

An Impressive Contrast

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

Matthew 16:26a

One of the diamond-fields of South Africa was discovered in a remarkable way. Entering the valley a traveller noticed a boy amusing himself by throwing stones. One of the stones fell near the stranger's feet. He picked it up and was about to return it, when to his great amazement he realized that the stone was a diamond. The child was playing with it as a common stone and had no idea of its value. The diamond had often been treated as a trivial thing. It was not until someone with understanding looked at it, that its value was perceived.

Just as the child with his diamond, so do many trifle with their souls. To treat a diamond as a common stone betrays a certain ignorance, but, to neglect the value of one's precious soul does far greater harm. When Jesus was on earth, the religious teachers of His day neglected the souls of the sinner; they even disputed whether or not a child had a soul. However, Christ, who excelled Solomon in wisdom, exhibited a unique awareness of the value of the soul, the soul of a child, of a beggar, and also of a criminal. He recognized, like no-one else, that every human being has a soul more precious than all the diamonds of this world combined.

In the words of our text Christ contrasts the gain of the *whole world* with the loss of *one single soul*. He impresses upon us how incomparably great the harm would be, if we should reach an impossible goal, the gain of the whole world, and in the process of it lose our soul!

No man has ever gained the whole world. No-one has even seen the whole world, and no man hopes to own the whole world. However, many desire to gain as much of this world as possible. They think about riches and wealth, about treasures and pleasures, about happiness and joy, and say let us eat and be merry for tomorrow we may die. Seeking for something to satisfy the deep longing of his soul, man is inclined to

seek his happiness in this sinful world and so lose his precious soul. The words of Christ point us in an entirely different direction. Indeed, what are earthly treasures compared to the value of our soul?

The Bible tells us all that we should know in order that we may properly take care of our soul. This should always be with a love for God's glory the chief concern of our life.

The Word of God tells us that the soul is a *spiritual entity*; it continues to exist after the body dies and it is *immortal*. The evidence lies in the words of Christ. In Matthew 10:28, He said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to kill both body and soul in hell." In the parable of "The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus" (see Luke 16:19-31) Christ teaches that when the rich man died and his body was buried, that his soul was in hell and in sore distress. When Christ was crucified, He spoke a word of mercy to the penitent thief. He said, "Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise." It is very clear that Christ referred to the man's soul. So when soul and body are separated in death, the soul continues to exist either in heaven or in hell.

Have you ever seriously considered this most important truth that you have a soul that will continue to exist for ever and ever? This brings out the greatness and importance of our existence as human beings. We have a soul and our souls have infinite value.

Let us look into this matter a little further. The soul is so valuable for the soul came from God. When we speak about man being created in the image, the likeness of God, we think first of all about the soul. The entire man – body and soul – was created in the image of God. However, the primary emphasis lies here upon the soul, for God is a Spirit. When man was created, he was created in the likeness of Him who existed from all eternity. It is because man has a soul that he can have fellowship with God.

When we think of the great value of the soul, we must also reflect on the amazing ransom price that has been paid to redeem the soul from sin, death and hell. When we see the Maker of the universe in His human nature in the Garden of Gethsemane, when we see that lonely Figure sweating great drops of blood, when we see Him on the cross forsaken

by the Father, then we say what a value did the almighty God set upon the soul! Do you also treasure your soul?

The value of the soul must also be seen in the light of the great contention there is between heaven and hell for the soul of man. God sent His Son, but also His ambassadors, the preachers of the Gospel, that souls may be saved. They are appointed by God to teach us about our deep fall and our misery as sinners in the sight of God. They tell us about our lost and ruined condition by nature and they plead with us to flee the wrath to come and to lay hold of eternal life. If they are faithful to God and to their task, they will do much of this pleading. They will tell man of his disease, and about the great remedy provided, and they will plead much with sinners to come as sinners to the great Physician.

Not only is heaven interested in your soul, so is hell. Satan is always busy, especially where the Gospel is faithfully proclaimed. He is afraid of losing souls. He will do all he can to distract and disturb people and to have them so busy with trifling things that they would forget to be concerned about the salvation of their precious souls. There is joy in heaven over one sinner that truly values his soul aright, but hell is roaring when a sinner is on his knees pleading for the salvation of his soul.

There is still another consideration in relation to the great value of our souls. We must all give heed to this. The immense value of our souls stems from the fact that we are heading for a vast eternity of either bliss or woe. This awaits us all. Eternity stamps infinite value upon our soul. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul that is created for eternity? He may for a certain season have all the joys of this world, he may be like the rich man who fared sumptuously every day and yet with this rich man be lost forever! Indeed, eternity stamps infinite value upon your soul!

Now my great concern is *your soul*. Have you already taken care of your soul? You may perhaps acknowledge the gravity of this matter. You admit that there is a danger, but are you truly prepared for the great eternity? It is so important that we learn about the only true way. Many acknowledge that we should take care of our souls and they think that we

can do so by making decisions and so on. However, that is not God's way of saving sinners.

It is an amazing blessing that there is a proper preparation for eternity. There is a way out. Christ is that way. The crucified and risen Redeemer is infinitely qualified to save. The Holy Spirit can open your eyes for your great need and for the excellent divine sufficiency of Christ, the Saviour. Have your eyes already been opened to see something of the marvel of the grace of God in Christ?

If this is so in truth, then God has done so. We ought to be zealous that this be the case. Remember, there is so much at stake. If we had two souls, so to speak, we could risk one. As we have only one soul, we cannot risk it.

God's people are a prepared people for a prepared place. They are prepared by God. God humbles them and gives them views of His rich mercy. The Holy Spirit provides the grace to embrace the great Refuge that is set before us in the Gospel. Those who have fled to Jesus for refuge are safe. They are prepared for eternity. They have a Refuge. How great and precious is this mercy. God's children are prepared for the bliss of heaven. Heaven will be their eternal abode. Are you prepared for eternity? Oh the value of one single soul!

Lose your money, you lose much,
Lose your honour, you lose more,
Lose your soul, and you lose all.

Rev. Hamstra