited? What a foolish thing for a reasoning, thinking human being to do!

Will you make the right decision, friend? Will you open that door and receive JESUS? He did not say, "Whosoever can." He says, "**Whosoever will.**" Will you? Will you? "**Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.**"

Bow your heads. How many tonight are not Christians?

Just be honest with GOD tonight; you are not saved or perhaps you are not sure whether you are saved or not; you don't know.

Will you say, "I want to make the right choice for eternity. I want to be saved. I want Heaven as my home. I believe the Bible; I believe that CHRIST died for me and I appreciate it. I do appreciate CHRIST's death for me, and before I die, I want Him as my Saviour"? That is the fairest and simplest proposition I know how to make. If you are not saved or not sure, and want GOD's People to pray for you, raise your hand.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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