

# The Preciousness of the Soul

by Stephen Olford

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*The sermon emphasizes the preciousness of the human soul and the importance of losing it in Christ to find true salvation and preservation.*

**Duration:** 31:53

**Scripture:** Mark 10:46

**Topics:** "Soul Of Man"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal journey of being called by God to serve in Angola and Congo. He talks about the initial challenges they faced in trying to connect with the local people, but gradually gained their trust and began to learn their language. The speaker then shares a tragic event that occurred in their lives, comparing it to the story of the rich young ruler in the Bible who chose wealth over following Jesus. The sermon emphasizes the importance of not losing one's soul in pursuit of worldly possessions and highlights the need for spiritual values in a society that often prioritizes materialism. The speaker references Mark 8:36, which asks what profit it is to gain the whole world but lose one's soul.

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## Transcript

Let us just bow together in prayer. Lord Jesus, with all our hearts we pray that that testimony in song may find an echo in hearts of boys and girls, men and women, in Houston Hall tonight. I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today.

To that end, Lord, speak through each waiting heart the word of the gospel of life in Christ Jesus. Eclipse thy servant in the glory of thine own outshining. May no voice be heard but thy voice.

No power be felt but thy power. No blessing be experienced but thy blessing. We ask it for thy dear name's sake.

Amen. I'm going to ask you to turn again to the passage we read together in Mark, in chapter 8, and particularly focusing our attention on verse 36. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? We're living in an age of devaluation.

Things of former worth have now lost their relevance, their meaning, in an age that has changed in its objects and its values and its ideals. One can understand this when some of our leading scientists today, and philosophers today, and alas, some of our theologians, are telling us that the prerequisite for the

acquisition of spiritual values is that of seeking material values. One of our leading scientists today made a statement to that effect, and what he said at the academic level seems to seep down into the language and life of men and women like you and me, and our boys and girls too.

And the things that are of real worth and value seem to be set aside today. The text with which we open this conference seems to have no message to a modern world. Jesus Christ said, "'See ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,' and all these things shall be added unto you." When our Lord Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh, confronted people just like you and me on this great issue of what constitutes the most valuable thing in all the world, he mixed no terms whatsoever.

He looked people straight in the face, and he said, "'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' In other words, man's priceless treasure is the soul. Now, I can hear somebody asking me, "'What do you mean by the soul?' Very simply, in non-technical language, the soul is the real you. The soul is that real man, that real woman inside of that temple body that talks about my hands, my eyes, my brain.

The soul is that rational, invisible part of you which distinguishes you from a brute creation. The soul is that part of you which thinks and disposes and acts and makes decisions. The soul is that part of you that lives on forever and ever, if in the devil's keeping, in hell, if in God's keeping, in heaven.

The soul, dear boy, dear girl, young person, older one here tonight, your soul is the most priceless treasure you possess. Jesus said, "'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?' And so, for a few moments tonight, I want us to think, first of all, about what I'm calling the preciousness of the human soul. First of all, then, the preciousness of the human soul.

What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? I cannot allow you to look at this subject. You come back right to the words of our Savior concerning the preciousness of the human soul. Think, first of all, of humanity's estimate of the human soul, humanity's estimate.

It's an interesting fact that anthropology and many other studies have proved that men, however barbarous they've been down through the centuries, have always set a high value upon the human soul, that the human soul outlives and therefore is more valuable than the material world. Four hundred years before Christ, Socrates said, facing his judges on the very eve of his death, "'We're about to part,' he said, "'We're about to part.' Which of us goes the better way is known to God alone?' Stern, that brilliant intellect and humorist of the eighteenth century, said, "'I am positive that I have a soul, nor the books that the materialists have written against such a concept mean absolutely nothing to me.'" Humanity's estimate of the soul, the priceless worth. Return to hell's estimate of the human soul.

What has hell got to say about it? The devil knows the value of your soul to such an extent, my friend, and the souls of people in Asheville and New York and London tonight, the devil knows the value of the soul to such an extent that he puts forth every effort he possibly can to blind people's eyes to the value of their soul. The God of this world has blinded the eyes of them that believe not the gospel, lest the light of that glorious gospel of Christ, which is the image of God, should shine in unto the world. If I walk down the streets of your city tonight and challenge men and women concerning eternity and the claims of Christ upon them, and they shrug their shoulders and say, "'I couldn't care less! I know that they've been blinded by Satan.'" And if you're sitting in that seat tonight, and you couldn't care less about the value of your soul and its final destiny, God have mercy upon you.

Humanity's estimate, hell's estimate. What is heaven's estimate of the soul? What shall it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lose his own soul? When we think of the Father God, our hearts are lost in wonder, love, and praise. God looked down upon a rotten, sinful humanity, but He loved their souls.

And when He thought of redemption's price, redemption's price, He didn't look upon the billions of worlds that He had scattered in their orbits across His universe. He didn't look upon the glory of the heavenly host when He evaluated your soul, my friend, when He estimated the price of your soul. He looked upon His precious Son, and He said, "My Son is the value of the human soul, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' We turn from the Father God to the Savior God.

Even our Lord Jesus Christ, in perfect agreement with His Father, He came from heaven's glory. He laid by His majesty, and He was born of a woman, lived a little boy, youth, into glorious manhood. He went to a cross, and there upon that cross He shed His precious blood for the redemption of your soul.

And Peter, astounded by this fact, said, "For you're not redeemed with corruptible things, with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." My friend, if you would close your eyes for a moment and come with me two thousand years back into history, you hear the cries in the midday midnight, when God's drawn His straw shroud over that scene. You hear that cry of dereliction, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Why hast Thou forsaken me?' There's only one answer. There's only one answer.

In that moment in time and eternity was compressed when He who knew no sin was made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, the Christ of your soul." God the Holy Spirit, in supreme agreement with the Father God, and God the Son, has one supreme function in the world today. It is to convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Why of sin? Because that's the curse of the human soul.

Why of righteousness? Because that's the cure of the human soul. Why of judgment? Because that's the cost of the human soul. When we turn from the triune God to the mighty movement of the triune God in the church down through the centuries, it's the same story.

Why is Brother Fenton here? Why is Brother Frank here? Why are these men away from high positions of office that they could hold in any great company in any academic world? Why are they spilling out their lives here this week if it's not to share with you a burden they've caught for a lost world? Why have Mishris down through the centuries been shot, and hounded, and persecuted? Why? Because they know the value of the human soul. I learned this in a poignant way a number of years ago. I'd invited a missionary from the Congo to come and speak to my young people's group in Newport, South Wales.

His message so impressed me that I felt I would like to have a word with him afterwards, and I took him out to supper. He had come from the infested Congo basin, infested with everything--stakes, disease, bugs, mosquitoes. He'd been working amongst the little pygmy people, and I felt so impressed and awed by his devotion and sincerity and compassion of heart.

I wanted to get near him, and I began to ask him questions. And he opened out and began to tell me there at the table things he never told those young people, the sheer modesty of the man. He said, you know, my wife and I went out as young people.

We loved each other. We saw a lovely home in our dreams, the bringing up of a family, the following through of a normal career. But God caught us up between his redemptive purpose and showed us the need of the pygmy land of Angola and then of Congo.

He said out we went, and oh, we've had a tremendous time. He said we started the work of trying to welcome these little people who only watched us with their blowpipes and their bows and arrows behind trees. But little by little they began to see that we really loved them.

One by one they began to come to us, and we began to unravel the language and speak to them. We write in the thick of mischievous work. Then God gladdened our lives by giving us a little fun.

This precious little boy chatted to us and made the home glad when things were very lonely. Then he said tragedy struck, humanly speaking. Our little boy caught a horrible disease.

We nursed him, but to no avail. One night he opened his eyes once more and then closed them and he was away. He said we wept, and yet we rejoiced.

We laid the little one aside, took courage and pressed on. He said not very, very long after that God compensated for that and gave us a precious little girl. She was the delight of our hearts, but she wasn't more than just a few months old when that dread disease laid hold of my dear wife.

I battled for her life. I prayed, I battled, but God saw best to take her away. Before she died in my arms, she whispered, darling don't give up, don't give up, and I buried her alone without another soul to share a tear.

He said I'm home now for a short furlough, and my little girl is 18 months. And as he said that, a pain seemed to course through his whole frame. I could see it in his face and I said can I do anything? This has cost you a lot to save it.

He said it's all right, it'll be over in a moment. He said I suffer with malaria and salaria. My body's riddled with it, and the doctors don't seem to have an answer.

Then I said brother you told us in the young people's meeting that you were going back again. You can't go back and leave a little child of 18 months in Wales. You can't go back.

And a pained look came across his eyes, and he looked at me, and then tears spurted out of his eyes. He said, Alfred, Alfred, do you know as far as I'm concerned there isn't another mystery in the whole of pygmy land? We don't know of another mystery. Don't you care for the souls of little pygmies? I want to tell you friends, I never slept for nights after that.

I'm an evangelist. God has called me to evangelism, and I long to see men and women saved. I thought I loved them, but I didn't know how to really love people until I heard that man talk.

The value of a human soul, what should it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lose his own soul? I want to ask you Christians, have you compassion for the lost? Since when did you last talk to your neighbors about Jesus Christ? When did you last leave the soul to Jesus Christ? When have you shed tears on your knees because of a lost world? Let's be away with praying church. Let's come to the heart of the matter. The only reason God has left us down here since our salvation is to release the life of Christ in all his compassion for a lost world and Jesus wept for souls, and so did the apostle Paul.

The preciousness of the human soul, and yet I can hardly say it and I can hardly believe it, there is taught in the word of God clearly and definitely such a thing as the perdition of the earth. But it can be lost, and your soul can be lost. Your soul can be lost.

Listen, 25, 25 delegates to the conference at Greengrass Hotel that Bobby Richardson spoke about just now never got there. They died in Asheville. Your soul can be lost if it's out of Christ tonight.

You say, how can it be lost? What should it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lose his own soul? How can it be lost? Your soul can be lost, my friend, by defiling it with the world, by staining it with the world, abstain from fleshly lusts that war against your soul, says the word of God. And there is such a thing as the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, all that is in the world. And there's such a thing as that soul of yours being stained and defiled and scarred.

It can be lost by staining with the world. It can be lost, my friend, by selling it to the world. Yes, selling it to the world.

What should it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lose his own soul? And just as Esau sold his birthright for a meal just to make a pottage, you can sell your soul. And in case you look through the scriptures and find how many people did that, think of the rich young ruler, think of the rich young ruler, that handsome young man who came running to the Savior and dropped on his knee in his purple gown and looked up and said, good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? What shall I do? And Jesus said, go sell all that thou art, give to the poor, dethrone gold and enthrone God, follow me, and you'll have life. And he waited up, he waited up, gold, God, gold, God, gold, and he turned away into the darkness of a never-ending night so far as we know.

Greed, he sold his soul for possession. I wonder how many businessmen in this place tonight are selling their soul for the dollars. And your heart can stop tonight, your heart can stop tonight, and your executive desk be completely destitute tomorrow, and your soul be damned, and all your dollars left behind.

I want you to think of Herod, the man who sold his soul for popularity. He loved to array himself in great garments, he loved to make great orations to the people, and he did that on one occasion, and the people shouted and said, this is the voice of a God, and he took the glory to himself, and he grasped at popularity, and the angel of the Lord smote him, and he was eaten up of worms, and he gave up the ghost. He sold his soul for popularity.

Think of Pilate, Pontius Pilate, who sold his soul for power. Yes, there was a moment, I believe, in that great drama when he tried to save Jesus Christ from being crucified, I believe, quite sincerely, but suddenly his power was challenged, and the crowd shouted, if you, if you save this man, you are not Jesus' friend. You'll lose your power, you'll lose your power, and he handed him over to be crucified, and he sold his soul for power.

Think of Felix, the governor, who sold his soul for pleasure. That man who's living, yes, in sin and immorality, even as that zealous preacher Paul reasoned with him of righteousness, and of temperance, and of judgment, to come with such incisive wisdom and authority, that Felix's knees smote one against the other, as he trembled under the power of God. But listen, in spite of that, in spite of that, he kept Paul bound.

Why? Because it pleased the Jews, and he loved his sin, and he sold his soul for pleasure. Young man, don't you sell your soul for pleasure. Don't you sell your soul for a night of wickedness and sin.

What shall it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lose his own soul? Yes, there are those who stain their souls, there are those who sell their souls, there are those who starve their souls, starve their souls. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Charles Darwin, in the evening of his day, had to confess that he had starved his soul, just as he'd lost all sense of music and even of beauty. He had left off and lost all sense of God.

Somehow his soul atrophied, and he was damned, so far as we know. There's such a thing as the loss, the perdition, of the human soul. And I want to say in the fear of God, and I want to say it with deep compassion in my heart, if your soul is lost, my friend, as from now onwards, if your soul is ever lost.

Do you know this? I'll have to witness against you at that great day, because you heard a message tonight about the possibility of a lost soul. But I thank God the message doesn't conclude there. I'm glad that this passage goes deeper.

Yes, there is such a thing as the preciousness of the human soul, the perdition of the human soul. But look again and notice there is something here. There is the salvation of the human soul.

Yes, the salvation of the human soul. If you prefer the preservation of the human soul, what shall it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lose his own soul, said Jesus? But what had he said before that? He said, whosoever will save his life shall lose it. Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospels the same shall save it.

Said the Lord Jesus Christ, if you want your soul to be saved, if you want that life of yours to be saved, lose it in Christ, lose it in me. Or said somebody, if I do that, I'll lose my individuality. That's a lie.

That's a lie, my friend. You don't lose your individuality by being lost in Christ. You find it.

For we are complete in Him, and until a man is lost in Christ, he's not all there. I cannot where you come from, Harvard, Yale, Oxford, or Cambridge. You're lost in terms of your humanity until you find it totally in Jesus Christ.

You say, well, then what does it mean to lose my life in Christ? How can my soul be orientated? How can I enter into the realization of the apostle's prayer when he says, I pray God, yes, the God of peace, let your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved, blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? How can my soul be preserved? Here is the answer. Here is the answer. Jesus called the people unto him with his disciples also, and he said, whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

And in the simplest language, I want to put that to you as the gospel, the gospel that saves the soul from eternal perdition. What does it mean? Three simple steps, and I want you to follow me. Here is the first one.

You've got to deny for Christ. You've got to deny for Christ. Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself.

Let him deny himself. My friend, that's where you've got to stop. That's repentance.

That's repentance. That's the renunciation of anything calculated to keep you back from Christ. I don't know what that may be.

It may be fear. Fear of the very person you've come with tonight, and the fear of man bringeth us there. That person shall laugh you into hell, but never out of it.

It may be pride, intellectual pride. It may be pride just because there are other people here, and you don't want to humble yourself at the foot of the cross. It may be prejudice.

It may be anything. I want to tell you tonight, if you're going to mean business, if you're going to be a real man, a real woman, then deny yourself. Renunciate anything calculated to hold you back from Jesus Christ.

I love that beautiful story in Mark's gospel, a few chapters on a blind Bartimaeus who sat by the wayside begging, his sightless eyes rolling wistfully, and he hears a crowd. The crowd comes nearer and nearer, and he learns from a standbeyer that it's Jesus of Nazareth, the son of David, the healer, the savior, and he cuts his hands, and he says, Jesus, our son of David, have mercy on me, have mercy on me, and we read that Jesus stood still and commanded that he should be brought. One of the most dramatic little touches of Mark makes through the story at that point.

We read this, and he, casting aside his garments, wrote and paid to Jesus. Ladies and gentlemen, there was nothing wrong with that garment, that old ragged garment that kept him warm on cold evenings, the only thing probably he possessed apart from a lying cloth. There was nothing intrinsically wrong with that garment, nothing at all.

But lest that garment should trip him up or impede him or hold him back from coming to Jesus quickly, this date with destiny, his date with destiny, we read he cast it aside and paid to Jesus. I wonder what garment's holding you back. Is it self-righteousness, R.E.P.? Is it pride? Is it prejudice? Is it anything? My friend cast it aside tonight and come to Jesus.

Come to Jesus. Denied for Christ. Then central to the whole message of the gospel is this next point, decide for Christ.

Decide for Christ. Take up thy cross. Take up your cross.

The cross speaks of shame, let me tell you that. The cross speaks of suffering, let me tell you that. The cross speaks of sacrifice, let me tell you that.

But ultimately the cross speaks of salvation in Christ. Salvation in Christ. And my cross is the personal application of that message of salvation to my life.

Taking up the cross is identifying myself with the Christ of the cross. In all the shame he bore for me, in all the suffering, in all the sacrifice, redemptive sacrifice, when he shed his blood. But it's more than that, it's identifying myself with Christ in the cross of salvation.

Yes, salvation, salvation. Fighting for Christ. Will you take up the cross tonight? Will you take up the cross tonight? My friend, you may be a Baptist, you've been a Baptist all your life.

A Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, a Methodist, a Pentecostalist, I care not what you are. Forget your labels, they'll mean nothing in heaven. Nothing in heaven.

The word Baptist is unknown in heaven. Or Presbyterian, unknown in heaven. What matters tonight is this, have you come to Christ? Have you taken that cross? Has it come deep down into your heart? Have you reckoned with the cross for sin, for self, and for Satan? Have you made that cross your answer? Your answer, I repeat, before a holy God? Can you stand in all the wonder and good of that cross and say, by that cross I am justified? Yes, I'm justified, I'm made in you.

Why? Because he was delivered for our offenses, but raised again for our justification. And you can't ever divorce the cross from the resurrection. As you made the cross your own, if you haven't, will you say tonight, I take, O cross, thy shadow for my abiding faith.

I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of thy faith. Content to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss. My sinful self, my only shame, my glory, all the cross.

Will you accept the sentence of that cross upon your sin life, your self life? Will you die to sin and self, and know what it is to rise to resurrection life in Christ, righteousness, and God? Will you decide for Christ tonight? That's the last step, and it completes the message. Deny for Christ, decide for Christ, and Jesus said, then follow me, dare for Christ. Do you know what that word means, follow me? It means join Jesus in the way, it means go through with Christ through thick and thin, life or death, go through with Christ.

I wonder how many young people here tonight are saying, God helping me as I take the cross, as my salvation in Christ, I'm going to dare for Christ, and I'm going to follow him, and I'm going through with him, right to the very end, and I care not who tries to hold me back, I care not, I'm going through with Jesus, right to the end. If it costs what it will, I'm going through with Jesus, following Jesus right through to the end. What shall it cost a man to begin the whole world and do his own soul, the preciousness of the human soul? The possible loss of the human soul, the glorious promise of the salvation and preservation of the human soul.

How? By denying for Christ, by deciding for Christ, by daring for Christ, and following him to the end. Will you deny for Christ, and let it have full sway? Will you decide for Christ, and follow him all the way? Then give your answer here and now, as low before his cross you bow.

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