

What Saith the Scripture?

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Profit and Loss; Or The Worth of The Soul- No. 1

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Lecture X

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Text.--Mark 8:36: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Text.--Luke 9:25: "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"

In speaking from these words, I first call attention to --

I. Several facts of consciousness and experience.

II. Show that the question suggested by the text is one of profit and loss.

III. What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?

IV. But how much would he lose, if he should gain the whole world and lose his soul?

V. Reverse the question in the text. What will it profit to lose the world and save your soul?

I. I first call attention to several facts of consciousness and experience.

- 1. That the human soul is immortal, seems to be one of the primitive beliefs of mankind. Certainly this belief has been well-nigh universal among men. We know by our own experience that men are hard to believe that to be true which they fear, or of which they have a dread.

All men are conscious of being sinners; and all men know themselves to deserve punishment. All men are aware that they are not dealt with as severely as they deserve to

be in this life, hence the belief seems to be well-nigh, if not quite universal, that there is a future state of rewards and punishments. When we realize that men are guilty and know themselves deserving of punishment, we see at once that a future state of rewards and punishments must be to them a terrible idea. They would not believe in it were not the conviction forced upon them by their own nature; and hence it would seem from the fact of this universal conviction of the immortality of the soul, that such is the very nature of the soul as to force this belief upon the race of mankind.

- 2. Such a state is evidently demanded by the justice of God.

We irresistibly affirm that God is just. We cannot conceive of an unjust being as God; and the human soul revolts at, and indignantly rejects the idea that God is not just. A future state of rewards and punishments is an irresistible inference from the two facts, that men are not punished as they deserve to be in this world, and that God is a just moral governor.

If God is just, there must be a future state of rewards and punishments where men shall be dealt with according to their true characters.

- 3. The Bible affirms this irresistible conviction, or primitive belief of mankind; and abundantly teaches that the soul is immortal, that there is a state of future rewards and punishments.
- 4. I assume, therefore, the soul's immortality. Men seem to believe this truth, even if they deny it. Men that call it in question are after all afraid to meet God, afraid to die, afraid of the consequences of their sins in a future state. There is probably not a human being on the face of the earth, having a sound, well-balanced mind, who does not, at the bottom of his mind, assume and believe in a future state of rewards and punishments.

I say, I assume the soul's immortality: I do it because I cannot help assuming it; and I do it because everybody does assume it. Indeed, it is just because the nature of the soul forces this assumption upon mankind, that the Bible everywhere, in the Old Testament especially, assumes that men are aware of this, just as it assumes that God exists. The Bible does not begin by asserting the existence of God; it assumes it. So the moral government of God everywhere assumes that men know that they are under moral government; that the soul will exist in a future state; and that there is a future state of rewards and punishments.

I say, the Bible does not frequently, especially in the Old Testament, affirm this; but always and everywhere assumes it, because of its being an irresistible belief of mankind.

- 5. The soul must be happy or miserable as it is holy or sinful. The conscience affirms intuitively that misery ought to be the consequence of sin, and that happiness ought to be connected with holiness. Again, we have enough of experience in this life to indicate clearly that a sinful soul cannot be happy, and that a holy soul cannot be truly miserable. The reason is plainly this; the soul was made to be holy; sin is a violation of its own laws, inconsistent with the nature of the soul. It turns the soul upon itself, and produces inward discord; throws it out of harmony with

itself, and with the universe in which it dwells. It is a violation of conscience, and must necessarily make the soul miserable. Holiness, on the other hand, is the souls harmony with itself and with the universe in which it lives, -- especially with God and all holy beings. Hence the soul is out of harmony, and miserable, if it is sinful, and in harmony and happy, if it is holy.

- 6. Cut off from the pleasures of sense, happiness or misery will naturally be as is the moral state of the soul. In the present state of existence there is much pleasure or pain connected with sense; but in the future state, there is no reason to believe that the pleasures and pains of sense will be at all as they now are, for the material organs will be removed.

Sinners take pleasure in some forms of sin, and have much in this life that they call happiness; but take them away from the brief pleasures of sense, and what can be the source of their enjoyment! Here they enjoy a degree of pleasure in spite of their sinfulness. But remove them from their friends, their business, their worldly pleasures, their associations in this life, -- and what then can make them happy? All the sources from which they received any enjoyment are cut off. They must then derive happiness or misery from the moral state of their souls, and the society in which they dwell. If holy, they will naturally be at peace; they will have the society of the holy, and will therefore be happy. If sinful, peace to them will be impossible; they will be surrounded with those of their own character, and must be miserable.

- 7. Progress is the law of finite existences; progress both in knowledge, and in sin and holiness. All finite creatures begin to be. They have their first thought, their first feeling; their faculties are gradually developed; and progress is the unalterable law of their existence. Having new thoughts and new experiences, and passing from one to another, and another forever, -- thus they accumulate new knowledge as long as they exist. Holiness is conformity to truth; sin is disconformity to truth. If the soul conforms itself to truth as fast as it is received, it is holy and grows in holiness. If on the contrary, it fails to conform to truth, and conforms itself to error, and is under the influence of lies, it violates its own nature and is miserable; and as knowledge increases, sin or holiness must increase as long as the soul exists. Again, as holiness or sin increases, so must happiness or misery increase. As sin is a violation of the laws of the soul's nature, therefore as sin increases, misery must increase. As holiness is conformity to the soul's nature, and conformity to truth, therefore as knowledge increases, and holiness increases, happiness must increase.

These are truths which most men will readily admit. They are so self-evident as not to need proof; they are in fact assumed by mankind in general.

Having premised these things, I proceed,

II. To show that the question suggested by the text is one of profit and loss.

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

The question of profit and loss is one that is much agitated in this world; and it behooves us to apply this to the great question of the soul. Christ puts the question in all solemnity. Now the real question

is, at which would we look in the first place? What is each worth to us? that is, what is the world's value to us, and what is the soul's value?

First, what is the real value of this world to us?

It is said that the richest man in the nation to which he belonged, was once complimented by a friend for his great wealth. This friend expressed the thought that he must be very happy in the enjoyment of his great wealth. He replied; "What will you ask to take the charge of all my business, and have all the care and concern of it, and relieve me of any concern about it?"

His friend replied, "I do not know." "But," said the rich man, "will you do it for your food and clothing? if you can be well fed, and well clothed, -- have just as much as you can eat, and drink, and wear?"

"O no!" said his friend, " I could not do it for that." "Well," responded the rich man, "this is all that I get."

Yes, this is all that we get for all our labor, and toil, and responsibility. So far as we are concerned, all that we can get from this world is our food and clothing, and drink.

It is also said of this same man, that near the close of life he was asked by another friend, what, upon the whole, he thought of his whole life. As he had been very successful in business, had accumulated great wealth, and had seemed to secure all that was desirable in this life, -- how his life appeared to him.

His answer was, "My life is a failure." What an answer!

But take the case of Solomon. Solomon set himself, it appears, purposely to see what could be gotten from this world, and what it was really worth. He had all the means of testing it that could be conceived of. He had greater wealth than any other man living. He tried what science could do; he surrounded himself with singing men and singing women; he made beautiful gardens; in short, he exhausted all the resources of wealth and all the pleasures of this life. He tried what could be obtained from every source of worldly enjoyment that we can conceive. He tells us, that he deliberately intended to test every source of worldly enjoyment, and to see what could be realized from it. He tried it to his heart's content, and then came to this mournful conclusion -- that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." This, then, is the best testimony that can be given of the value of the world to us. All that we can obtain from it is merely the gratification of sense.

Secondly, The worth of the soul.

We can answer the question proposed in the text only as we estimate first, the real value of the world, and secondly the real value of the immortal soul.

But how shall we estimate this? An immortal soul, ever increasing in sin or holiness, and consequently, in happiness or misery! The thought is overwhelming.

To get a glimpse of the truth on this subject, I observe that to lose the soul is,

- 1. To lose, or fail of, eternal happiness.
 - (1.) Eternal happiness is an ever-growing quantity. However small the beginning, and however gradual the development and the increase, -- still there is no end to the development of the soul, and to the increase of happiness if the soul is holy.
 - (2.) Consequently, each soul must arrive, in the progress of its existence, at a point where he can truly say, taking the whole of his past existence, that he has enjoyed more happiness than all the creatures of God, comprising the whole universe of created beings, had enjoyed previous to his existence. The last one that arrives in heaven from this world, will surely arrive at a point in the progress of his existence, in which he can truly say that he has enjoyed more of heaven -- that the amount of his enjoyment in the aggregate far exceeds all that had been enjoyed by all its inhabitants before he arrived there.
 - (3.) It is true that each soul will be able to say, in the progress of his existence, that he has enjoyed millions of times more happiness than all creatures had enjoyed before he began to be.

The aggregate of their enjoyment together did not amount to so much as the aggregate of his single enjoyment since he began to be. And this will be true of the whole of the holy universe; such will be their progress in an ever-growing holiness and happiness.

- (4.) Not only will they be able to say that they have enjoyed millions of times more, but inconceivably more than all creatures had enjoyed before they began to be. That is, each soul will, in the progress of his existence, be able to say, that the amount of his happiness will be inconceivably greater than that enjoyed by all creatures before he began to be.
- (5.) And this is only the beginning. For remember, the soul is immortal; and when it has been increasing in holiness and happiness for millions of ages, for cycles which the arithmetic of angels cannot compute, it has not a moment less to grow in knowledge, holiness, and happiness.

When the amount of this happiness has swelled to be so great as to overwhelm all thought, -- so far as calculating or apprehending this amount is concerned -- this is but the vestibule of enjoyment, the beginning of happiness which shall have no end.

- (6.) But again, I remark, that this is true whether happiness in the future state accumulates slowly or rapidly. In this respect it makes no real difference.

If the accumulation of knowledge, and holiness, and happiness, be very slow,

but a little gain in even a cycle of ages, it would only take longer; but the result must be the same. As the soul is immortal, there is no end to its progress. Yet there is reason to believe that knowledge, holiness, and happiness will increase more rapidly in the future state. But whether this is true or not, all that I have said before of the amount of its real enjoyment, must be true.

- (7.) But it is true, also whatever be the cause of this happiness, -- whether the reward be purely natural, or whether it be governmental; whether the cause be partly physical and partly moral, -- or whatever be the immediate cause, it must be true, that as the quantity is ever-growing there can be no bound ever set to the increasing happiness of the holy soul. It can only fall short of absolute infinity.
- 2. To lose the soul is to exist in endless sin and misery.

- (1.) It has been said that sin is necessarily connected with misery. Now to lose the soul, in the Bible sense of the phrase is, manifestly, not annihilation. It is to lose all that is valuable to the soul; to fail of the great end of its existence, and to incur all the miseries of an endlessly perverted existence.

- (2.) As I said of happiness, so I say of misery, that each soul must, in the progress of its existence, arrive at a point at which it can truly say that it has suffered more than the entire universe had known of suffering before it began to suffer.

However great the sufferings of the whole universe of creatures may have been, take the aggregate of all the sufferings of hell and earth, and all that creatures have known in any part, and every part, of God's dominions, each soul may arrive at a point where it will be true of it. That the amount of its sufferings, taken as a whole, is greater than the aggregate of all the sufferings that had been endured in the universe before its sufferings commenced. What a dreadful thought! an ever-growing quantity of suffering!

- (3.) As I said of happiness, so I say of misery, that each soul will arrive at a point where it must say that it has suffered millions of times more in its own experience than all creatures had experienced before it began to suffer.

- (4.) Yes, inconceivably more than all the creatures of God had known, or even conceived of, previous to its beginning to suffer.

- (5.) But, this is only the beginning. As I said of happiness, so I say of misery, that when the lost soul has suffered millions of ages, cycles which no arithmetic in heaven or earth can compute, this is but the vestibule of its sufferings; it is but the beginning. An eternal ocean of misery rolls its waves ahead; its progress is onward and downward, and onward and downward forever and ever.

- (6.) Again, this is true, whether the amount of misery accumulates slowly or rapidly. If

the accumulation be very slow, it will only take a longer period; but the misery at last must be the same. If the accumulation be rapid, the misery at last must be the same. The amount of misery endured by the lost soul can only fall short of the absolutely infinite.

- o (7.) Evidently the same is true whatever be the law or cause of this suffering, -- whether the suffering be a natural consequence of sin, or a governmental consequence of sin.

Whether it be caused by fire or any physical cause whatever, or whether these altogether comprise the cause or causes of this misery, it matters not. The fact remains that, whatever is the cause, whether it be fire or sin, or both, whether it be a natural or governmental consequence, or both -- the fact remains, the soul's enduring an ever increasing amount of misery.

An old writer has attempted to illustrate, what in fact cannot be adequately illustrated from its very nature, by the following supposition.

Suppose a bird were commissioned to remove this globe of earth by the slow process of taking a single grain of sand, and carrying it to such a distance that it would take a thousand years for the bird to go and return. She takes a single grain of sand, and goes her long journey of five hundred years out, and deposits it; and then she spends five hundred years more in her return; making in all a thousand years consumed in conveying away but a single grain and returning for another.

Now suppose she was obliged to remove the entire globe of earth in this way, what an amazing period it would take! It seems to swallow up all thought and conception.

But I add to this supposition -- suppose the old bird were commissioned to remove the entire universe in this way -- myriads of systems that are now known to exist in the material universe, for it is now known that this world is but a mere speck in the material creation. Now suppose that this old bird were to continue her labor until she had removed the entire physical universe, at the rate of one grain of sand for a thousand years. And now let me add to this, that suppose there were hundreds of thousands of such universes as this, and her commission extended to removing them all; -- this would not be eternity. It would be only time, and not eternity. When the whole of this universe should be removed at this rate, there would be not one moment less than at first. And suppose a sinful soul had suffered all this time -- all the time that the bird was coming and going, removing a grain of sand once in a thousand years; -- first, this globe -- and then the other planets -- and then the vast sun, and then the myriads of systems which compose the universe, with all their innumerable planets and suns -- and suppose that of such universes there were more in number than the angels could compute, and she continued to remove them all, -- when that bird had continued her labors until she has removed this vast and inconceivable amount of matter at

the rate of one grain in a thousand years, this vast period cannot for one moment be compared to eternity. The suffering soul has only begun to suffer. To be sure the amount which it has already suffered is inconceivably great.

Yet this is but the vestibule of its sufferings; the beginning of that which has no end. It is an ever-increasing quantity. How the soul shudders at this, and faints, and withers!

Yet such is the destiny of the immortal soul.

GLOSSARY

of easily misunderstood terms as defined by Mr. Finney himself.

Compiled by Katie Stewart

1. **Complacency, or Esteem:** "Complacency, as a state of will or heart, is only benevolence modified by the consideration or relation of right character in the object of it. God, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, in all ages, are as virtuous in their self-denying and untiring labours to save the wicked, as they are in their complacent love to the saints." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE VII)*. Also, "approbation of the character of its object. Complacency is due only to the good and holy." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE XII)*.
2. **Disinterested Benevolence:** "By disinterested benevolence I do not mean, that a person who is disinterested feels no interest in his object of pursuit, but that he seeks the happiness of others for its own sake, and not for the sake of its reaction on himself, in promoting his own happiness. He chooses to do good because he rejoices in the happiness of others, and desires their happiness for its own sake. God is purely and disinterestedly benevolent. He does not make His creatures happy for the sake of thereby promoting His own happiness, but because He loves their happiness and chooses it for its own sake. Not that He does not feel happy in promoting the happiness of His creatures, but that He does not do it for the sake of His own gratification." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE I)*.
3. **Divine Sovereignty:** "The sovereignty of God consists in the independence of his will, in consulting his own intelligence and discretion, in the selection of his end, and the means of accomplishing it. In other words, the sovereignty of God is nothing else than infinite benevolence directed by infinite knowledge." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXVI)*.
4. **Election:** "That all of Adam's race, who are or ever will be saved, were from eternity chosen by God to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of their hearts by faith in Christ. In other words, they are chosen to salvation by means of sanctification. Their salvation is the end- their sanctification is a means. Both the end and the means are elected, appointed, chosen; the means as really as the end, and for the sake of the end." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXIV)*.
5. **Entire Sanctification:** "Sanctification may be entire in two senses: (1.) In the sense of present, full obedience, or entire consecration to God; and, (2.) In the sense of continued, abiding consecration or obedience to God. Entire sanctification, when the terms are used in this sense, consists in being established, confirmed, preserved, continued in a state of sanctification or of

entire consecration to God." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LVIII)*.

6. **Moral Agency:** "Moral agency is universally a condition of moral obligation. The attributes of moral agency are intellect, sensibility, and free will." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
7. **Moral Depravity:** "Moral depravity is the depravity of free-will, not of the faculty itself, but of its free action. It consists in a violation of moral law. Depravity of the will, as a faculty, is, or would be, physical, and not moral depravity. It would be depravity of substance, and not of free, responsible choice. Moral depravity is depravity of choice. It is a choice at variance with moral law, moral right. It is synonymous with sin or sinfulness. It is moral depravity, because it consists in a violation of moral law, and because it has moral character." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
8. **Human Reason:** "the intuitive faculty or function of the intellect... it is the faculty that intuits moral relations and affirms moral obligation to act in conformity with perceived moral relations." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
9. **Retributive Justice:** "Retributive justice consists in treating every subject of government according to his character. It respects the intrinsic merit or demerit of each individual, and deals with him accordingly." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXIV)*.
10. **Total Depravity:** "Moral depravity of the unregenerate is without any mixture of moral goodness or virtue, that while they remain unregenerate, they never in any instance, nor in any degree, exercise true love to God and to man." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
11. **Unbelief:** "the soul's withholding confidence from truth and the God of truth. The heart's rejection of evidence, and refusal to be influenced by it. The will in the attitude of opposition to truth perceived, or evidence presented." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LV)*.