

YOUR MOST VALUABLE POSSESSION

Imagine that you own one valuable item. That one item is more valuable than all else that you have. It is worth far more than your house, car, bank account and retirement portfolio combined. Now, you tell me, what would be your attitude toward that most valuable item? Would you be nonchalant in your attitude toward it? I didn't think so! You would do all that you could to keep that item safe.

However, each and every one of us possess such an item. It is call our soul. Jesus poses a somewhat rhetorical question, "*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?*" (Mark 8:36-37). He also said, "*fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*" (Matt. 10:28).

Many are taking all kinds of chances with their souls. Where they should be going to any extent to secure the salvation of their soul, they put forth little or no effort toward that end. Two parables of our Lord would apply here. He said, "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field*" (Matt. 13:44). The second parable is: "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it*" (Matt. 13:45-46). Both of these parable show the lengths that one should be willing to go for the salvation of their soul.

One very important and encouraging thing about this most valuable of all your possessions is that no one can take it away from you. Your body can be destroyed by disease or accident. Your wealth can be stolen or lost. Your family and friends can even be taken from you by any of several means. But, your soul is unharmed by all of these things. It is you that has the power or control over what happens to your soul! God wants your soul in heaven for eternity. Satan wants it in hell for the same eternity.

Freedom of choice is given to us by God. Just as Adam and Even had freedom of choice in the Garden of Eden, so have we freedom of choice in the land in which we live. With a possession so valuable, why would not put forth whatever effort is needed and take every precaution available to provide a heavenly home for it? **Robert**

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

It can be said that it is easy to stand for a cause so long as nothing is standing against you. In other words, when there is nothing to lose by standing for something, the tendency to retreat is nil. However, the real test of faithfulness to a cause is when one is faced with what almost appears as insurmountable obstacles. It's when the going gets tough that the tough get going.

The cause of Christ requires sacrifice. It always has and it always will. In the earliest days of the church examples show the cause needed those who really stood for it to sacrifice their material possessions in order to provide for those who were in need (Acts 2:44-46; 4:34-37). It was no less a sacrifice for these people to give up their material possessions in their day than it is for one to give up his/her material possessions today for the cause of Christ! In fact, it was probably more of a sacrifice than it is today. Yet today, few members of the Lord's church give as they have been prospered, as they have purposed in their hearts, bountifully and cheerfully (I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 9:6-7). Oh, most put something in the collection plate each week, but they are lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3) if they call their offering a sacrifice for the cause of Christ.

In the early days of the church, disciples willingly sacrificed their very lives if faced with the choice (Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-29). Fox's Book of Martyrs is filled with examples of such sacrifice in the first couple of centuries of the church. One example is Agatha, a Sicilian lady. She was "scourged, burnt with red-hot irons, and torn with sharp hooks. Having borne these torments with admirable fortitude, she was next laid naked upon live coals, intermingled with glass, and then being carried back to prison, she there expired on February 5, 251" (Fox's--p. 16). Today? It seems to be too much of a burden for those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (which they certainly didn't deserve) to attend the services of the church, to study the word of God in preparation to teach others, to miss out on a little recreation or rest in order to teach others or any other of a number of examples of the minor sacrifices that any child of God should easily make if they truly stand for the cause of Christ.

Maybe we need more physical opposition to the cause of Christ so that we too might grow a little backbone and stand for the cause.

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