

Your Soul or the Whole World?

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[0 : 00] Well, let me invite you to take your Bibles and turn back with me to Mark, chapter 8. Mark, chapter 8. Page 1018.

I'm going to read it from the King James Version, just because it's the verses that I know better in regards to these two famous verses. Verse 36 and verse 37.

For 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?

Let's just bow our heads and let's pray. Father, take my mouth and speak through it. Father, take our minds and think through them. Take our hearts and soften them.

Take our ears and unstop them. Father, speak to us now through your word, by your spirit, for your glory. Amen. Kids are so unpredictable.

[1 : 11] Something that I've learned in ministry. Last year I was given a children's address on these two verses in a church in London. Let me just say up front that this was one of the biggest lessons I learned in ministry regarding kids is that they're just so unpredictable.

Kids' talks never go the way you intend them to go. So on the train down to London, I planned out my talk, what I was going to say to them. I would use this iPad as the illustration.

I'd ask the boys and girls, what would they like to give me in exchange? At that time, this was a brand spanking new iPad in its box. What would they like to give me in exchange for this iPad?

It's in my head, so good, so far. That was until I stood up and gave the talk. Boys and girls, what would you like to give me in exchange for this new amazing iPad?

Picture in your head a wall of blank stairs. That was okay, I can deal with that. Boys and girls, what would you trade with me for this iPad?

[2 : 20] Would you trade with me all your sweeties? Again, picture in your head, the front row pew, a wall of indifference. Okay, so I'm starting to struggle.

So I quickly use that technique that all preachers use when they start to struggle giving a kid's talk. I look out for that kid who I think is the minister's daughter. She looks the oldest, I'm going to ask her because she's going to give me the right answer.

So I say to her, what would you trade me for this iPad? Nothing. Why? Because I've already got one.

Very quickly, I think, okay, I didn't plan that one, I didn't anticipate that, I move to the next kid. What would you give me in exchange for this iPad? Nothing.

Why? Because my mum's got one, and I've got one at school. Disaster. So at that point, I'm thinking to myself, Andrew, how are you going to recover this?

[3 : 21] So I say to the wee boy sitting at the edge of the pew, what's your most precious possession? And the wee boy puts his hand in his pocket, and he pulls out a little Lego figure like this one.

And I said to the wee boy, imagine I had one of them. I thought, Andrew, just get to the point of your talk and just tell them the punchline. Wee man, would you exchange this for your own soul?

The little boy said, yeah. I'd exchange that for my own soul. Disaster. Kids talk. Ruined.

I want the ground to swallow me up. Okay, boys and girls, you're dismissed. You can go to Sunday school. Let's pray. I'm only kidding, but I share that story. Because there's a really serious point in it. You see, what I thought that these kids would value, they did not. And what I would not have placed any value in, they did. And the crazy thing was, they were willing to exchange their souls for it.

[4 : 23] Or at least in the case of the young boy. And maybe that's just like some of us here tonight. We place value in things that no one else does. And we are willing to exchange our soul for that something.

And for some of us, it might just be a bigger toy. For others, it might not be. It might be something else. It may be a person that we place value on. It may be a relationship. It may be the dream or the vision of having an ideal family or an ideal lifestyle. It may be comfort. It may be beauty. For each of us, it's all going to be a different treasure that we place our value on. But the question tonight is, would we exchange our soul for it? Now that wee boy was willing to say, yes, I would. I'm not sure that some of us would verbally say yes that we would. But I think our lives and our hearts can often communicate that we certainly would. And so I want to look at these two verses in verses 36 and 37.

[5 : 30] The context of these two questions is, Jesus is challenging the large crowds that are following him.

And he's challenging them about what it means to be a true follower of him. Our two questions forms part of a greater challenge of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. But I just want to hone in on these two questions that he asked them on that occasion. Now being a great teacher, Jesus often asked great questions.

He was amazing at it. There are so many accounts in the Gospels that we could read of Jesus asking people, strangers, his disciples, the crowds, questions.

In fact, we read one tonight just before the verses that we have here in Mark 8. We read that occasion when Jesus said to his disciples, Guys, who do people say that I am?

[6 : 36] And the disciples responded, Well, Jesus, some say that you're John the Baptist. Other people think that you're Elijah. And yet still other people think that you're one of the prophets raised from the dead.

And then Jesus, as a master class teacher, took that question and he turned it right back on them. Guys, who do you say that I am? And we read that Peter gave him the answer, you're the Christ. There's that other occasion just a couple of chapters later here in Mark's Gospel when Jesus is walking through Jericho and he's on his way to Jerusalem. Large crowds with him, they're heading up to the festival of Passover.

And as they're walking out of the city, there's a man begging at the side of the road and he's shouting out, Son of David, have mercy on me. Son of David, have mercy on me. All the disciples are telling the man, shut up, be quiet.

Jesus doesn't have the time to speak to you. Son of David, have mercy upon me. And we read that Jesus stops and he says to the man, What do you want me to do for you?

[7 : 38] Heart-stopping question. Face-to-face with the Messiah. Face-to-face with Jesus. And he gets asked the question, What do you want me to do for you?

I've read in my devotions this week, John chapter 21. You know that account where Jesus is walking along the seashore of Galilee with his best friend.

Or perhaps at that time someone who didn't feel like much of a best friend, Peter. And they're walking along the seashore and Peter's just denied Jesus three times to a little peasant girl. Cursed Jesus to this little peasant girl.

And Jesus, as he's walking along the seashore, says to him, Simon Peter, do you love me? Simon Peter, do you love me?

Third time. Simon Peter, do you love me? And John tells us in his gospel that at that point it hurt Peter to be asked.

[8 : 38] Because when Jesus asks questions, he gets right to the heart. He gets right underneath our skin. And he wants us to listen. Tonight we have two heart-stopping, heart-revealing, heart-penetrating questions here in verses 36 and 37.

And these two questions that we have here in Mark's gospel are rhetorical questions. That is to say that these two questions are asked not with the view of getting a verbal answer, but they're asked to cause the people, the crowds, the disciples, to stop, to think, and to weigh up in their head how they really would answer the question.

And that's what we're going to do this evening. We're going to hear these two questions and we're going to stop, we're going to think, and we're going to meditate over our answer to them. For 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? Two very simple, two very straightforward questions. Two questions that really hang over our generation.

Two questions that have hung over every generation since Jesus spoke them. Now in the first question in verse 36, in essence what Jesus is saying is, what good is it to get all the things you want whilst being willing to lose your own soul eternally in the process?

[10:13] You might not know this, but when Jesus asked this question to the crowds, he employed very precise and very vivid language in the question.

Language that everyone back then would have been really, really familiar with. He drew in words from the first century marketplace. Notice them. Three key words.

Profit, gain, loss. Everyone in Palestine, young and old, were conversant with these words from the marketplace. The marketplace was the core of society.

For people in Jesus' day, going to the marketplace was a daily thing. Going to meet the market dealers. And in that culture, you would barter with the market dealer. You would try and heckle him for a lower price or a higher price.

You would try and make an exchange so that you could buy the item for him. Whether it was trading livestock, whether it was trading assets, it was an everyday reality. Trading reality. Everyone in Jesus' day understood profit, gain, loss.

[11:18] In my generation, when we were at school, we traded football stickers. Maybe if you're a bit older in your generation, you traded conkers. I think that's what old people traded back in the day, but I'm not sure.

Now Jesus was saying something like that to the crowds. What are you willing to trade? In fact, what he was saying to the crowds was, I want you to think of a pair of scales.

And on one side, place the whole world. And on the other side, place your soul. And Jesus was asking them to weigh up in their minds the cost personally.

Are you willing to gain the one and lose the other? In reality, what Jesus was saying was pretty straightforward. The answer was plain. Don't you know that upon the scales, your soul outweighs the whole world.

From God's perspective, your soul is infinitely valuable and precious. So are you willing to exchange it to gain the whole world?

[12:23] I don't know spiritually speaking where you're at tonight. I don't actually know if you're a follower of Jesus Christ or not.

But let me ask you this. Have you ever stopped and asked yourself, is what you're living for worth losing your soul for?

Is what you're living for worth losing your soul for? Has this thought ever crossed your mind?

Because the consideration put before us tonight, is there any profit to be made in gaining the whole world whilst losing our own soul?

In many ways, Jesus wanted these people to do that quick calculation in their head. Was there profit to be made for living for the world? Or was there greater loss to be incurred?

Now we know that literally, no one can gain the whole world. Of course, Jesus is speaking in hyperbolic language. That is to say, he's exaggerating.

[13:28] He's saying, imagine that you could have all that you've ever dreamed of, all that you've ever imagined. Imagine you could possess absolutely everything. Would you be willing to exchange your soul for it?

Do you think there was profit in gaining it all and yet losing your soul? Maybe I should point out that everybody in Jesus' day knew that the soul was a part of you that lived forever.

And so he's saying, are you willing to live for that which is temporal in exchange for that which is eternal? It's interesting that he uses the word world to capture many people's life's ambition.

If you go through the Bible, you'll find that the word world is used in a whole host of ways.

Sometimes it literally refers to creation itself, the whole world. Other times it refers to all the people of the world.

And yet other times it refers to the world as a metaphor for sin. For example, that's the way that John uses it in his letter. He says in 1 John chapter 1, chapter 2, verse 15, And so in other words, what Jesus is saying, you may gain all the desires of the flesh, all the desires of the eyes, the pride of life.

[14:59] You may gain all the idols of your heart, but what will it really profit you? Because you will be at enmity with God. James wrote in his letter, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. I'm not a trained financial advisor. It's actually what my younger brother's training to be. But I don't need him to give me advice on whether or not this is a very bad bargain. To give up your soul for the whole world is a foolish exchange.

Because the soul is that part of you that is more valuable than anything else in this world. The reason that Jesus came into this world was to shed his blood to purchase your soul.

The reason why Jesus hung suspended on a cross was to shed his blood to purchase your soul. Let me ask you an important question that I don't want to assume.

[16:07] Do you believe that you possess a soul? Because that's exactly what Jesus says here, that every single person possesses a soul. He speaks in the possessive, loses his own soul.

He said Jesus believed that every single man and woman has a soul. Because Jesus was the creator of the world. And the word Jesus uses for soul can be literally read as breath or life. And it fits in with what it says in Genesis, the book about creation.

Genesis chapter 2 verse 7, which says, Friends, we exist according to the Bible because God breathed life into us and we have become a living soul.

And here's a really interesting thing. See our culture today? Many people have rejected this. Many people don't believe that we have a soul.

A lot of emphasis today if you pick up any magazine, watch anything on television on the body, even on the mind. There's a big push to take the soul out of the marketplace.

[17:17] Walk down the streets, look anywhere you want and it will scream out to you, The most important thing about you is your body. The most important thing about you is your looks. The most important thing about you is your appearance.

The most important thing about you is your image. That's all our culture ever talks about. Sells millions and millions, makes billions and billions on things like feed the body, groom the body, beautify the body.

Last week in the budget they just made a law that they're going to add tax on sugar things. Because they really care that there's no obese bodies. You know the only really tragic thing?

Is that rarely does our government make laws that protect the soul. Because rarely does our government see that the most important thing about a human being is the soul.

Someone said the other night there, If you lose Sunday, If you lose Sunday, If you lose the Sabbath, You lose the gospel. I would add to that. If you lose Sunday, You lose the soul.

[18:30] Because see Sundays, There are days when we come to have our soul fed. There are days that we come to have our soul addressed. There are days in which God requires of us our soul.

And he talks to us. And he feeds us. And he nourishes us. And he challenges us. And he reminds us that we are people who live and exist.

By his strength, By his power. Because he's breathed his life into us. And made us a living soul. God says man shall not live by bread alone. But by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

You can have all the food in the world. You can do all that you want. But God says that we exist by every word that comes from his mouth. Your soul is that part of you that makes you you.

It's your true inner being. It's who you really are. And it's that part of you that God has placed an infinite worth upon. So when we're against each other on this set of scales.

[19:36] The whole world or your soul. In God's economy. Your soul is by far the most weary thing. So let me ask you that question again. Do you now understand the crucial importance of your soul?

The tragic lie of Satan is to trick us into thinking. That our soul is not the most important part. In Eden.

As Hugh said on Friday night. He managed to convince Adam and Eve that Eden was not enough. The desires of the flesh.

The desires of the eyes. Jesus told a very powerful story. We read it in Luke's gospel. Where somebody was not satisfied with the fact that they had everything.

Jesus told him that parable of that rich farmer who had a booming crop. Great profits. Lots of cash. Lots of material possessions. Such that he had to knock down all his warehouses.

[20 : 37] And build new ones. Gigantic ones to contain all that he had. He had more money. He had more crops than he knew what to do with.

And so he said to himself. Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to chill out now. I'm going to eat, drink and be merry. Not a bad plan, right? Well Jesus says about this man and this story.

He had the whole world. He had everything that he thought was so important. But the punchline of that parable is crucial. But God said to him, fool. This night your soul is required of you.

And the things you've prepared. Amazing question of Jesus. Whose will they be? See you can gain the whole world. You can gain all the material possessions of the world.

You can gain the bigger toys. You can gain that relationship. But in the end, whose will they be? With the dust of the earth, many of these things will return.

[21 : 37] Many of these things will rust. Many of these things will decay. But do you know what won't? Your soul. From God's perspective, life is far more than just the abundance of our possessions.

Life is far more than just the abundance of our possessions. Life is all about the soul. Satan spends every day trying to trick us.

That that's not what life is about. He tries to trick us. That you know, you would be far more satisfied if you just had this or that. Do you ever have that battle with yourself when you wake up in the morning?

Where you lie in your bed and you think, you know, what would make me a bit more happier? What could I get that would be of greater significance for me? My life. My comfort. My satisfaction. And then you spend hours, if not days, trying to get it.

Not knowing that even when you finally get it, it actually doesn't truly ever satisfy. So many people in our culture are pursuing the whole world.

[22 : 47] Watch the news. Watch the television. See the celebrities. Pursuing everything. X factor. X factor generations that we're part of. Wanting to be popular. Wanting to be famous. Wanting to have it all. Do you know one of the realities that's shown to us every single day that we watch them?

They have nothing. Never satisfies them. They're in and out of beds because beauty doesn't satisfy them. You can have the most beautiful wife in the world and you can still cheat on her. You can have all the power in the world.

That's not going to keep you from not being corrupt. Wanting more. Abusing your authority. You can have all the honour in the world. All the titles. All the accolades. Everything. And yet in one scandal you can lose it all because it never really satisfied.

You can have all the glitz and all the glamour. You can be famous in every sphere of life. But you really have nothing. You know one of the things that Satan really holds out to us is pleasure.

See before I was a Christian that was my God. That was the thing that Satan convinced me that I had to have. Pleasure. And so I spent my life living for the weekend.

[23 : 55] Living for pleasure. How long did the pleasure last? All the parties. All the nightclubs. It was pleasure. Empty. Hollow. But just for a moment.

Every morning I'd still have to get up. Every morning I'd still have to go home with weary feet. A lighter wallet. A heavier heart. An aching head. A nosy stomach. Guilty conscience.

And thinking what a fool you have been. Pleasure never satisfies. Friends. Friends.

The Bible says that the world passes away. All the wealth. All the honour. All the pleasure. Maybe here today. But I can assure you of this. It will be gone tomorrow.

It's well been said that when you get to the top. You'll discover there's nothing there. The world doesn't satisfy. The world doesn't last. But here's the thing. Your soul does.

[24 : 54] Your soul is immortal. Your soul will last forever. The apostle John said it like this. The world is passing away along with its desires.

But whoever does the will of God abides forever. So here's a question. Are you living to gain that which will not last and not satisfy? It doesn't take a spiritual accountant to tell you that's a bad bargain.

Sell your soul. Your immortal soul for fading, passing, unsatisfying desires. It's a bad bargain. Oh that we would live for Christ.

Oh that we would give up this whole world for Christ. Because he is the one we can have all satisfying life. He spoke of himself.

The abundant life that he's come to give us. He came as a good shepherd to lay down his life for his sheep. That he could lead them into the good pasture. That they might know the abundant life.

[26 : 01] All that he asks of us is that we put our faith in him. I said there right there. Faith is forsaking all. I trust him.

That's all that's required for us to have eternal life. To know that which will last forever. Apostle Paul realized this. When he placed his faith in Christ.

And so he wrote. But whatever. And he lived a life that was full and rich. And he says. But whatever was to my profit. Before as a Christian. I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more. I consider everything a loss.

Compared to this. The surpassing greatness. Of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For whose sake. I have lost all things. Do you get the language he's used in? First century marketplace.

He'll lose everything. Because the thing that's most important. Is to gain Jesus Christ. He writes. I want to know Christ. Christ. That's because he understands.

[27 : 01] That knowing Christ. Is the greatest treasure. You'll ever gain. In this world. Christ is going to return one day. It might even be tonight.

It could be tomorrow. It could be 10 years. 20 years from now. We don't know. And the hour and time. Is not for us to worry about. But on that day.

That he does come back. Every single one of us. Will stand before his throne. Face to face. With the living God. And he'll either say. What a fool you've been.

To forfeit your never dying soul. To get this world. That never satisfied you. And is now slipping from your grip. Or he'll say to you. Come. Drink of living waters.

And you'll never thirst again. Come. Eat from my feast. The manner of life. Come. Celebrate. And enjoy the abundant life forever.

[27 : 59] With me. In my kingdom. With all my people. For my glory. And your good. Because my son. Shed his blood. To purchase your soul.

Let me close with a story. In the 18th century. There was a preacher. It's called Roland Hill. And he was out.

Preaching in the fields. One day. To a huge assembly. Right. So picture in your head. A field preacher. Thousands of people gathered. To listen to him. And on that day.

A very wealthy. Aristocratic woman. Called Lady. Anne Erskine. Was passing by. In her elaborate. And ornate carriage. And she said to her coachman.

Who is it. That's drawn this large assembly. In this field. And he replied. It's a preacher. Roland Hill. And so Lady Erskine. Said to her coachman.

[28 : 59] Ah. I've heard a good deal about him. Draw the carriage up closer. So that I can hear him. Well Mr. Hill. The preacher. Soon saw the carriage.

And recognised who it was. And he suddenly stopped. In the midst of his preaching. To the alarm of the crowd. And he said to them. My friends. Today.

I have something for sale. The soul. The hearers were amazed at this. Yes. I have something for sale. It's the soul. Of Lady Anne Erskine.

Just imagine the look. Of horror in everyone's face. Is there anyone here. That will bid. For her soul. Ah. Do I hear a bid.

Who bids. Satan bids. Satan. Satan. What will you give. For the soul. Of Lady Anne Erskine. I will give her.

[29 : 56] The whole world. Honour. Riches. Power. Glory. Everything. But stop. Do I hear another bid.

Yes. I hear another bid. Who bids. Christ bids. Christ. What will you give. For her soul. Christ. I will give her. My life. It's said that when. Roland Hill.

Looked at Lady Anne Erskine. He looked her right in the eyes. And he said to her. You've heard the two bids. And you know. That it was said.

That she fell out her carriage. Into the dirt. Of the ground. And on her knees. She cried out. I will have Jesus. Dear friends.

[30 : 55] Tonight. There are two. Bidding for your soul. Satan. Is bidding. For your soul. He offers you. The whole world. He offers you. Honour.

Pleasure. Riches. Glory. Material. Things. Jesus. And there's another. There's another. Who's bidding for your soul. His name is Jesus Christ. And he offers.

You. His life. The life. That he laid down. At Calvary's cross. So that you could be forgiven. Forever. So that you could become one of his children.

So that you could spend forever with him. In the fullness of life. The question. For you tonight is. Which will you have? Stop.

And think. For what does it profit a man. To gain the whole world. And forfeit his soul. Or what shall a man give.

[31 : 51] In exchange. For his soul. Let's pray. Satan.

Take the world. Father. Give us Jesus. Thank you so much. Father.

For the life. Of your son. Thank you. That you so love the world. That you. Gave your one and only son. Whosoever.

Should believe in him. Shall not perish. But have everlasting life. Where the whole realm. Of nature. Mine. That were a present.

Far too small. Love so amazing. Love so divine. Demands my soul. My life. My all. Lord.

[32 : 59] Pray for anyone here tonight. Who hears the two bids. That they would ask for Jesus. That you would grant them Jesus. As they forsake all. To trust in you.

Thank you so much. For the blood that was shed. For the forgiveness of our sins. Thank you for the abundant life. That is offered in Christ. Father. May we know this night. And may we go here. Knowing. That all of us. Have the greatest. Treasure in life. Christ himself. Our king and lord. Master. Of our life.

In his name we pray. Amen. We're going to now sing. In Psalm 1. Again in the Scottish Psalter version. Find it in page 200.

Man of perfect blessedness.

[33 : 58] Who walketh not astray. In counsel of ungodly men. Nor stands in sinners way. We'll stand and sing. Psalm 1. To God's praise. God's praise.

God's praise. God rapture. God. For God. O God. God protects.

God organise especially. God bless. God bless. The end Nor stands In sin Nor Sit In The scorner's Cheer Of Christ Is Divine Upon God's Hope And Meditate On His For Day And Night He Shall Be Like A Dream And Grow Near Abundant

Life Fire With Genesis The Heels His Fruit And His Leap Dogs Af client We Like Remember Dylan Is Great Search And Money I Unto the child which went right to the road In judgment therefore shall not stand

Such a son called Lear Nor in the assembly of the just Shall make a man appear For boy the ray of only man Unto the Lord is known Whereas the weight of wicked men Shall quite be overgrown

[38 : 02] Let's stand and sing verses 68 to God's praise

Amen