



## **“The Worth of Your Soul”**

**Kevin Presley**

It's a real pleasure to be with you today. I'm glad you are taking this time to study the word of God. Today, we're going to talk about one of the most important things we could talk about, and that is you. Your soul, and what it's worth in the eyes of God. Jesus asked many rhetorical questions in His preaching. On one occasion, He asked a question that cannot be positively answered.

**Matthew 16:24-26** “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. 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?”

That's an incredibly important question that I hope you will consider today. You know, we can place some kind of price upon most things. I know people who say that anything they own is for sale depending on how much you are willing to pay. Others will trade just about anything as long as they think they are coming out ahead. My grandfather was known as a trader. He used to like to boast that he started out early in life with a pocket watch and ended up a few years later with a farm. Some people are that way.

But Jesus says there is something that cannot be traded or bartered. *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* I'd like to challenge you today to answer that question. What is there in all of the world or within your reach, that could possibly be obtained that is worth your soul? If you think you can answer that in the affirmative, then you don't understand what the soul is. You don't understand the value of that soul. Many of us every day are putting our souls up for sale to the highest bidder, selling it for money, earthly gain, pleasure, fame, honor...No matter where you along the road of life, I hope you'll pause for a few minutes today and think with me about this convicting question from the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the most powerful and motivating things in the realm of human relations is money. Money is not an evil thing, nor is it wrong to be rich. If a man honestly comes by his gain, he can thank God for having the ability to do so, and he can even use his wealth for good and worthwhile things. More often than not though, those who pursue the wealth of the world become very poor in the things that matter most. Therefore, the Bible gives a warning about those who *would be* (those who *desire* or *make their objective in life to be*) rich. Those who seek the treasure of earth end up forfeiting the treasures of heaven.

In our text, Jesus calls us to be His disciples.

**Matthew 16:24-25** “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. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”

If any man will COME AFTER ME--not sit and let God do something to or for him – but discipleship means I come after or FOLLOW the Lord Jesus. If any man will come after Me, let him DENY HIMSELF – not live for self and selfish gain, but rather DENY self--and TAKE UP HIS CROSS – that is the cross of sacrifice, the cross of suffering, the cross of deprivation. Let him take up His cross and FOLLOW ME. For whosoever will save his life (meaning to live for things that are seen here and now, things that are temporary, that preserve his earthly existence)--whosoever will save his life shall LOSE IT – and whosoever shall lose his life (that is give up things that could be held in our hand now) for My sake shall find it.” What did Jesus mean? Well, this is one of the famous paradoxes of Jesus. If you would gain life, you must be willing to lose your life, and if you would gain life here, then you forfeit the life that is to come. We have to choose whether we want heaven or earth. Whether we want gain here below or we want to gain treasures above. You can choose pleasure, ease, maybe wealth, perhaps popularity here and forfeit eternal life, OR you can place your faith and hope in the world to come by sacrificing your life here and now for Jesus Christ.

Well, Jesus goes on to warn us:

**Matthew 16:26** “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?”

We devote most of our attention to material things: investments, savings accounts, retirements, accumulation of property. It's not that it's wrong to be wise in how we manage our money, nor is it necessarily foolish to lay plans for our financial future. That's not what Jesus is saying or condemning. The problem is that we focus and even obsess over those aspects of life. For example, we insure our property and even our lives, but we don't insure our eternity. We worry about retirement thirty years before we get there but then face eternity thinking, *I'll worry about that when I get there*. That's very foolish. It's a common but very foolish approach to life.

The Lord's question implies that your soul is more valuable than all those other things, and in fact, it is the most valuable possession that you hold. Not your body. We value our bodies. That's evidenced by the fact that we spend in the United States alone more than 3 trillion dollars a year on healthcare – that averages out to about \$10,000 we spend each year per person (if you divide the debt evenly) to try to live longer. But Jesus one time said, “**And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell**” (Matthew 10:28).

Your money isn't the most valuable thing you have – because Peter told Simon the Sorcerer in **Acts 8** that his money would perish with him. At least 16 times in the last fifteen years or so, Bill Gates was declared the richest man in the world – worth nearly eighty billion dollars. Yet if he died today, you would have more money than him. It's not your clothing either. I'm told that the most expensive dress in the world costs thirty million dollars--and it's not only the women. The most expensive suit a man can buy costs more than \$892,000. And someone will spend that kind of money for a suit of clothes. Yet, **Ecclesiastes 5:15** says, **“As a man comes forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.”**

Money, clothes, houses, land, cars, jewels, gadgets – they're all exciting but ultimately their worthless. Jesus says there is something that we possess that outshines and outlasts all those things. In the sermon on the mount, He said this:

**Matthew 6:19-21** **“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”**

The treasures of the soul never fade, never break down, and never become obsolete and never lose their value. Your body will grow sick and old and finally die, and then it will go back to the dust that it originally came from. Your possessions will eventually lose their value. But the value of your soul is immeasurable! Why is that? What is the soul? What makes it so valuable? Don't mistake the point: we're not talking about self-worth. We're not valuable to God because of what we have done; if that were the case, we would be worthless to Him. But we ARE valuable to God and that is because He made us, and He did so for His glory.

First of all, let's look at the intrinsic value of the soul. Your soul is valuable because of what it is! The soul, to put it very simply, is the inner man. In one sense, it's the whole being. We focus on the outer man, on the body. But when we refer to the soul of man, we're really talking about man and his entire being, the eternal aspect of man. When God created man, **Genesis 2:7** tells us that, **“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.”** We are made of dust but dwelling within this mortal coil is an immortal being.

God said He made man *in His own image* (**Genesis 1:27**). You see, man is more than just an animal life form; he bears the image of God in a way that no other living thing does. He bears the image of God in that he is a moral, rational, and spiritual being. You're more than a biological being. You're much more than a clump of cells and a mass of molecules. You're not merely the product of electrical impulses and chemical reactions. If that's how you think about and measure life, if that's what you think you consist of, then you're probably going to live according to that philosophy. But if there is more to you than that, then that changes everything, of course. There IS something beyond or something that transcends the body or the physical existence of man. The Bible describes that as man's spirit, the spirit within him.

Now, the scriptures teach that the spirit of man has the power to think (**Proverbs 23:7**), it has the power to reason (**Mark 2:8**), and it has the ability to love (**Matthew 22:37**). The Bible teaches that it is immortal; that is, it will live forever! It never dies! When Jesus drew a picture of the final judgment in **Matthew 25:46**, He described the hosts of earth divided before Him – some on His left and some on His right-- and He said, **“these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”** When the ancient patriarch Job was suffering miserably, death became appealing to him. One

reason is because he believed in the eternity of man. He said, in **Job 14:14**, **“If a man die, shall he live again?”** Now, scholars tell us the question mark was erroneously placed there by translators. That instead, Job is making a declaration, not an interrogative. He is declaring “IF a man dies, he WILL live again,” meaning Job understood that there is something beyond the grave.

Now, that alone puts life in a totally different perspective. If, as the atheist alleges, we are merely a mass of molecules or the product of a combination of chemicals, then why does anything really matter? Why would we value life? What makes it meaningful? There is absolutely a correlation between the devaluing of life in our modern culture and the sweeping philosophy of our day of secular humanism and atheism. But, you see, there is an eternal purpose behind life. If a man lives forever in bliss or punishment, then that changes everything. No wonder Jesus said, **“...what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26)**. The soul is valuable because of what it is: an eternal being made in the image of God.

Secondly, there is the estimative value of the soul. God not only created it but He places a high price upon it. He demonstrated what your soul is worth in giving Jesus, His Son, to die for it.

**1 Peter 1:18-19 “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”**

The word *redeem* means *to purchase or buy back*. Jesus did not die for you or me because we somehow proved ourselves to be valuable to Him. No, no. Don’t mistake the point. We’re not valuable to God because of what we’ve done or what we’ve made of ourselves. That’s simply not the case. In fact, as sinners, we were God’s enemies. We were wretched and worthy only of death. Therefore, salvation is by His grace; not of merit. It’s not of self-worth or merits that we have done. It’s by His grace through faith in Christ. Yes, His death on Calvary was because of His grace. He saw our souls as something He wanted to redeem--to buy or purchase off the auction block of sin--not because of some self-worth, but because He created us in His image and for His glory. He wanted to redeem His fallen and ruined creation. The high price that heaven paid shows the divine estimate that God places upon the souls of men and women whom He created. You’re worthwhile to God because He made you—not because you made yourself worthwhile, but because He made you.

Thirdly, we see the soul’s value in the fact that it cannot be replaced. Let’s think about the proposition that Jesus puts before us in **Matthew 16:26**: What if a man gains the whole world and loses his own soul? What would that mean? Well, if I gain the world--and Jesus says if I gain “THE WHOLE WORLD”--if I could amass all of the wealth and worth of the material universe together, how much would I have?

Merely from a material standpoint, the History Channel aired a special program a few years ago about the value of planet earth. They looked at diamonds, gold, water, lumber, and all of earth’s other resources and concluded that our planet is worth just under 7 quadrillion dollars. That’s a seven with fifteen zeroes after it. If you could have all of earth’s money, according to the 2013 Global Wealth Report by Research Institute, you would have 241 trillion dollars. If you had that in dollar bills and stacked it up, one mathematician said the stack would reach over two-thirds of the distance to the moon. Yet, if all of that was yours, what have you gained? Jesus said you’ve gained something that won’t satisfy.

**Ecclesiastes 5:10 “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.”**

And how true that is! Have you ever met a rich man who was satisfied? I haven't. Every person that I know who has a lot of money is always trying to make more money. Thinking *if only I had this or that, it would be enough. I would be satisfied...* but we never are. We're always looking for ways to invest our money to make more money off the money that we have.

Alexander the Great conquered the world and then we're told he wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. So, man is not satisfied with earthly possessions and earthly gain. Solomon was one of the wealthiest men in history. The half has not been told about his wealth, his wisdom, and his works. The wealthy king even admitted that he sought happiness in all of these things he had accumulated, but all of he could say of it was, *“it is vanity and vexation of spirit”* (**Ecclesiastes 2:11**). If you gain all of the world, you're gaining something that will not satisfy. You're gaining something that will eventually perish.

**1 John 2:17 “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”**

Not only that, but the world that you gain becomes a dangerous and disappointing master. Paul told Timothy to warn those who chase after riches.

**1 Timothy 6:6-12 “But Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”**

And Jesus illustrated the vanity of living for things when He told the haunting parable of the rich farmer in **Luke 12** who had a great crop and said he must tear down his barns and build bigger ones and prepare for the future. But in all of his preparations--in all of his gaining the world--he wasn't doing anything about his soul.

**Luke 12:20-21 “God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”**

That's exactly what many of us are doing day by day. You see, that man gained the world but lost his soul. Now, you may lose material things, but you've not lost everything. You may lose your home in a fire, but that home can be rebuilt. You may lose what you have in the stock market, but wealth can be re-earned or replaced given enough time and opportunity. But if there is an eternity (and there is)--if we are created in the image of an eternal and transcendent God (and we are)--if we will stand before Him in judgment after this life is over (and we will)--and if we will spend eternity somewhere -- either in His presence or in hell fire (you can count on it)--then friend, if you lose your soul, you've lost EVERYTHING.

Now, think about that.

Jesus said in **Luke 16** that a rich man died and went to hell and was in torment. There is no indication in scripture that his suffering was temporary. Lazarus, on the other hand, was comforted in Paradise and he'll enjoy the bliss and comforts of heaven through eternity. Friend, if you miss that for mere things and pleasures here on earth that don't last, how foolish is that? What have you gained? And more importantly, what will you have lost?! No wonder Jesus asked, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

What value do you place upon your soul today? You may agree, my soul is the most valuable thing I possess, but you're living as though that's not the case. Are you making preparation for eternity or are you wrapped up in here and now and earth's tomorrow which we have no promise of? If your soul was required of you today in a car accident, a heart attack, a stroke, a natural disaster, or if Jesus should finally break the eastern sky and sweep down from glory and the angel declared that time shall be no more, then whose will those things be that you place such importance upon and forfeited eternal and spiritual blessings in pursuit of? What will you give in exchange for your soul? Would you not deny yourself, as Jesus called you to do long ago, and take up your cross and follow Him? Make the greatest investment you will ever invest by giving to Him your life, your heart, your will, your all. Surrender to Him in gospel obedience and start laying up treasures in heaven. It will be worth it in the after-while.

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