

The Value of a Soul



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Have you ever heard anyone say that humanity is vile and worthless? Have you heard people consign humanity to the scrap heap? Have you ever felt, or been made to feel, that you are valueless, that there is no hope for you?

In Psalm 8:4 we read this: *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

That is a good question. What is man?

Genesis 3:19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou [art], and unto dust shalt thou return.

So man is dust. That is a very humbling thought, isn't it? Man is dust. What is the worth of a pile of dust? Not much.

But in creation, God had done something very special to that dust.

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

The pile of dust became a living soul, created in the image of God. But a usurper came and man chose death rather than life *for the wages of sin [is] death* (Rom 6:23), for to hate God is to love death (Prov 8:36).

However, despite the entry of sin into the world, nowhere can I find that humanity is called worthless in the Bible nor can I find it in the Spirit of Prophecy. However, we can find some things that are worthless.

*Isaiah 64:6 But we are all as an **unclean** [thing], and all our righteousnesses [are] as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

We are all unclean. The Hebrew word translated as unclean also means polluted or corrupted or defiled which is exactly what sin has done to humanity. Notice the text does not say mankind is worthless. When we read on we see that it is our righteousness that is as filthy rags. That is what is worthless, not the person.

In Job 13:4 we are told: *But ye [are] forgers of lies, ye [are] all physicians of no value.*

Job is not saying that his friends are of no value. He is saying their behaviour is of no value because they were not bringing him any comfort or help.

In Proverbs 10:20 – *The tongue of the just [is as] choice silver: the heart of the wicked [is] little worth.*

What is of little worth? Not the wicked person, but the heart of the wicked.

Writing under inspiration, what did Mrs White say was worthlessness?

Jesus knew the worthlessness of earthly pomp, and He gave no attention to its display. (1 Selected Messages 259.2)

What was worthlessness? Not the pompous person but the practice of earthly pomp.

In all His lessons, Jesus presented to men the worthlessness of ceremonial obedience. (Signs of the Times, June 9, 1890 par. 9)

What is worthlessness? Not those practicing ceremonial obedience for salvation but the practice of ceremonial obedience.

As time is fast closing, we should keep before the mind the spirituality of the law, and the utter worthlessness of a formal, ceremonial obedience to the commandments, involved in a legal religion. (General Conference Bulletin, October 1, 1896)

What is worthlessness? Not people but *a formal, ceremonial obedience to the commandments, involved in a legal religion.*

Man's efforts alone are nothing but worthlessness; but cooperation with Christ means a victory. (1 Selected Messages 381)

What is worthlessness? Not the man but the Man's efforts alone.

So it is clear that that to which humanity clings instead of Jesus is worthlessness but humanity itself, as sinful and rebellious as it is, even reprobate to the faith which means completely impervious to the Holy Spirit, even those in that condition are nowhere called worthless. Even though Paul, in 2 Timothy 3:5, says to turn away from such people, they are not called worthless.

So it must be that humanity does have a value, it must have a worth. Indeed we do have a value and we have such value to God and to His Son that, in the event that man might sin, our salvation was provided for before the world was even created.

1 Peter 1:18-20 18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, [as] silver and gold, from your vain conversation [received] by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

Mrs White said this in the Review and Herald, July 25, 1899:

Our salvation is complete, because it is founded on the accomplishment of a plan laid before the foundation of the world. {RH July 25, 1899, Art. A, par. 14}

This is the everlasting covenant which was conceived in the mind of God because of the value He placed on each lost human soul.

This comes from Manuscript 198-1899.14:

The kindness and love of our Saviour toward men has been demonstrated. The covenant of the grace of Christ commenced before the world was made. It existed from eternity and it is named the everlasting covenant. As there never was a period of time when God was not, so never was there a moment when His grace to man was not the determinate counsel of the object of delight of the eternal mind – the salvation of the human race formed in His image. Let no one suppose the plan of redemption was not conceived of before Adam and Eve fell under the temptation of Satan and that this was a method thought of to remedy the terrible work of the destroyer. “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” [Acts 15:18] Everything was done for our first parents to make them pure and keep them pure. {Ms198-1899.14}

The everlasting covenant is from eternity, from before the creation of the world, and is therefore a covenant between the Father and His Son in behalf of humanity.

What happened when Adam sinned? Christ went to His Father to plead the case.

Here is the record of what happened from the Signs of the Times, November 4, 1908:

The Son of God, heaven’s glorious Commander, was touched with pity for the fallen race. His heart was moved with infinite compassion as the woes of the lost world rose up before Him. But divine love had conceived a plan whereby man might be redeemed. The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. In all the universe there was but One who could, in behalf of man, satisfy its claims. Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law, and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin—sin so offensive to

a holy God that it must separate the Father and the Son. Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race. {ST November 4, 1908, par. 2}

Before the Father He pleaded in the sinner's behalf, while the host of heaven awaited the result with an intensity of interest that words cannot express. Long continued was that mysterious communing – “the counsel of peace” [Zech 6:13] – for the fallen sons of men. The plan of salvation had been laid before the creation of the earth; for Christ is a lamb “foreordained before the foundation of the world”; yet it was a struggle, even with the King of the universe, to yield up His Son to die for the guilty race. But “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” O, the mystery of redemption! the love of God for a world that did not love Him! Who can know the depths of that love which “passeth knowledge”? Through endless ages, immortal minds, seeking to comprehend the mystery of that incomprehensible love, will wonder and adore. {ST November 4, 1908, par. 3}

This tells us there is value to our Father and His Son in humanity. So, what is the value of a soul?

What is value? Value is what is assigned to something by what one will pay to acquire it.

In the Signs of the Times, October 18, 1899, Mrs White said: “*The value of a soul is estimated by the price paid for it.*”

In Christ's Object Lessons, page 196, we read:

The value of a soul, who can estimate? Would you know its worth, go to Gethsemane, and there watch with Christ through those hours of anguish, when He sweat as it were great drops of blood. Look upon the Saviour uplifted on the cross. Hear that despairing cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Mark 15:34. Look upon the wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet. Remember that Christ risked all.

For our redemption, heaven itself was imperiled. At the foot of the cross, remembering that for one sinner Christ would have laid down His life, you may estimate the value of a soul. {COL 196}

What does the Bible tell us is the value of a soul?

Let's start in Matthew 13:45, 46.

45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

There are a number of ways this parable can be interpreted. One of these ways helps us to determine the value of a soul. Here are some explanations of the parable that explain this theme.

This parable has a double significance, and applies not only to man seeking the kingdom of heaven, but to Christ seeking His lost inheritance. Through transgression, man lost his holy innocence, and mortgaged himself to Satan. Christ, the only begotten Son of God, pledged Himself for the redemption of man, and paid the price of his ransom on the cross of Calvary. He left the worlds unfallen, the society of holy angels in the universe of heaven; for He could not be satisfied while humanity was alienated from Him. The heavenly merchantman lays aside His royal robe and crown. Though the Prince and Commander of all heaven, He takes upon Him the garb of humanity, and comes to a world that is marred and seared with the curse, to seek for the one lost pearl, to seek for man fallen through disobedience. For our sake He became poor that we, through His poverty, might be made rich. {YI, October 10, 1895 par. 2}

This from the Paulson Collection pages 399, 400:

Men who do not control their own impulses are not chosen by the Lord to deal with human minds. For this work, there is need of much prayer, much humiliation before God, much deep sensibility of the value of the

human soul, for whom Christ has paid so great a price. It was to seek for the pearl of great price that He left the enjoyments of heaven. And when the pearl is found, all heaven rejoices. ... Christ has found His pearl of great price in lost, perishing souls. He sold all that He had to come into possession, even engaged to do the work, and run the risk of losing His own life in the conflict. How then should man regard his fellow man? {Paulson Collection 399, 400}

Finally from Manuscript 45, 1895, page 20:

In order to understand the value which God places upon man, we need to comprehend the plan of redemption, the costly sacrifice which our Saviour made to save the human race from eternal ruin. Jesus died to regain possession of the one pearl of great price. ... The Lord gave His only begotten Son to ransom us from sin. We are His workmanship, we are His representatives in the world, and He expects that we shall reveal the true value of man by our purity of life, and by the earnest efforts put forth to recover the pearl of great price. {Ms 45 – 1895 p 20}

The merchant is God Himself. There is a pearl of great price that He does not have.

That pearl is you and it is me. To buy that pearl, He has to sell everything He had.

God gave up, offered up, His only begotten Son. To understand that in a context that we can begin to comprehend, consider this.

When the Father gave His Son to live and die for man, He placed all the treasure of heaven at our disposal. {Letter 143, 1900}

Because the world was ruined through sin, God gave His Son to draw men back to Him. He "so loved the world, that He gave" all that heaven could give for the saving of the lost. {RH, August 11, 1896 par. 7}

So to understand the value of the pearl, being the value of each one of us, we need to understand the value of the Son of God because it was

His life that was traded for us. And remember, the thing traded establishes the value of the acquisition. What does the Bible say?

Turn to 2 Corinthians 9:14, 15.

14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. 15 Thanks [be] unto God for his unspeakable gift.

So here we see that the exceeding grace of God is his unspeakable gift. What does Paul mean by “unspeakable”? Words cannot describe it. It is beyond our capacity to put into words. It is too great for us to comprehend since it cannot be described.

What is this exceeding grace of God? Turn to Titus 2:11

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men

The interlinear bibles put the words “to all men” after “salvation” so the text then reads as *For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared.*

What was this grace of God that brought salvation to all men and had appeared?

Turn to John 1:14 - 17

*14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) **full of grace and truth**. 15 John bare witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for He was before me. 16 And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given by Moses, [but] **grace and truth came by Jesus Christ**.*

Putting this together, we can see that the saving grace of God that brings salvation to all men, appeared or was manifested in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ who came in the fullness of His Father’s character, full of grace and truth. This is the unspeakable gift of God.

We don't have any capacity to describe the magnitude of this gift given to save souls, even just one soul.

Here are some word pictures I found in Ellen White's writings that help us begin to grasp the magnitude of the "unspeakable gift" which is the exceeding grace of God, which is His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Isaac was a figure of the Son of God, who was offered a sacrifice for the sins of the world. God would impress upon Abraham the gospel of salvation to man. In order to do this, and make the truth a reality to him as well as to test his faith, He required him to slay his darling Isaac. All the sorrow and agony that Abraham endured through that dark and fearful trial were for the purpose of deeply impressing upon his understanding the plan of redemption for fallen man. He was made to understand in his own experience how unutterable was the self-denial of the infinite God in giving His own Son to die to rescue man from utter ruin. To Abraham no mental torture could be equal to that which he endured in obeying the divine command to sacrifice his son. {3T 369.1}

We can only try to imagine what Abraham went through without actually having experienced it ourselves, but it does help us begin to understand the cost to God of our redemption.

This next statement has particularly powerful imagery.

The Eternal Father, the unchangeable one, gave His only begotten Son, tore from His bosom Him who was made in the express image of His person, and sent Him down to earth to reveal how greatly He loved mankind. {RH, July 9, 1895 par. 13}

You can see that, for God, sending Jesus to this world was not a passive action.

There was much emotion involved. Those powerful words "tore from his bosom" make me think, in human terms, of a mother clutching her

baby to her breast and then someone rips the baby away from her. What anguish.

This from 7 BC, 915

The work of redemption is called a mystery, and it is indeed the mystery by which everlasting righteousness is brought to all who believe. The race in consequence of sin was at enmity with God. Christ, at an infinite cost, by a painful process, mysterious to angels as well as to men, assumed humanity. Hiding His divinity, laying aside His glory, He was born a babe in Bethlehem. In human flesh He lived the law of God, that He might condemn sin in the flesh, and bear witness to heavenly intelligences that the law was ordained to life and to ensure the happiness, peace, and eternal good of all who obey. But the same infinite sacrifice that is life to those who believe is a testimony of condemnation to the disobedient, speaking death and not life (MS 29, 1899). {7BC 915.3}

Was it an easy decision for the Father to allow His Son to redeem sinful man?

Consider this:

Said the angel, Think ye that the Father yielded up His dearly beloved Son without a struggle? No, no. It was even a struggle with the God of heaven, whether to let guilty man perish, or to give His beloved Son to die for them. {1SG 26.2}

Imagine that. The almighty all powerful God of the universe struggling over the trade-off between us and His Son. How does that make you feel?

The reason it was such a struggle is that this was an “at risk” transaction. A safe transaction is where there is an assured exchange of value. For example, I give the shop keeper money and he gives me goods to that value. An “at risk” transaction is one where I could lose everything.

That's where I give the trader my money and he runs off with my money and my goods and I am left with nothing. That was the dilemma God faced. What if, in giving His Son, He lost Him forever?

In Desire of Ages we read this:

Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss. {DA 49.1}

Let's sum up with this:

By giving His only begotten Son to die on the cross, God has shown us the estimate He places on the human soul. All that the world admires, all it calls precious, sinks into insignificance when placed in the balance with one soul; for a matchless ransom has been paid for that soul. All heaven has been given in one gift. {6MR 2.2}

So how does it feel? Humbling? Uplifting? Is your mind filled with praise for your God?

If I left it there you would be content that you were now grasping the value of a soul wouldn't you – at least to the extent that our fallen minds are able? We can begin to grasp that the life of the Son of God was offered for ours. So the value of a soul is measured by the life of the Son of God.

Well just when we think we are getting to understand, God raises the bar a bit higher. Have a look at this.

Every gift is stamped with the cross and bears the image and superscription of Jesus Christ. All things come of God. From the smallest benefits up to the largest blessing, all flow through the one Channel--a superhuman mediation sprinkled with the blood that is of value beyond estimate because it was the life of God in His Son. {1888 814.2}

Wow! Right there my view of Christ's sacrifice on the cross was seriously changed. The life is in the blood – (Lev 17:11 & 14; Deut 12:23). We know that. Shedding blood is shedding life. At the cross, whose life was shed? It was the life of God the Father in His Son. This can only be so if Christ is truly the begotten Son of God. If He is an unrelated entity, how can He have the life of God the Father in Him?

What does the Bible say?

John 5:26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

Now how do you see your value? How precious are you? How precious am I? We really are a pearl of great price! The merchant really did sell all that he had in order to buy us.

Listen to this from Manuscript 111-1897.22:

In the darkest hour, when Christ was enduring the greatest suffering that Satan could bring to torture His humanity, His Father hid from Him His face of love, comfort, and pity. In this trial His heart broke. He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" {Ms111-1897.22}

As He hung upon the cross, angels gathered about the divine Sufferer. As they looked upon their loved Commander, and heard His cry, they asked with intense emotion, "Will not the Lord Jehovah save Him? Shall not that soul-piercing cry of God's only begotten Son prevail?" We ask, What if it had? What if the world had been left to perish with its accumulation of guilt, while the Commander of all heaven again took up His kingly crown and royal robe, leaving an ungrateful, unappreciative people to perish in their sins? {Ms111-1897.23}

Not long before this, He said, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." What melting, heart-stirring words. "Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." The Father respond to this request. "There came a voice from heaven,

saying, *I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.*" {Ms111-1897.24}

As the angels beheld the over-mastering anguish of the Son of God, the words were spoken, "The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent." Father and Son have clasped their hands, and are mutually pledged to fulfill the terms of the everlasting covenant, to give fallen man another chance. {Ms111-1897.25}

*"Jesus, knowing that **all things** were accomplished, cried out with a loud voice, It is finished. The work that Thou gavest Me is accomplished." Thus He gave His dying testimony to men and angels that the work He came to earth to do was to save a perishing world by His death.* {Ms111-1897.26}

When Christ spoke these words, He addressed His Father. Christ was not alone in making this great sacrifice. It was the fulfillment of the covenant made between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the earth was laid. With clasped hands they entered into the solemn pledge that Christ would become the substitute and surety for the human race if they were overcome by Satan's sophistry. The compact was now being fully consummated. The climax was reached. Christ had the consciousness that He had fulfilled to the letter the pledge He had made. In death He was more than conqueror. The redemption price has been paid. His right hand and His glorious holy arm have gotten Him the victory. {Ms111-1897.27}

When He uttered the cry, "It is finished," Christ knew that the battle was won. As a moral conqueror, He planted His banner on the eternal heights. Was there not joy among the angels? Not a son, not a daughter of Adam, but could now lay hold on the merits of the spotless Son of God, and say, Christ has died for me. He is my Saviour. The blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel has been shed. {Ms111-1897.28}

The darkness rolled away from the Saviour and from the cross. Christ bowed His head and died. In His incarnation He had reached the prescribed limit as a sacrifice, but not as a Redeemer. The controversy in regard to the rebellion was answered. The human race have an open door set before them. "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth." {Ms111-1897.29}

When Christ cried, "It is finished," God's unseen hand rent the strong fabric composing the veil of the Temple from top to bottom. The way into the holiest of all was made manifest. God bowed His head satisfied. Now His justice and mercy could blend. He could be just, and yet the justifier of all should believe on Christ. He looked upon the victim expiring on the cross, and said, "It is finished. The human race shall have another trial." The redemption price was paid, and Satan fell like lightning from heaven. {Ms111-1897.30}

We are of infinite value to our Father and to His Son, our Lord Jesus. It doesn't matter whether the things we own are not as good as someone else's. It doesn't matter if we do not hold a high or important position in our work or in our church. It doesn't matter whether people like us or not. None of these things value us. Satan wants us to think that they do, but they don't. We are valued by the infinite price paid for our redemption – and that infinite price was the life of God in His Son. That is the value of a soul.

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