

## THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE SOUL.

MAT. xvi. 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?*"

**EVERY** man doth carry a treasure about with him, a DIVINE SOUL; and that this jewel should not be undervalued, our Saviour here sets a price upon it, he lays the soul in balance with the whole world, and being put in the scales, the soul weighs heaviest. "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

The world is a stately fabric, enriched with beauty and excellency, it is like a curious piece of arras, set about with divers colours; it is a bright mirror and crystal, in which much of the wisdom and majesty of God is resplendent; but as glorious as this world is, every man doth carry a more glorious world about him, a precious soul. It would bankrupt the world to give half the price of a soul; it will undo the world to buy it, and it will undo him that shall sell it. If we can save our souls, though we lose the world, it is a gainful loss; if we lose our souls, though we gain the world, our very gains will undo us. "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?"

The words branch themselves into these five parts:

1. A supposal of a purchase, "if a man shall gain." The proposition is hypothetical; Christ doth not say he shall gain, but puts a case; it is not a certain purchase, it is only supposed.

2. The purchase itself, the world.

3. The extent of the purchase, the whole world, the world with all its revenues and perquisites.

4. The terms of this purchase, "he shall lose his soul," not that his soul shall be annihilated (that were happy), but he shall lose the end of his creation; he shall miss of glory, he shall lose his soul. And the loss of the soul is amplified by two things:

*First*, The propriety, his own soul, that which is nearest to him, that which is most himself; the soul is the most noble part, it is

the man of the man, he shall lose his own soul.

*Secondly*, The irrecoverableness of the loss; "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The words are a *miosis*, there is less said, and more intended. What shall he give? as if Christ had said, alas! he hath nothing to give; or, if he had something to give, yet nothing will be taken for it; the soul cannot be exchanged, there shall be no bail or mainprise taken for it. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

5. Our Saviour's verdict upon this purchase, "for what is a man profited?" as if Christ had said, he will have a hard bargain of it, he will repent him at last, it is but the fool's purchase: for what is a man profited, &c.

*Doct.* The observation is, that the soul of man is a jewel more precious than a world; all souls are of one price: in this sense that maxim in philosophy holds true, all souls are alike. The soul of prince and peasant, all are equal; and every soul of more value than a world. For the illustration of the doctrine there are two things to be demonstrated.

*First*, That the soul is very precious.

*Secondly*, That it is more precious than a world.

1. That the soul is very precious. What Job saith of wisdom, I may fitly apply to the soul. "Man knows not the price thereof, it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire, the gold and the crystal cannot equal it; and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold," Job xxviii. 13, 16, 17. The soul is the glory of the creation; the soul is a beam of God; it is a sparkle of celestial brightness, as Demascen calls it; it is, according to Plato, a glass of the Trinity. There is, in the soul, an idea and resemblance of God: an analogy of similitude, not proportion, as the schoolmen speak. If David did so admire the rare texture and workmanship

of his body, Psal. cxxxix. 13, 15. "I am wonderfully made, I was curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." If the cabinet be so curiously wrought, what is the jewel? how richly and gloriously is the soul embroidered! it is divinely inlaid and enamelled. The body is but the sheath, Dan. vii. 15. "I was grieved in the midst of my body;" in the Chaldee it is, in the midst of my sheath. The most beautiful body is but like a velvet sheath, the soul is the blade of admirable metal. The soul is a sparkling diamond set in a ring of clay, &c. The soul is a vessel of honour; God himself is served in this vessel. The soul is the bird of paradise that soars aloft; it may be compared to the wings of the cherubims, it hath a winged swiftness to fly to heaven. The soul is capable of communion with God and angels. The soul is God's house he hath made to dwell in, Heb. iii. 6. The understanding, will, and affections are the three stories in this house. What pity is it that this goodly building should be let out, and the devil become tenant in it. The preciousness of the soul is seen in two particulars.

It hath I. An intrinsical worth. II. An estimative worth.

I. The soul hath an intrinsical worth. Which appears in two things: 1. Spirituality. 2. Immortality.

1. Spirituality. The soul is a spiritual substance. It is a saying among the ancients, our souls are tempered in the same mortar with the heavenly spirits. Now the soul is spiritual three manner of ways: In its essence, object, operation.

(1.) The soul is spiritual in its essence. God breathed it in, Gen. ii. 7. It is a sparkle lighted by the breath of God. The soul may be compared to the spirits of the wine, the body to the dregs: the spirits are the more pure refined part of the wine, such is the soul; the body is more feculent, the soul is the more refined, sublimated part of man. Mistake me not, when I say the soul is spiritual, and that it is a beam of God; I do not mean that it is of the same substance with him, as Servetus, Osiander, and others have held; for when it is said God breathed into man the breath of life, they erroneously

thought that the soul being infused did convey into man the spirit and substance of God, which opinion is absurd and sinful: for if the soul should be part of the Divine essence, then it will follow, that the essence of God should be subject not only to change and passion, but which is worse, to sin, which were blasphemy to assert; so that when we say the soul is spiritual, the meaning is, God hath invested it with many noble endowments, he hath made it a mirror of beauty, and printed upon it a surpassing excellency; as the sun shining upon crystal, conveys its beauty, not its being.

(2.) The soul is spiritual in its object, it contemplates God and heaven; God is the orb and centre where the soul doth fix; if you could lift up a stone into the highest region, though it did break in a hundred pieces, it would fall to its centre. The soul moves to God, as to its rest, Psal. cxvi. 7. "Return to thy rest, O my soul." He is the ark to which this dove flies; nothing but God can fill a heaven-born soul; if the earth were turned into a globe of gold, it could not fill the heart, it would still cry, Give, give. The soul being spiritual, God only can be the adequate object of it.

(3.) The soul is spiritual in its operation, it being immaterial, doth not depend upon the body in its working. The senses of seeing, hearing, and the rest of those organs of the body, cease and die with the body, because they are parts of the body, and have their dependence on it; but the soul (as Aristotle saith) hath a nature distinct from the body, it moves and operates of itself though the body be dead, and hath no dependence upon, or co-existence with the body. Thales Milesius, an ancient philosopher, calls the soul a self-moveable, it hath an intrinsical principle of life and motion, though it be separate from the body. And thus you have seen the soul's spirituality.

2. The preciousness of the soul appears in its immortality. There are some that say the soul is mortal; indeed it were well for those who do not live like men, if they might die like beasts; but as Julius Scaliger well observes, it is impossible for any thing of a spiritual, uncompounded nature, to be subject to death and corruption: the souls of

believers are with Christ after death, Phil. i. 23. (Ecolampadius said to his friend, who came to visit him on his death bed, Good news, I shall be shortly with Christ my Lord. And the devout soul shall be ever with the Lord, 1 Thess. iv. ult. The heathens had some glimmerings of the soul's immortality. Cicero saith that the swan was dedicated to Apollo, because she sings sweetly before her death; by which hieroglyphic they intimated the joyfulness of virtuous men before their death, as supposing the Elysian delights, which they should always enjoy after this life. And we read it was a custom among the Romans, that when their great men died, they caused an eagle to fly aloft in the air, signifying hereby that the soul was immortal, and did not die as the body.

The soul's immortality may be proved by this argument, That which is not capable of killing, is not capable of dying; but the soul is not capable of killing; our Saviour Christ proves the minor proposition, that it is not capable of killing. Luke xii. 4. "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Therefore the soul not being capable of killing, is not in a possibility of dying; the essence of the soul is metaphysical, it hath a beginning, but no end; it is eternal, *a parly post*. The soul doth not wax old, it lives for ever, which can be said of no sublunary created glory. Worldly things are as full of mutation as motion, and like Jonah's gourd, have a worm eating at the root.

## II. The soul hath an estimative worth.

1. Jesus Christ hath set a high value and estimate upon the soul; he made it, and he bought it, therefore he best knows the price of it. He did sell himself to buy the soul. Zech. xi. 12. "They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." Nay, he was content not only to be sold, but to die; this enhanceth the price of the soul, it cost the blood of God. Acts xx. 28. 1 Pet. i. 19. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." God must die, that the soul may live; the heir of heaven was mortgaged, and laid to pawn for the soul of man. What could Christ give more than himself? what

in himself dearer than his blood? O precious soul, that hast the image of God to beautify thee, and the blood of God to redeem thee! Christ was the priest, his divine nature the altar, his blood the sacrifice which he did offer up as an atonement for our souls. Now reckon what a drop of Christ's blood is worth, and then tell me what a soul is worth.

2. Satan doth value souls, he knows their worth; he saith as the king of Sodom did to Abraham, 'Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.' So saith Satan, 'Give me the persons.' He cares not how rich you are, he doth not strive to take away your estates, but your souls. Give me the persons, saith he, take you the goods; whence are all his *noemata*, his warlike stratagems, his subtle snares, but to catch souls? Why doth this lion so roar but for his prey? he envies the soul its happiness, he lays the whole train of temptation to blow up the whole fort-royal of the soul. Why doth he lay such suitable baits? he allures the ambitious man with a crown, the covetous man with a golden apple; the sanguine man with beauty; why doth he tempt to Delilah's lap, but to keep you from Abraham's bosom? the devil is angling for the precious soul; to undo souls is his pride; he glories in the damnation of souls; it is next to victory to die revenged. If Samson must die, it is some comfort that he shall make more die with him; if Satan, that lion, must be kept in his hellish den, it is all the heaven he expects, to reach forth his paw, and pull others into the den with him.

2. Having showed you the soul's preciousness; the next thing to be demonstrated, is, that the soul is more precious than a world; the world is made of a more impure lump; the world is of a coarser make, of an earthly extract; the soul is heaven-born, of a finer spinning, of a more noble descent; the world is a great book or volume, wherein we read the majesty and wisdom of him that made it; but the soul is the image of God, Gen. i. The soul is a studied piece; when God made the world, it was but *fiat*, let it be, and it was done; but when he made the soul, all the persons in the Trinity sat together at the council table, Gen. i. 26. "Come, let us make man in our own likeness." The soul

is a glass wherein some rays of divine glory shine, much of God is to be seen in it; though this glass be cracked by the fall, yet it shall one day be perfect; we read of spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 23. The soul since the fall of Adam, may be compared to the moon in its conjunction, very much obscured by sin; but when it is sanctified by the Spirit, and translated from hence, it shall be as the moon in the full, it shall shine forth in its perfect glory.

1. If the soul be so precious, see then what that worship is that God doth expect and accept; namely, that which comes from the more noble part of the soul. Psal. xxv. 1. "To thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." David did not only lift up his voice, but his soul; though God will have the eye and the knee, the service of the body; yet he complains of them that draw near with their lips, when their hearts were far from him, Isa. xxix. 13. The soul is the jewel; David not only put his lute and viol in tune, but his soul in tune to praise God. Psal. ciii. 1. "Bless the Lord, O my soul;" his affections joining together in worship, made up the concert. The soul is both altar, fire and incense; it is the altar on which we offer up our prayers, the fire which kindles our prayers, and the incense which perfumes them. God's eye is chiefly upon the soul: bring an hundred dishes to table, he will carve of none but this; this is the savoury meat he loves. He who is best, will be served with the best; when we give him the soul in a duty, now we give him the flower and the cream; by a holy chemistry we still out the spirits. A soul inflamed in service, is, "the cup of spiced wine, and the juice of the pomegranate," Cant. viii. 2. which the spouse makes Christ to drink of: without the worship of the soul, all our religion is but bodily exercise, 1 Tim. iv. 8. which profits nothing; without the soul we give God but a carcase. What are all the Papists' fastings, penance, pilgrimages, but going to hell in more pomp and state? What are the formalist's prayers, which do even cool between his lips, but a dead devotion? It is not sacrifice but sacrilege; he robs God of that which he hath a right to, his soul.

2. *Branch.* If the soul be so precious,

then of what precious account should ordinances and ministers be?

1. Ordinances are the golden ladder by which the soul climbs up to heaven, they are conduits of the water of life. O how precious should these be to us! they that are against ordinances, are against being saved.

2. Of how precious account should ministers be, whose very work is to save souls; their feet should be beautiful.

1. Their labours should be precious; they are, in the Greek, *sunergoi*, 2 Cor. vi. 1. They labour with God, and they labour for your souls; all their sweat, their tears, their prayers are for you; they woo for your souls, and oftentimes spend their lives in the suit.

2. Their liberty should be precious. Constantine was a great honourer of the ministry; if indeed you see any of them who are of this holy and honourable function, like that drug the physicians speak of, which is hot in the mouth, but cold in operation; if you see them either idle or ravenous, if they do not divide the word rightly, and live uprightly, censure and spare not. God forbid I should open my mouth for such. In the law, the lips of the leper were to be covered; that minister who is by office an angel, but by his life a leper, ought to have his lips covered, he deserves silencing. A good preacher, but a bad liver, is like a physician that hath the plague; though his advice and receipts which he gives may be good, yet his plague infects the patient: so though ministers may have good words, and give good receipts in the pulpit, yet the plague of their lives infects their people. If you find a Hophni and Phinehas among the sons of Levi, whose unholy carriage makes the offering of God to be abhorred, you will save God a labour in ejecting them; but be sure you distinguish between the precious and the vile; while you let out the bad blood, have a care to preserve the heart-blood; while you purge out the ill humours, do not destroy the spirits; while you are taking away the snuffs do not eclipse the lights of God's sanctuary; it is a work fit for a Julian to suppress the orthodox ministry, and open the temple of the idol. The Romans sacked the city of Corinth, and rased it down to the ground for some incivility offered to their ambassador. God will



avenge the affronts offered to his ministers, Psal. cv. 15. O take heed of this! if souls be of such infinite value, how precious should their liberties be, whose very design and negotiation is to save souls; 1 Tim. iv. 16. Jude 23.

*Use 2. Exhort. Branch 1.* If the soul be so precious, take heed of abusing your souls. Socrates exhorted young men that they should look their faces in a glass, and if they saw they were fair, they should do nothing unworthy of their beauty. Christians, God hath given you souls that sparkle with divine beauty; O do nothing unworthy of these souls, do not abuse them: there are four sorts of persons that abuse souls.

1. They that degrade their souls.

(1.) That set the world above their souls; "Who pant after the dust of the earth," Amos ii. 7. As if a man's house were on fire, and he should take care to preserve the lumber, but let his child be burnt in the fire.

(2.) That make their souls lackeys to their bodies. The body is but the brutish part, the soul is the angelical; the soul is the queen-regent, who is adorned with the jewels of knowledge, and sways the sceptre of liberty; oh what a pity it is that this excellent soul shall be made a vassal, and be put to grind in the mill, when the body in the meantime sits in a chair of state! Solomon complains of an evil under the sun, Eccl. x. 7. "I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth." Is it not an evil under the sun to see the body riding in pomp and triumph, and the soul of man, that royal and heaven-born thing, as a lackey walking on foot.

2. They abuse their souls that sell their souls.

(1.) The covetous person sells his soul for money; as it is said of the lawyer, he hath a tongue that will be sold for a fee; so the covetous man hath a soul that is to be set for money. Achan did sell his soul for a wedge of gold. Judas did sell his soul for silver; Judas sold cheap pennyworths; for thirty pieces of silver he did sell Christ, who was more worth than heaven; and his own soul which was more worth than a world! how many have damned their souls for money? 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. It is observed that the

eagles' quills or feathers mixed with hens' feathers, will in time consume them; such is the world to the soul; if you mix these earthly things with your souls, and let them lie too near you, they will in time consume and undo your souls.

(2.) The ambitious person sells his soul for honour; as Alexander the sixth did sell his soul to the devil for a popedom; and what is that honour but *res imaginaria*? a torch lighted by the breath of people, with the least puff of censure blown out! how many souls have been blown into hell with the wind of popular applause?

(3.) The voluptuous person sells his soul for pleasure. Heliogabalus drowned himself in sweet water; so many drown their souls in the sweet perfumed waters of pleasure. Plato calls pleasure the bait that catcheth souls: Pleasure is a silken halter, a flattering devil, it kills with embracing.

(4.) They abuse their souls that poison their souls; error is a sweet poison. Ignatius calls it the invention of the devil. A man may as well damn his soul by error as vice, and may as soon go to hell for a drunken opinion as for a drunken life.

(5.) They abuse their souls that starve their souls; these are they that say they are above ordinances; but sure we shall not be above ordinances, till we are above sin. The apostle saith, that in the blessed sacrament we are to remember the Lord's death till he come, 1 Cor. xi. 26. that is, until Christ comes to judgment. How then can any omit sacraments without a contempt and affront offered to Christ himself? if Saint Paul and the apostles, those giants in grace, needed the Lord's supper to confirm and corroborate them, much more do we need such holy ordinances, who have but an infant faith; but Satan likes these fasting days, he would have men fast from ordinances: if the body be kept from food, it cannot live long.

*Branch 2.* If the soul be so precious a thing, take heed you do not lose your souls; consider what a loss it is, as appears in two things.

1. It is a foolish loss to lose the soul, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," Luke xii. 20. It is a foolish loss to lose the soul, in a threefold respect.

(1.) Because there is a possibility of saving the soul; we have time to work in, we have light to work by, we have the Spirit offering us help. The soul is like a ship laden with jewels, the Spirit is a gale of wind to blow; if we would but loosen anchor from sin, we might arrive at the port of happiness.

(2.) It is a foolish loss, because we lose the soul for things of no value; worldly things are infinitely below the soul, they are *nonentities*. Prov. xxiii. 5, "Wilt thou set thine eyes on that which is not?" The world is but a bewitchery, these things glister in our eyes; but at death we shall say, we have set our eyes on that which is not: he that thinks to find happiness here is like Ixion, that hugged the cloud instead of Juno, and like Apollo, that embraced the laurel-tree instead of Daphne. Now to lose the soul for such poor inconsiderate things, is a foolish thing; it is as if one should throw a diamond at a pear-tree, he loseth his diamond.

(3.) It is a foolish loss, for a man to lose his soul, because he himself hath a hand in it; is it not folly to give one's self poison? a sinner hath his hands imbrued in the blood of his own soul: "thy destruction is of thyself," Hos. xiii. 9. "They lay wait for their own blood," Prov. i. 18. The foolish sinner nourisheth those lusts that kill his soul; the tree breeds the worm, and the worm eats the tree; were it not folly for a garrison to open to the enemy that besiegeth it; the sinner opens to those lusts which war against his soul, 1 Pet. ii. 11. this is a foolish loss.

2. It is a fatal loss to lose the soul.

(1.) It is an unparalleled loss, because in losing the soul there are so many things lost with it; as a merchant in losing his ship, loseth many things with it; his money, plate, jewels, spices. Thus he that loseth his soul, he loseth Christ, he loseth the Comforter, he loseth the society of angels, he loseth heaven.

(2.) It is an irreparable loss: other losses may be made up again; if a man lose his

health, he may recover it again; if he lose his estate, he may get it up again; but if he lose his soul, this loss can never be made up again. Are there any more saviours to die for the soul? as Naomi said to her daughters, "Are there yet any more sons in my womb?" Ruth i. 11. Hath God any more sons? or will he send his son any more into the world? Oh no, if the soul be lost! Christ's next coming is not to save it, but to judge it. Christian, remember thou hast but one soul, and if that be gone, all is gone. God, saith Chrysostom, hath given thee two eyes, if thou lovest one, thou hast another; but thou hast but one soul, and if that perish, thou art quite undone. The merchant that ventures all in one ship, if that ship be lost, he is quite broken.

(3.) The loss of the soul is an eternal loss; the soul once lost, is lost for ever; the sinner and the furnace shall never be parted, Isa. xxxiii. 14. As the sinner's heart will never be emptied of sin, so God's vial shall never be emptied of wrath: it is an eternal loss.

*Branch 3.* Do what you can to secure the main chance, to save these precious souls. In times of danger men call in their debts, and labour to secure their estates; let me tell you, all you who are yet in your natural estate, your souls are mortgaged; if your land were mortgaged, you would endeavour to redeem it; your souls are mortgaged: sin hath mortgaged them, sin hath laid your souls to pawn, and where do you think your souls are? the pawn is in the devil's hand, therefore a man in the state of nature is said to be "under the power of Satan," Acts xxvi. 18. Now there are but two ways to fetch home the pawn; and both are set down, Acts xx. 21. "Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Unravel all your works of sin by repentance, honour Christ's merits by believing: divines call it saving faith, because upon this wing the soul flies to the ark Christ, and is secured from danger.