

The supreme value of knowing God

The Supreme Value of Knowing God

A sermon preached at Poplar Baptist Church in the morning service by Henry Dixon on 4th September 2005

The Supreme Value of Knowing God

A sermon preached at Poplar Baptist Church in the morning service by Henry Dixon on 4th September 2005

“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8.36 – 37)

“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Introduction

The Greek word that is translated in these verses as “soul” can also be translated as “life” and I think that is how it should be translated here. So using the word “life” in the place of “soul”, the verses read: “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his life? Or what can a man give in exchange for his life?”

Introduction

The Greek word that is translated in these verses as “soul” can also be translated as “life” and I think that is how it should be translated here. So using the word “life” in the place of “soul”, the verses read: “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his life? Or what can a man give in exchange for his life?”

By the word “life” clearly what Jesus means here is a person’s spiritual life; a person’s relationship with God. What Jesus is doing is asking questions whose intended answer is obvious, in order to make us think. Jesus puts the question, “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet lose his spiritual life?” The answer he clearly intends us to arrive at is, “None whatsoever.” Implicitly what Jesus is saying is that your spiritual life, your relationship with God, is more valuable than all the riches, all the power, all the fame, all the happiness and all the pleasures put together that this world could offer. If you could obtain everything that the world could give you, but at the same time you lost your spiritual life, you would have lost everything. All the riches of this world cannot begin to compensate you for the loss of your spiritual life.

The same thing is meant by the second question, “What can a man give in exchange for his life?” Is there any price that can be put on a person’s spiritual life? A man’s spiritual life is so valuable, so important, that it you cannot put a price on it.

The same thing is meant by the second question, “What can a man give in exchange for his life?” Is there any price that can be put on a person’s spiritual life? A man’s spiritual life is so valuable, so important, that it you cannot put a price on it.

So what Jesus is saying through the questions that he is asking is quite obvious and quite clear. Yet so many people in the world never said these words. So many people live a life where the only thing in life is to get as much money, enjoyment and pleasure as you can. Their whole life is focused on these things.

So what Jesus is saying through the questions that he is asking is quite obvious

So what Jesus is saying through the question is quite obvious and quite clear. Yet so many people in this world live as if Jesus had never said these words. So many people live as if the single most important thing is to get as much money, enjoyment, pleasure, entertainment, as you can. Their whole life is focused on these things. Their attitude towards spiritual life is: "Well, it's a nice add-on if you're a religious sort of person. If you really like religion, then you go to church if you want to. But as for me, I might go to the odd funeral but I'm not really a very religious sort of person. In other words what they are really saying is that their relationship with God does not really matter. So I want us to meditate on these words together and to think together why it is that the spiritual life is so important and so much more valuable than all the riches of this world put together. There are three main reasons which I would suggest as to why the spiritual life is so valuable and so much more valuable than the relatively little value of what the world can offer. The first is because of the great value of what a relationship with God brings you. The second is because of the dreadful nature of the alternative to having spiritual life. Let us think about these three things.

So I want us to meditate on these words together and to think together why it is that the spiritual life is so important and so much more valuable than all the riches of this world put together. There are three main reasons which I would suggest as to why the spiritual life is so valuable and so much more valuable than the relatively little value of what the world can offer. The first is because of the great value of what a relationship with God brings you. The second is because of the dreadful nature of the alternative to having spiritual life. Let us think about these three things.

1. The relatively little value of what this world can offer

The first reason why spiritual life is so valuable is because of the relatively little value of what this world can offer.

Notice I did not say because of the zero value of what this world can offer. I would be a fool if I said to you that what this world can offer you is of no value at all, or that to have money, family, friends and pleasures is of no consequence whatsoever. I would be a fool because you can be thankful to God to have these things. Life is like for people who are deprived of such things to realise how difficult life can be without them. But the thing that we need to understand is that some help, they are of relatively little worth especially with the worth of knowing Christ. Why do I say the

We are made very aware of this whenever a disaster like an earthquake or hurricane strikes. When disaster strikes people are deprived in just a few seconds of their homes and everything they possess. They are hardly able to get drink or food, they are deprived of shelter having lost loved ones. Our hearts go out to those who suffer such extreme deprivation. First of all, because the world and the things of you. Every single one of us has got a vacuum, and that vacuum can only be filled by God. You might try all these things but whatever you try will never inside your heart.

So we are not saying that the things in this world are of no consequence

whatsoever. Of course they are of consequence. God has made the creation. God has given us food. God has given us a happy person when he died, dependent as he was on thousands upon thousands that could be thankful to God if we have these things.

2) Because the things of this world get damaged

But the thing that we need to understand is that although these things are of some help, they are of relatively little worth, especially when you compare them with the worth of knowing Christ. Why do I say that? For three reasons:

1) Because the things of this world can never satisfy

First of all, because the world and the things of this world can never satisfy you. Every single one of us has got a vacuum, an emptiness, in our lives. And that vacuum can only be filled by God. You might try all sorts of things to fill that vacuum – for example money, pleasure, but they will soon be broken and thrown away, like every other thing in this world. This world is of relatively little value because it is inside your heart.

3) Because sinful pleasures of this world have

You have only got to look at some of the lives of the rich and the famous to know that this is true. Think of somebody like Elvis Presley. He had everything he wanted but he died a relatively young man and he was obviously a very unhappy person when he died, dependent as he was on thousands upon thousands that could be given. The things of this world do not and will never satisfy you.

4) Because our lives are passing away

2) Because the things of this world get damaged and destroyed

A second reason why this world is of relatively little value is that the things of this world get damaged and destroyed. How long do all the things in your household? We have 11 children and things remain in pristine condition in our household rarely longer than one day. Maybe in your household things last a few weeks, maybe a few months or even longer but because we are living in a fallen world the truth is that everything we have degenerates. Scientists have even invented a law for it – the second law of thermodynamics. Everything is just running down all the time. That is the nature of life in a fallen world. That is exactly what Jesus said. He said "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal (Matthew 6.19). That wonderful new gadget that you work overtime for and save up to buy will soon be broken and thrown away, like every other thing in this world. So this world is of relatively little value because it is passing away.

All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the withers and the flowers fall because the breath of the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall forever.

Think of a beautiful bunch of flowers. You have a bunch of flowers, say £20 or £30. It looks really nice. How long does the beauty of that bunch of flowers last? You are lucky then the petals start to fall off, and soon they are in the bin. That is just how we are. Just a few years then before long we are ageing, and not long after we have died for is taken from this world.

So we see then that what Jesus says here when man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his life, his

3) Because sinful pleasures of this world have such a high price

The third reason why we should not value this world too much is because if you get into sinful pleasures they carry a very heavy price tag. If you get involved with sexual immorality, which is any sexual relationship outside of marriage, it is very likely that you will reap sexually transmitted diseases, loneliness and many other heartaches and troubles. If you get involved in drugs and you are likely to reap a twisted up mind, poverty and premature death. If you get involved with crime you will most likely land up in prison. Knowing God brings tears.

2. The great value of true spiritual life

The second reason why spiritual life is so much more valuable than anything the world can offer is that spiritual life is so vastly better than anything the world can offer. Let me outline very briefly some of the blessings of knowing God.

1) Forgiveness of sins

4) Because our lives are passing away

The fourth reason why this world is of limited value is because our lives are passing away so quickly. The days slip by at frightening speed. The days become months and the months become years and the years become decades. But when you are approaching old age and death. Before you know it you will not be here any more. All the things into which you put so much time and so much effort will be gone. Isaiah 40.6 – 8 says:

Firstly, there is the complete forgiveness of sin. Our conscience is troubled. Our judgement day is coming and we are going to have to answer for the things that we have done wrong and for the things that we have failed to do. But when you completely obliterate the guilt of your sin, Jesus of sinners. He was punished for their sins. The single thing he or she has ever done wrong blotted out. Everything you will do wrong today and everything you will do wrong in the future is completely forgiven for you if you trust in Jesus Christ and who trusts in what Jesus Christ has done for you.

2) Deliverance from the power of sin

All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flower. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.

Not only does having spiritual life cleanse you from the power of sin in your life. Do you have habits you did not have, perhaps a filthy temper, perhaps an addiction to certain substances? Do you say to yourself, "These things are really nice, there on the table. But how can I just cannot stop myself from doing them. With my own strength. What price would you put on this? Well here it is freely available, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3) The knowledge of God as your father

Think of a beautiful bunch of flowers. You have opened a box of flowers, say £20 or £30. It looks really nice, there on the table. But how long does the beauty of that bunch of flowers last? What price would you put on this? Well here it is freely available, in the Lord Jesus Christ. So soon you will throw the flowers in the bin. That is just how we are. Just a few years of beauty and strength and then before long we are ageing, and not long after that we are dead and all we have lived for is taken from us.

In our natural state we are alienated from God between us and God. But when you have trust in Jesus Christ, you are made to be a friend of God and a child of his. You are adopted into his family, you speak to him as "Daddy". Those who are heirs of God. They will inherit with Christ the glory over the new heavens and the new earth.

4) Satisfaction of the soul

So we see then that what Jesus says here when man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his life, his

If you gain the whole world? What can the world have gained the whole world what has it given you? Has it satisfied you? Has it met your deepest needs? No. The world is of relatively limited value.

2. The great value of true spiritual life

The second reason why spiritual life is so much more valuable than all that this world can offer is that spiritual life is so vastly beneficial for those who have it. Let me outline very briefly some of the blessings which come to us through knowing God:

1) Forgiveness of sins

Firstly, there is the complete forgiveness of sins. Do you have a troubled conscience? Maybe there are things that you did weeks ago, months ago or maybe even years ago which wake you up in the middle of the night. Your conscience is troubled. Our conscience is the sounding bell that there is a judgement day coming and we are going to have to answer to Almighty God for the things that we have done wrong and for the good things that we should have done and failed to do. But when you have true spiritual life, God completely obliterates the guilt of your sin. Jesus died on the cross in the place of sinners. He was punished for their sins. The person who comes to God through Jesus Christ and who trusts in what Jesus did on the cross for every single thing she has ever done wrong blotted out. Everything in the past, everything you will do wrong today and everything you will do wrong in the future is completely forgiven for you if you come to God through Jesus Christ. What a blessing, to know that your sins have been forgiven!

2) Deliverance from the power of sin

Not only does having spiritual life cleanse you from your sins, it also removes the power of sin in your life. Do you have habits in your life that you wish you did not have, perhaps a filthy temper, perhaps lust, perhaps greed, or perhaps addiction to certain substances? Do you say to yourself, "If only I did not do these things!" You can see your life is being dragged down by these things and you just cannot stop yourself from doing them. With Jesus there is the power to overcome sin. What price can you put on this? What more people would give to be free from their addictions, and from destructive tendencies in their lives? Well here it is freely available, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3) The knowledge of God as your father

I have mentioned already that nothing in this world can give you the peace that you can know in your soul. What more people would give to know this peace? It is freely available through the Lord Jesus Christ.

5) Joy

With the true spiritual life that comes through Jesus Christ, joy cannot be taken away. This is a joy that does not depend on circumstances. With this joy you can be genuinely happy whatever happens, God loves you. You know that God is working all things together for your good.

6) Hope

Those who have true spiritual life have it for ever. Jesus says "Whoever comes to me and abides in my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I go to my Father, and they shall never perish" (John 10.27 - 28). If you have true spiritual life, God will completely usher you into paradise. Then when Jesus comes again you will be with him. God will give you a new body. You will then enjoy the new world that God is going to make, in which there will be no crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away. That new world you will never sin again, nor be tempted to sin. You will have certain hope for all those who receive the spiritual life through Jesus Christ.

3. The dreadful alternative to not having spiritual life

The third reason why spiritual life is so valuable is that without it, life is unspeakably dreadful. Jesus says "What good is the world, yet forfeit his life?" What follows if you forfeit the opportunity to receive the life that God can give you? You still have a guilty conscience because you have not repented. You are still a slave of sin, instead of being a free child of God. Instead of having fellowship with God, you are alone. Instead of having satisfaction for your soul, you are miserable. Instead of having peace, you are in a constant state of war with the devil.

What price can you put on this? What more people would give to be free from their addictions, and from destructive tendencies in their lives? Well here it is freely available, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no real love without the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In our natural state we are alienated from God by our relationship with a family member between us and God. But when you have true spiritual life that barrier is removed and you are made to be a friend of God and not just a friend, but a child of his. You are adopted into his family, you are able to talk to God, and to speak to him as "father", "daddy". Those who are the children of God are also heirs of God. They will inherit with Christ the glory in this world and the glorious Christ over the new heavens and the new earth.

4) Satisfaction of the soul

I have mentioned already that nothing in this world can satisfy the emptiness inside you. But when you have this true spiritual life you are deeply and profoundly satisfied in a way that nothing in this world can satisfy, and you know peace in your life. So many people are so troubled, anxious and fearful that they take tranquillisers, but still they have no peace. Their mind is like a tossing sea, never at rest. But through the knowledge of Christ there is a genuine peace that you can know in your soul. What a valuable thing it is to know this peace! What if the answer to this is "no", or "not sure", the mess money people would give to have peace, and yet have it freely available through the Lord Jesus Christ.

5) Joy

With the true spiritual life that comes through the message of salvation accurately according to the scriptures of the Bible, joy cannot be taken away. This is a joy that does not depend on your outward circumstances. With this joy you can be genuinely glad because you know that, whatever happens, God loves you. You know that he is in charge of your circumstances, and working all things together for your good.

6) Hope

Those who have true spiritual life have it for ever. Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me, and I shall never perish" (John 10.27 – 28). If you have this true life that Jesus gives, then when this life is over you will be ushered into the presence of God in paradise. Then, when Jesus comes again, he will raise you from the dead, and he will give you a new body. You will then enjoy the glorious new world that he is going to make, in which there will be "no more pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21.4). In that new world you will never sin again, nor be sinned against. This is the certain hope for

the God to bring relationship with a family member know the greatest love of all, the love of God, if you are removed and you are made to be a friend of God and not just a friend, but a child of his. You are adopted into his family, you are able to talk to God, and to speak to him as "father", "daddy". Those who are the children of God are also heirs of God. They will inherit with Christ the glory in this world and the glorious Christ over the new heavens and the new earth. The worst thing of all is that if you do not have a friend of God, that I have mentioned will go on forever in hell. People who are able to talk to God, and to speak to him as "father", "daddy". Those who are the children of God are also heirs of God. They will inherit with Christ the glory in this world and the glorious Christ over the new heavens and the new earth. Instead there will be the most dreadful ever. There will be no way out. There will be no suffering.

So to have spiritual life is worth more than the wages of sin, for a man to gain the whole world and give it up, is like giving up the emperor's old clothes for good at all! What can a man give in exchange for

Lessons for us

Are you a true Christian? Have you received the gift of God? If the answer to this is "no", or "not sure", the message of salvation accurately according to the scriptures of the Bible, joy cannot be taken away. This is a joy that does not depend on your outward circumstances. With this joy you can be genuinely glad because you know that, whatever happens, God loves you. You know that he is in charge of your circumstances, and working all things together for your good. What if your answer to the question I just asked is "no", or "not sure", the message of salvation accurately according to the scriptures of the Bible, joy cannot be taken away. This is a joy that does not depend on your outward circumstances. With this joy you can be genuinely glad because you know that, whatever happens, God loves you. You know that he is in charge of your circumstances, and working all things together for your good. Do not despise your salvation, which is so valuable. Do not despise your salvation, which is so valuable. Do not despise your salvation, which is so valuable.

Now is this not what some of us are doing with our lives? Well, I've got my salvation, I'm saved and I'm glad. I've taken Christ for granted and just, leave him on the shelf. Jesus? Perhaps you have a look into the Bible when you feel like it. Is that what Christ means to you? Christ, this one whose life is worth more than the wages of sin. Sometimes you hear of a marriage that has gone wrong. The wife has drifted apart and lives separate lives. The husband is left out of the marriage. What happened? You can't tell. No! The husband just took the wife for granted.

all those who receive the spiritual life that Jesus offers. How valuable it is to have this spiritual life!

3. The dreadful alternative to not having a spiritual life

The third reason why spiritual life is so valuable is that the alternative is so unspeakably dreadful. Jesus says "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his life?" What follows if you forfeit your spiritual life, if you miss the opportunity to receive the life that God can give you? What follows is that you still have a guilty conscience because your sins have not been paid for. You are still a slave of sin. Instead of being a child of God you are a child of the devil. Instead of having fellowship with God you are cut off from God. Instead of having satisfaction for your soul you have an ever increasing and gnawing hunger and emptiness.

his work, and gave virtually no time or effort to his
took her for granted. He stopped loving her. A
Christ for granted? Pray to God that we who are
our relationship with Christ; that we might give
grasped to his sacrifices for him and that we
him, because he means so much to us.

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy E
1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission, Int

© 2008 by the author. All rights reserved. © 2008, Popular Baptist
United Kingdom. It may be reproduced without permission, provided:

- It is reproduced in full.
- The author is stated and this copyright notice is reproduced e
- No charge is made for copies.

All other reproduction can only be with permission of the copyright holde