

The Voice of the Soul

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon emphasizes the eternal significance of the soul and the necessity of prioritizing its salvation over worldly pursuits.

Duration: 24:35

Scripture: Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 6:25-26, Matthew 6:33, Luke 12:15-23, Luke 12:33-34

Topics: "Soul"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the parable of the rich man from the book of Luke. The rich man had a bountiful harvest and decided to tear down his barns and build bigger ones to store his goods. He then planned to live a life of ease, indulging in food, drink, and merriment. However, God intervenes and tells the rich man that his soul will be required of him that very night. The preacher emphasizes the importance of the soul and the need for salvation, highlighting that the eternal worth of the soul surpasses all worldly possessions. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the message of the voices of God's love, which call us to prepare for the other world through faith in Jesus Christ.

Transcript

In what would be, I guess, the fifth or sixth in a series called Voices That Entreat Us. And this tonight I'll speak of the voice of the soul. In the book of Luke, the twelfth chapter, beginning with verse sixteen, the words that our Lord spake.

He spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do. I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.

Then who shall these things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasures for himself and is not rich toward God. Now, this passage which I have read takes its meaning, partly at least, from that which precedes it and that which follows it. You will remember what precedes it is that a young man came to him.

He came running up to Jesus and said, Master, speak to my brother that he divides inheritance with me. Somebody had died in pestilence, he had no will, and the older brother just grabbed on to it. And the younger brother came and said, Speak to my brother that he divide this with me.

And our Lord refused to have anything to do with it. He said, Man, who made me a judge or divider over you? I am not engaged in the business of settling family disputes over property. Then he said, Take heed, for he knew what was wrong with that man.

Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. Then he told this story about the man who built the barns. Then he went on to say, Take no thought for your life what ye shall eat, and so on.

Which is too familiar for me to read, since everybody knows it. Now, what this passage declares here is the eternal worth of the soul as compared with all else. For you know what I've been trying to say these nights is, these Sunday nights, that there are voices, all the voice of God, but heard through different channels coming to us and telling us that there is another world and that we are here to get ready for it, but that we won't be here long, and that there is a door to that other world, and that door is Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, and that faith in him prepares us for that world.

This is what God is saying. This is the message that the voices have for us, the voice of God's love as it comes to us in these various ways. Now, I'm saying tonight that this poor neglected soul that Jesus told about has a voice, and it is speaking, and it is saying the same thing.

It is saying, Don't neglect me, because I'm all you have, and don't get so concerned with the things of earth that you forget you have a soul. That's what your soul is saying to you. Now, the Bible takes for granted, Christ our Lord taught and took for granted that man has a soul.

We've almost arrived in the world at a point where the soul is forgotten, but man has a soul. This is assumed in the Bible, and the facts appear throughout the entire scripture that man as we see him is not all. You've never seen me, and I've never seen you, and you have never seen anybody to tell the truth, because all we see is the outward, my hand is sore from shaking hands with Gideon.

But I never saw one of those men last week. Not one of them. All I saw was their faces and their general outline, but they have a soul, and that soul, that's the man, the soul.

If we're going to be sound philosophers, we've got to believe truth, and the truth is that I am not a man with a soul, and that I am a body having a soul, but the truth is that I am a soul having a body. The body, if the soul leaves it, can't say yes or no, it is a dead thing. But the soul of the man is the man.

When I say I, I don't mean my body. It's involved, but it's not primary. I mean my soul, the ego, the I. Sometimes it is used synonymously with spirit, and if any of you are very careful whisker splitters here tonight, and especially if you've been reading Jesse Penn Lewis, you'll probably come around, or maybe you'll be too courteous to do it, but you'll pray for me because you will say that poor fellow is confused.

Well, I'm not confused because I know two things. I know that in the Bible the word soul and the word spirit in what they connote are often used synonymously. You cannot always divide the word soul from the word spirit.

The Bible says we are body, soul and spirit, but it very often uses the word spirit and the word soul synonymously, showing that while you can think them apart, they are actually inseparable so that we are, when I'm talking about the man's soul, we are including the spirit of a man. That essential thing that was made in the image of God and that will never die, that will never cease to exist. And yet somebody says, wait a minute, doesn't the Bible say that the sinner is already dead? Yes, but there are two or three meanings for the word dead.

The word dead means cut off from God. A man who is dead in his sins is cut off from God, and that is dead because he is cut off from God. But dead also means ceasing to exist, but a man's soul never ceases to exist.

It continues on and on and on ever. The man who gave up his soul here, that soul continued to exist, but it did not continue to exist in eternal life because it had no eternal life. Our friends of the Seventh-day Adventists are confused here.

They say that nobody has immortality, that is, nobody has a continued existence until the Lord comes and gives it to some, and the ones that don't get it will lie in the grave and cease to be and be annihilated. But they confuse eternal life with immortality. Eternal life is the life of God in the soul of man, but immortality means not subject to death, and continued existence is possible both to the man who has eternal life and to the man who has not.

Continued existence in eternity to come is for every human being. There is no such thing taught in the Bible as secession of being. You can't snuff a soul out as you'd snuff out a candle.

It only goes from one place to another. It changes from earth to the world beyond, either to heaven or hell, but it continues to exist. So, soul and spirit is used synonymously very often, though sometimes used separately.

I use the two tonight as one, meaning that which is not material in me and all that which is not material. Now, the fact that a man has a soul is taken for granted in the scriptures, and it's also taught in the scriptures, and it's declared boldly as a hard tenet of truth, and there are very few people who doubt it, because it's believed by all people. It's a common coin of knowledge that people do have souls, that the races of men everywhere have believed it, and religions everywhere take it for granted since time began.

Only after a man has been educated beyond his intelligence is he prepared to say, I don't believe that there is any future like. George Bernard Shaw, the great and witty Irish playwright, was an agnostic, that is, a man who said, I don't know. He didn't know whether there was a God and whether he had a soul up until near the end of his life, and at the end of his life, right down toward the last, he said, Well, I've changed from being an agnostic.

I'm no longer an agnostic, I'm now an atheist. I know now there's no God, and of course if there's no God there's no future, no soul. Well, that would be quite in keeping with the gentleman, but he's wrong nevertheless.

He was brilliant, but he could be wrong, and he was. And it takes an awful lot of sophistication for anybody to dare to rise and say, I don't believe there's any future life or any soul, because it is a common coin of knowledge, and it is believed by the peoples of the world everywhere, red and yellow, black and white, around the world, and it is taught clearly and specifically by the scriptures. Now, one might almost say that

it is the test of our humanity, because the man who stands and says, I believe that I'm going to die like a dog, he's strange, isn't he strange? And he's suspect.

There's something monstrous about this. For a human being who is capable of letting his imagination leap from earth to the farthest star, who is able to leap in his imagination from today back to the dim beginnings of recorded history, a man who's capable of writing a symphony or painting a picture or building a bridge or flying an airplane, that same man to stand up and say, I do not believe in the future life. There's something monstrous about that.

There's something shocking and terrible about that. So I say that the belief in the soul is almost a test of our humanity. We're less than human, we've dehumanized ourselves when we stand and say we do not believe in the soul.

For now, to our Lord Jesus Christ, the soul is the endless part of the man. And the body is mere matter, as I've said, having no life from itself and ready to dissolve into dust when the soul withdraws from the body. But the man has an essential part, and it is proof that we're fallen, that that which is essential in us gets less attention than that which is incidental.

If everybody present here today had taken as much pains to look after your soul as you have to look after your body in the last 20 years, you'd be brilliant, shining saints tonight. But we neglect our souls and spend our time on our bodies. But somebody says, I don't care much for my body, I'm spending my time on my mind.

Well, your mind is a part, I suppose, of the eternal and the everlasting in you, but it's possible to spend your time on your intellect and still not have struck home to the real truth, because while the intellect's included in redemption, it is not the primary factor. The primary thing is the soul. Scripture says that a man is born of the Spirit, and if he's not born of the Spirit, it is Spirit that is born of the Spirit.

When the Spirit of God gives second birth to the Spirit of man, that includes a man's intellect. But a man can have a brilliant intellect and not have the new birth. Everybody knows that.

I'm only reciting what you people well know, but I'm trying to bring it together into one place so we can see it all in one place. Now, I say the body is mere matter, and the man has his essential part, and that's what I want to talk about. And that essential part of you has something to say to you.

That essential thing in you, which you may call spirit or soul, but I call soul for the night, that essential thing in you is talking to you, trying to get your attention, and it's saying to you that there's the place where memory dwells, and there's the place where intelligence dwells and moral perception, and there's where everlastingness lies, and there's where the hope of heaven and endless peace must lie at last. Now, the soul must be saved. This has been taught in the scriptures, that that internal part of me must be saved.

The scriptures are very, very free in saying that my body, that my body, I can freely give my body to die if that internal part of me is saved. Be not afraid, said Jesus, of anybody that can kill your body, but here's the one to be afraid of. Be afraid of the one that can destroy both body and soul in hell.

He was concerned with that soul of yours, and while he loved the body and while he has a body like our body, and we'll someday have a body like his glorious body, still he was concerned with the souls of men, and told them freely that they could sacrifice their bodies if necessary to save their souls. Now, the New Testament teaching is that if a man saves his soul, he saves everything else. That if a man's

everlastingness, that eternal in him, if that's saved, everything else is saved.

And if that's lost, everything else is lost. That's what Jesus taught, and that's what Paul taught. That's what the Bible teaches, that if I lose my soul, I've lost everything.

But if I lose everything and win my soul, I have gained everything. The person who has in him that everlasting thing, that seat of his selfhood, that that makes him, I'm almost talking in the language of the existentialist, though I am not an existentialist, but I see what they're trying to get at. They're trying to get at that thing that defies the grasp of our mind, the fact of our existence, that which exists in us.

And that's what the Lord Jesus Christ came to say. But he died for our bodies, too. Never imagine heaven as a place of disembodied spirits.

There are some disembodied spirits now. Souls under the altar are crying out to the Lord, and souls separated from the body. That's what happens when people die.

When we lay our loved ones in the grave, we are laying only the body away. It's very difficult for us to keep that in mind, even for Christians, very difficult. But it's so.

We're laying only the body away, and the body is no more our friend than the coffin is our friend, because our friend is gone to be with his Lord, and he was a Christian. The essential part of him, the soul, separated, and for the time being not disembodied. I think I said disembodied a while ago, but I would back out on that and say that it's not disembodied, but only out of this body.

But Paul told us in the 5th chapter of 2 Corinthians that there was no such thing as a disembodied spirit, really. He says, "...for in this body we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. If so be it, that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed," that's the disembodied spirit, "...but clothed upon that mortality might be swallowed up with life." There is an intermediate state. Maybe sometime I'll preach a whole sermon on this doctrine, but there is an intermediate state. But it's not a state of nakedness.

The Lord never allows anything to be naked except babies. He wants everything to be clothed, even the lilies clothed, and all the earth is clothed in beauty. And God clothes things, and so he clothes the soul.

He clothes it in a body, and then when the body dies, he clothes it in an intermediate body until the Lord comes. And when the Lord comes, our old body shall be raised and glorified like unto his glorious body. But if a man loses his soul, he's lost everything, absolutely everything.

Somebody told me, writing over here this morning from Ottawa, about a man who lived in a certain town here in Ontario. He told me that this man was one of the most penurious men he'd ever seen, the stingiest man, and the hardest worker, making money. He said, Lecture 15 The Resurrection And The Three Degrees Of Glory 2 he just had one ambition in life.

You shake your head and wonder if it's ticking, you wonder if you're hearing all right. But I was hearing all right, and this was a good Christian brother on his way to preach down here somewhere when he told me this. He said, this man that he knew has one ambition in life.

You know what it is? He said, I want to die richer than my father was. You know, you can't believe such a thing, that a man's ambition in life is to die richer than his father. He dies poorer than a church mouse, for the man who lives for this world only dies a pauper.

The Lord Jesus came that you might be saved, that the internal you might be saved, that the essential, the existential you, that which exists in you and can't cease to exist, that it shall continue on, saved and right in the presence of God. That it has enemies, your soul has enemies. Your own fallen nature is an enemy to your soul and to your soul's salvation.

And fallen nature is an enemy also, and fallen society is an enemy. And the devil himself goes about seeking whom he may devour. The soul can be lost, and it can be saved.

It can be lost by not knowing it can be lost. It can be lost by not believing it can be lost. It can be lost by neglecting its claims, and it can be lost by leaving it uncleansed and unforgiven and unblessed.

But I want to tell you about a friend, a friend whose sister testified they sticketh closer than a brother. You know, that doesn't say in the Bible that that's Jesus, but it's been universally believed by Christians that that's our Lord Jesus, and I believe it, too. There's a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

And the scripture says about him that he made his soul an offering for sin. Do you remember that? We go a lot on the body of Jesus dying, and he did die. He died in his body, there's no doubt about it.

He was a dead man, and God raised him from the dead the third day, that same body now glorified. But there's something deeper and more meaningful even than the body of Jesus dying, and that is that his soul was offered for us. Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.

Do you remember that? I think body only could have died for body, but soul died for soul. And when our Lord Jesus Christ died, he offered his soul, the essential part of him he offered, that which was he in contradistinction from anything else and everybody else, that which made him Jesus and not somebody else, that died as an offering for sin, his soul for my soul, his life for my life. And he lives to save us.

I want to talk more in these coming days about the risen Jesus Christ. I don't think we should wait until Easter to talk about it. I think that the fact that Jesus is alive ought to be the central theme of all our Christian thought, that Christ lives, that he lives now that he's with us, Christ is risen.

So he lives to save us, and he waits to welcome us. And amid all the creature noise, something inside of your heart is saying, don't neglect me, I'm your soul, I'm the essential, everlasting part of you, and there is a friend who came to die for that soul. I pray that you and I and all of us here tonight, you're not neglected.

Don't look after your housework and forget your soul. Don't look after your business and forget your soul. Don't get mixed up in politics and forget your soul.

Don't get mixed up in pleasures and forget your soul. Don't forget that you have that in you which can't cease to be, but that can die. Die meaning can be cut off from the presence of God in hell, but it can be renewed by the new birth and made to live in the presence of God while the ages roll everlasting to everlasting.

Now, there's a song I want you to sing, written by a man who had lost members of his family in an accident and who wrote it out of the grief of bereavement. His name was Spafford, and it's number 2 in our books.

And our brother will lead us, and I want you to sing it, and I'm not the song leader, but I'll tell you, I want you to sing your parts, and I want you to sing them out full-bodied and loud while we sing together this wondrous song, It Is Well With My Soul.

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