

It Is Written

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The Tragedy of a Lost Soul

by R.J. Evans

One of the striking things about the teachings of Jesus is the way He gets to the heart of every issue. There is no better illustration than the following: "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26). According to the context, Jesus is talking about the value of the soul of a person, not his physical body. In reality, man is a soul. In the beginning, God said, "Let us make man in Our image, according to our likeness...And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (a living soul, KJV)" (Gen. 1:26; 2:7). The questions Jesus raised in Matthew 16:26 have some sobering implications:

1. Humans possess an eternal, immortal nature. Mankind has a physical body and a soul or spirit. When a man dies, the spirit leaves the body (Jas. 2:26). Observe that James said "the body without the spirit is dead," not the spirit without the body is dead. The word of God teaches us that "the spirit will return to God who gave it" (Eccl. 12:7). Jesus speaks of "both soul and body" in Matthew 10:28. Such false philosophies as atheism, humanism, and evolution deny this truth – that man has a soul or spirit. This makes man merely a physical creature with no more soul or spirit than a rock.

2. The soul is our most priceless possession. It is worth more than all material things combined. It is of divine origin (Eccl. 12:7; Heb. 12:9), eternal in duration (Matt. 25:46; Mk. 9:43-46), and can transcend earthly relationships (Jn. 4:24). Concerning the soul, the Apostle Peter stated: "...you were not redeemed with corruptible things...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot...Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...having been born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Pet. 1:18-23).

3. The soul can be sold or exchanged. Some people exchange their souls for pleasure (2 Tim. 3:4). Others sell out for popularity, loving the approval of men more than the praise of God (Jn. 12:43). Many exchange their souls for the love of the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Then there are those who trade their souls for error and the false philosophies of men (Col. 2:8). Others trade their souls for material prosperity (Lk. 12:16-21).

4. Whatever the exchange, it is foolish and costly. The world and all that is in it can never satisfy the deep, vital need of the soul in order to be at peace with God. This world and all its material contents will ultimately be destroyed by fire (2 Pet. 3:10). At death we must leave everything behind. The Apostle Paul stated: "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Tim. 6:7).

5. There is no loss as tragic as that of the soul. The loss of health, of a child, of one's family, of one's life in attempting to gain the "whole world" would be tragic enough, but they are not comparable to the losing of one's soul. The damnation of the soul is a multiple loss: the beauties of heaven are forfeited and the agonies of hell must be endured forever. A lost soul in hell is everlastingly abandoned "from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess. 1:9); there is no help or hope for such a horrible condition. A soul in hell is lost for all eternity!

What could possibly be more important to us than to obey "the gospel of Christ...the power of God to salvation" (Rom. 1:16) and do whatever the Lord commands and teaches in the New Testament for our soul's eternal salvation. Jesus, while on earth, stated: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:10).

Can We Be Confident

by Gary Henry

"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

We have God's assurance that we will find him, but only if we seek him with all our hearts. There is no guarantee that the indifferent or the double-minded will find Him. We must do more than dabble in religion, and God must be more than simply one of the "interesting" things on our agenda. We must pursue Him with a purity of heart and a passion that will not be denied. What He seeks is to be the Lord over all our thoughts, and if we seek anything less than that, then it is not God who we seek. But even so, we need to be strengthened by the confidence that when we seek Him truly, we will in fact find Him.

There is a text in Isaiah where God says that He desires to be found by those who seek Him: "For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: 'I am the Lord, and there is no other. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I did not say to the seed of Jacob, "Seek Me in vain"; I, the Lord, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right'" (Isaiah 45:18-19). Just as God did not create the earth and then leave it uninhabited, He did not command His people to seek Him and then hide Himself from them!

When Paul was given an opportunity to speak in Athens, he said that God designed the world so that people would be moved to seek Him: "in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27). We may "grope" for God, as it were, but in truth "He is not far from each one of us". Our seeking for God need not be unsuccessful.

The lackadaisical may complain that they sought God but never found Him. Yet no one has ever been disappointed who sought Him wholeheartedly and with an honest desire to obey Him once He was found. "You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart", God said through Jeremiah. This means that it is a matter of choice on our part whether we find God or not. And the choice that we must make is to seek Him diligently. If we're diligent, then we can also be confident.

"Pedal to the Metal"

by Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

"For I bear witness that they possess an enthusiasm for God, but it is an unenlightened enthusiasm." (Romans 10:2 Weymouth's New Testament)

I have often compared enthusiasm untempered by the knowledge of God's word to jumping into a souped-up car, without either steering or brakes and putting the pedal to the metal. Somebody is going to get hurt big time.

In my judgment, there is a lot of effort these days to generate enthusiasm for God among Christians by jerking at the heart strings without invoking a "thus saith the Lord."

Everybody loves enthusiastic, "gung ho", "let's get the job done" kind of guys. There is just something about them that attracts a following. Some say it is actually contagious. But, we must be careful not to get carried away by their enthusiasm.

Am I trying to discourage genuine enthusiasm for God? No. No. No. But, I am encouraging, especially young folks, to stop, look, and listen before jumping on a bandwagon driven by emotion rather than biblical facts.

In preaching the word, it is not even OUR JOB to "convince, rebuke, and exhort" people. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4:2), It is our job to point them to the word THAT IT MAY do the convincing, the rebuking and exhorting. Then the person is moved by God and not by us.

Likewise, when we want people to be truly zealous for God, point them to that portion of the word that will generate the kind of enthusiasm that they need. This will produce a real zeal for God - based on a real knowledge of His word - not a reaction to our ability to whip up enthusiasm like modern motivational speakers.