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Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
by Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday
30th November 1924

Text: Matthew 14 verse 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 ?

Do you believe in Jesus Christ ? some may say, of course we do, but it is not a matter of course, believing in Jesus Christ, is on the only ground, and for the alone reason of a revelation of Him in the soul. Plenty of evidence was about and before the eyes of the Jews when Christ came, if they could have discerned the signs of the times, as they did the face of the sky. And by what it portended they would have known that Shiloh had come, but they knew Him not, and they perished in their unbelief. "For if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."(John 8 verse 24). Why did not Peter perish in his unbelief ? Because the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ revealed His Son in the Apostle Peter, and in his brother Apostles. Why have some of us not perished, and believe we shall never perish in our sins ? Because of that distinguishing grace, and the manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts.

Seek, Oh you seekers, seek this above all else, it is a free communication of the grace of God. A free and sweet manifestation of the mercy of God to a sinner. It comes freely, it is bestowed upon a sinner, and enters his soul, he does not fetch it in. It drops in and he believes it, and feels it. He loves this blessing and he cleaves to Christ who comes to him by revelation. You will always love Christ, when you see Him in the light of the Spirit, and you will cleave to Him. One might then say, I shall never doubt, and I should never think anything else of the Lord, I shall always love Him. But you might come to find this in your self, a very great anxiety to avoid the path of tribulation. Peter found it, think of him turning as it were to a devil, in a very short time after he had received that manifestation. Does not this teach us that we must continually have fresh manifestations, as the earnest of the gift communicated from God to keep us alive, and spiritually lively. If it were asked of any of you who fear the Lord, whether you believe you must have tribulation, no doubt you would say, of course we believe it. Oh but it is a great thing, you must have tribulation, I wish I always believed it. If you believed it you would never grumble at trouble, you would never fret at anything that comes to you.

It is unbelief that turns us aside from all good things, and now the Lord having rebuked Peter in this most solemn manner, calling him Satan. "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (Matthew 16 verse 23). What things were of God at this moment ? the sufferings of Christ that were soon to come, and the anxiety of Peter to save Christ, and of course himself from suffering, made him savour of the things that be of men. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." (Job 2 verse 4). And Peter at this moment, was just full of the things that are of men, therefore he did not savour of the will of God, which will was that Christ should suffer. He did not savour of that will of God, which is what all the followers of Christ must do, to take up their cross and follow Him.

Then Christ said, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it:" (Matthew 16 verse 25). Will you flee from the path of tribulation ? will you shun the cross ? will you keep in the city, rather than go out to a suffering Saviour without the camp, bearing His reproach ? "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." (Hebrews 13 verse 13). It will be but a short time you will lose what you save. You will lose it, whatever you save by shunning the cross, you will be the loser. "whosoever will lose his life," face sorrow, walk by faith in tribulation. Walk looking at the things which are not seen, and are not affected, so as to be turned aside from God, by the things that are seen. (see 2 Corinthians 4 verse 18). Whosoever will thus lose his life shall save it, he must take up his cross. For where there is no cross, there is no crown, and no reaching heaven, nor being with God.

If you have no cross it is a very solemn thing for you, having no cross you will have no crown, henceforth said a suffering Apostle, whose life was not counted dear unto him, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, (having promised it) shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (2 Timothy 4 verse 8). Does this make religion look harsh and disagreeable ? The reason is in yourself, you are looking at things which are seen, and not the unseen things. May the Lord open your eyes, and you will see a beauty in a suffering Saviour, a glory in His grace and shame, such a beauty, and such a glory, as will make you willing to take up any cross that God may prepare for you to take up. And remember this, If you will save your life you will lose it, and if you shun a path of suffering, you will enter a suffering eternity. If you have not the grace of Christ, and no sufferings for Christ's sake here, then you will have a cross and the yoke of God's curse throughout eternity.

This is the dreadful alternative. The text propounds an amazingly great matter, it sets before us two subjects, the world and the soul. Also it sets before us the comparative values of these two subjects. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul." I would, a little as enabled, speak to you, as I would speak to myself about the soul. The soul is that immortal part of us, distinguished from the mortal part. And our bodies must die, but our souls can never die. The soul is distinguished from the body, for the soul thinks, the soul is capable of knowledge the soul is capable of knowing God, and of loving Him. The soul thinks, one said "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." (Psalm 104 verse 34). The Psalmist speaking out of his heart, said he would think or meditate, the soul is sometimes hidden within the whole person, as in the rich man in the parable. "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, (that is himself) Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." (Luke 12 verses 16 - 19). It is the whole person that the soul was thinking of, planning, and looking to the future for, and that is what we can do. We think of self, and a great deal more highly of self generally than is good for us, thus we think.

The soul is also capable of pain, because it is capable of enjoyment, and of misery. It is capable of anything, capable of knowing God, doubtless Adam knew God well under the covenant of works. We have not grown upward, since the fall, we have degenerated, we are alienated now from the life of God through ignorance. We can know, but sadly we are willfully bold and determined not to know the invisible things of God, as they are manifested in God's work of creation. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even the eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:" (Romans 1 verse 20). "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." (Romans 1 verse 28).

This is very solemn, probably some of you do not like to retain the knowledge of God, you think of the world, and it attracts you. Its pleasures attract you, they seem solid things to you, youthful ambitions draw you, and if you obtained them you would be like the rich man in the parable. What a solemn thing it is not to like to retain the knowledge of God in your heart.

How awful to say, in the very motion of our hearts, every wish of our minds, and every plan that we form, to say practically to the Almighty, in whom we live and move and have our being, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." (Job 21 verse 14). Oh it would be well, if the Lord should come to some of you, and turn you upside down, and convince you of your practical atheism. Listen to me for I mean it, and wish it for your good, your condition is very solemn, terrible in the extreme. The capacity that you have of knowing your abuse, in wanting to know the world instead of God. This is what your soul is capable of, it is capable of joy. Everyone knows that when things turn out as we would have them naturally, then we are joyful, we are happy in the success that comes in some particular way. And we are also capable of misery. You may be in good circumstances, may have good health, and all you could wish for at the moment as to outward matters. And yet something may come, a worm may be at the root of this or that matter, and misery is the effect.

Now carry this out through eternity, what is the soul capable of ? it will know. Are you capable of knowing God when you shall enter eternity, unprepared to stand before Him ? That natural capacity of yours will not be destroyed. It will be intensified probably far beyond our uttermost conception today, and what intensity it will be of suffering when memory joined to all the other things in you, shall bring up past days, falsehoods spoken and connected with wrong desires. And you will live over all those things, and they will live in you, in an intensely suffering state. Intensely above all that you could have suffered here. And think that in this there will be the knowledge of God, it will be a just hell, a just pain and anguish.

This is the soul and it must live for ever, it is immortal and the person, the whole person must live for ever. And here let me say, that the law of God, under which a sinner dies, who has no union with Christ, claims his entire person, and this makes the resurrection of the wicked necessary. For the law cannot punish singly, only the soul, it must punish the sinner, it must punish the man who said to Christ, "We will not have this man to reign over us". (Luke 19 verse 14). Of that man and all men who die like that, Christ will say, "But of those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." Luke 19 verse 27). "This is the second death." (Revelation 20 verse 14). "Take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 22 verse 13). Now this is a brief word about your souls which are immortal, and the body shall also be immortal after the resurrection.

Now Christ says there is a world here, a world of pleasure, riches, honour and profit. a world which though passing away, appeals to all in it who leave it in this state, to be attractive and desirable. There is also an invisible God, but of Him, the natural man has no thought, there is also an invisible world. The visible world attracts, its riches attract, the assured possession of which, if they can be secured attracts. Wealth attracts, it attracts all men especially for what it can procure, and what pleasure it can bring to the possessor. This is the world in some form, and it is in the heart of every man. "He hath made everything beautiful in His time: also He hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning of the world." (Ecclesiastes 3 verse 11). The world is set in the hearts of the sons of men, really set in the soul. We preferred it in our head Adam, when he chose with his eyes open, to disobey his God, and preferred what he saw. He saw the world, and he preferred it before God. We naturally see the world, and not seeing God, prefer the world which is in our hearts. We reach after it, grasp and lay hold of as much of it as we can. We think much of it, and if we can get hold of more than we have naturally we shall do so.

This is man, and these two things, an undying soul and a dying world, a world under the curse of God. A world that passeth away, a world of whom its possessions can give no more than a momentary satisfaction. Everything in this world is like a sentence spoken or written, it has a full stop. You will find it, I shall find it, and Christ in the next place sets before us, a great question, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?" The greatness of his soul lies in its immortality, its capacities, while the littleness of the world lies in this, that it can give no real satisfaction, it passeth away. If then you can gain as much of the world as your heart can wish, and enjoy it, for some have a great capacity for enjoyment, even of the world, if as I say, that can be your choice. Just think, an immortal person and a passing treasure, legally flowing away from you, of no real value or abiding good, unable to fit you for eternity. Suppose one here should say, now I have an assured position naturally, I have no reason to be anxious, and that person has nothing more, what has he, should he live to be three score years and ten, the allotted span for mankind in age ? Even if his strength should be lengthened out to four score years, he will find his strength labour and sorrow. The position he then occupies, or may occupy, even then has with it so much sting, so much death, so much misery that he can say, it is not desirable to live to a great age, and so he passes away. What will he give in exchange for his soul then ? That immortality with which he was invested by his maker, what will he give ?

He has nothing to give for his soul, he is a poor lost creature. He has lost his own soul. Lost in the scripture is spoken of in more ways than one, in this place it means, lost eternally, without remedy, and without hope. It means that the separation between him and God, which began in sin, shall never end. It means that whatever he knew of religion, or of the Bible, whatever he enjoyed by way of privilege. Whatever he may possess, whatever he might have felt in any moment of passing conviction that there was a God in heaven, that there was a heaven to go to, and a hell to avoid, all those things, being nothing but natural, he is a lost soul.

May the Lord make some of you, who give no present evidence of possessing grace consider these two things. You have souls, you may acknowledge it, but you cannot really believe it. There is a God, and you can not quarrel with that statement, but Oh if you only see Him. There is a heaven, and you may say yes sometimes, with a passing wish to get there, but do you know what you must be in order to get there ? There is a hell, and you may not say otherwise than the scripture says about that dark abode, but you never seek to avoid it, do you ? There is a reality in religion, a solemn, awful, wondrous, blessed reality in religion. It says in the heart of the man, to whom God gives it, now there are two places in one eternity, two places for two different classes and kinds of men. Even for all who are righteous, righteous by imputation, who are holy, holy by partaking of Jesus Christ. Saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and heaven full of bliss, filling all its inhabitants with bliss.

There is also Hell, a just hell, every stroke of divine justice will be undisputed, as it is indisputable. Heaven is full of love, hell is full of hatred. May God make you think of the value of your soul, it will never die, you might possess millions of pounds, but they can be counted, and will come to an end, and go no further. But your soul is immortal in its choice, and immortal in its exercise. Think, Oh sinner think, may God make you stop and think, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ?" (Mark 8 verse 36). I would put before you a few of the things that are lost, when a man is lost. These are the things that are lost, namely the smile of God, this was lost in Adam our first parent, and if we never get another smile in Christ, on different grounds entirely from that in which he gave it in Eden, what a loss this is to man, for the favour of God is better than life, infinitely better than life. The touch of that on a poor sinner will make him happy, yea it would make his soul happy, even if his body were like Jobs body covered with sore boils, and if his circumstances were as miserable as Job's, with not a friend to save or comfort him.

The favour of God, who can express it, why some of you may have felt it in your souls, which makes you leap at the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Leap at ever mention of redemption, and the mention of the love of God, and the thought of missing that love, missing that name, that Saviour, what a terrible thought it will be to you, to enter into eternity without it. To be without the smile of God is to be lost indeed, no other loss is comparable to it. One may lose great wealth and come into deep miserable poverty, but without the favour of God our soul is lost for eternity. Oh this is terrible, no words can ever express what the loss of Gods favour is. It is set out in a way, by the expulsion of Adam from the garden of Eden, never to return into divine favour by that way. The loss of the soul means the utter absence and lack of righteousness. "And He said unto him, Friend, how comest thou in hither not having a wedding garment ? And he was speechless. Then said the king to His servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 22 verses 12 & 13). What, enter eternity without righteousness ? that is to enter eternity unfit for the presence of God. Oh what will all your pleasures here, do for you there. What will all your comforts, your music, your delights that you have here, do for you when you enter eternity without righteousness.

What will all your religion, which you may have been pleased with, do for you there, when you have no righteousness. An unrighteous person is an object of divine vengeance and angry punishment, for we have no right to be there without righteousness. We were not created destitute of righteousness, you have no right to be as you are. I have no right to be a sinner, God did not make us sinners, we made ourselves sinners, and hell is open for sinners. Nothing enters heaven that defiles or makes a lie. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." (Revelation 21 verse 27). So to be lost is to have no righteousness. Oh the hideousness of a lost sinner, no righteousness, no justice, not straight with God's character, or requirements, and not answering them in any way whatever, but to be absolutely contrary to them. Think of it sinner, if you leave this world unrighteous, then you are lost. To be lost means to have no holiness, as I judge that, it is to be absolutely straight with the requirements and will of God. Are you then straight ? do you meet all those requirements ? No, who does ? The sinner who is in Christ, is safe, for Christ is made sanctification to him, but those who leave this world without this holiness. whatever they may have vamped up themselves to be in their own mind, it will avail them nothing. You must be holy according to God's own manifestation of what holiness really is, or you are lost.

To be lost is to lack the image of Christ, which image is given to every regenerated person at the new birth by the Holy Spirit. The image of Christ is imprinted on the sinner, and he grows up in that image. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called them He also justified: and whom He justified them He also glorified." (Romans 8 verses 29 & 30). So sinner, if you leave this world without the image of the heavenly you are lost. Paul says of the saints, "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly". (1 Corinthians 15 verse 49). And to be lost is to be destitute of all experience of union and communion with Christ. Union with Him is, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." (John 15 verse 5). And communion is, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." (John 15 verse 4). That is communion, receiving from Christ, and then you bear fruit that is to the glory of God. Now sinner, when did you have this union, and when did you get this communion? But if you never have this union, if you never enjoy this communion, if you never bare fruit unto God, what of eternity? Why you are lost, really, terribly, eternally lost. And when the Lord Jesus commends His dear people, and says, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: Naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." (Matthew 25 verses 35 & 36). He will not say these things to you who are lost, you may say, "Lord when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" "Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me." (Matthew 25 verse 45). You did not do them at all, so what an awful thing it is to be lost. And thinking of you the last day or two, I have felt a desire to say these things unto you, to speak to the congregation, because eternity is coming, and it is near. We must needs die, Oh that the Lord would look upon you, who know Him not, and who fear Him not. To be lost is terrible.

Now I would like to say a word about what it is to be saved, it is the opposite of what I have just named, and we have an instance before us which is on my mind, in the death of our beloved friend and brother Mr Curry who has entered heaven. He chose the way of tribulation, he believed in it, he walked in it, he took up his cross, denied himself and followed Christ. You too must do this if you are to be saved, deny your self. Self denial is a common thing among some people, as they think.

If you give something away, and are not deprived of comfort in your whole life, by doing so, you do not deny yourself at all. You simply give away something that you do not need for your own use. I might go further than this, and in challenge give away something which did deprive me of comfort, or of some comforts. That would not be much self denial.

But when one comes to say, Lord I am a lost creature, I have no righteousness, though my heart pretends to righteousness, I have no wisdom, I have no goodness, I am just an empty poor depraved sinner and I renounce everything, and esteem everything that my nature would value, and does value, and I look to the blood of Christ for cleansing, and the Spirit of Christ to work in me to do the will of God. I look to the righteousness of Christ for justification, and the blood of Christ for cleansing from all my sins, that man denies himself. He has a cross to take up, it may be in his family, or he is despised for the religion God has wrought in him. He may be vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, when he walks within his duties, and does that which he is appointed to do. He takes up his cross, he cannot unite with those who blaspheme, who are against his Lord and master. He takes up his cross and follows the Lord, in secret prayer and in a public separation from ungodliness. What is it to be saved ? It is to be saved in and by Jesus Christ, to have union with Christ, to receive His life, to live that life, a life of faith on the Son of God. It is to get communications from heaven from time to time. It is to realise the righteousness of Christ as being on you for justification, and the presence of the Trinity with whom you hold some measure of fellowship.

What is it to be saved ? It is to leave this poor world, to let go as it were, of a dying body, a body that is to be really humiliated, and suffer the indignation of the grave. But for the soul, to fly away and enter into the presence of God I feel this to be very attractive to me. When people are young in the ways of God, they are rightly and greatly concerned often about their steps. Shall I do this, keep me from that, save me from bringing any dishonour on Thy name Oh Lord. When they grow old, and eternity is nearer their desire is, May I be found not only ready but willing to go. Nature says no, I do not want to go, Faith says, the way is open, and Christ is the way. Faith says, the qualification is here, the righteousness and blood of Christ. Faith says, the fitness is here, made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Colossians 1 verse 12). And the presence of God so loosens every tie, so that faith says, I am ready, I am willing. Heaven is more than earth, God is more than time, and Christ is more than all below. The Trinity is attractive to faith, the absence of sin, with the presence of Christ.

And a fulness of holiness, Oh what an attraction. Dear Mr Curry was greatly favoured in his latter end, nearly three weeks before he died, he said to me, I have said this morning, good bye to Satan, and I believe he said it in faith, for I do not know that there was one little cloud on his sky after that, it was just a sweet cloudless blessed heaven of peace and happiness. And he was ready to go, willing to go, yet willing to wait God's time. Willing to go when the time came, and where is he now ? One says, as we sing,

Give me the wings of faith to rise
Within the veil, and see
The saints above, how great their joys,
How bright their glories be. (Gadsby's 477 verse 1)

Oh to see those joys by precious faith, that are in heaven, the presence of the Trinity, The Father in His eternal love, giving His only begotten Son to be the head of the Church, which is His own body. The Son, the Lamb as it had been slain, and the seven spirits which are before the throne of God, this Holy God and the sinner in His presence. This is being saved as I understand it. This is what is called rest, they rest from their labours. This is the peace in which they walk, this is the light in which they walk, Here is the temple in which they worship, never to be taken down. Here is the sun in whose light they walk, never, never to set. Now if you get the whole world and miss this, what would you gain, what would you be profited. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul." For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels.

And then He shall reward every man according to his works, saying, this man shunned the cross, preferred the world, lived for himself, died in himself, died under the law, died in his sins, and never believed in Me. He is lost, and is rewarded according to his works. He appears before the judgement seat of Christ, and receives in his body, the things which he did, the bad things, the turning of his back upon God, and his saying depart from me for I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. He receives these things, and gets the full wages for them. they were his own works, now he is paid his wages. And the good man said, I am afraid of sin, afraid of sinning, afraid of offending the Holy Majesty, but I desire grace to follow Thee, to cleave to the atonement, to be washed in Thy blood, and clothed in Thy righteousness. And Oh give me grace to take up my cross, and this man had an answer in his conscience, and was blessed. And now he receives his reward. Christ comes in the Glory of His Father, and all he angels.

And says to this man, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:" (Matthew 25 verse 34). And dear friends, we, each person must stand before this great Lord. How He knows, some of us wish to stand in Christ, that it may be said, "Go thou thy way ...: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot..." (Daniel 12 verse 13). Faith says, Oh let it be my lot to stand in Christ, to be in union with the Lamb of God, and to receive of His fulness, His life, His grace, His mercy, His righteousness.

Now may the Lord bless you, and bless His word to you, and enable you to consider, cause you to lay it to heart, "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again;" (2 Samuel 14 verse 14). And cause you to consider your sins, and your sinfulness, and consider against who you have committed that sin. What it will be to die in sin, causing you to consider Christ, as the Saviour of sinners, that you may seek to know Christ, "And be found in Him, not having mine (your) own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Philippians 3 verse 9).

Amen