

God's Economy Man's Dilemma



Thoughts on Matthew 16:24-26

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SCRIPTURE TEXT: MATTHEW 16:24-26 (KJV)

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me, For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it, 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?

“Banks have collapsed...dollars being burned in the streets!” While this is not yet the actual situation, this is the headline we all expect to see just any day now in our local papers. There’s no question that the economy of most nations on earth today is in crisis. Many are very near collapse, and some have completely failed already.

These are unprecedented times of economic disaster in America, unparalleled even by the Great Depression of the 1930s. The stock market last year set a new record of all-time lows. Home repossessions are at a record high in American history. “Economy” is the central focus of every radio broadcast, the main topic of every television interview, and

the theme of every editorial in our newspapers. In short, no subject under the sun in today's world is more pertinent or pressing than this matter of "economy."

In light of this, is it not reasonable to ask, "Has God ever had anything to say about economy?" If the Christian Bible has any word on the subject of money, now would be a good time for us to hear it, right? Right!

To the surprise of most people in our generation, the Bible does, in fact, have a great deal to say about money—or more accurately—economy. Christians and non-Christians alike could gain a great deal of wisdom and prosperity while avoiding a great deal of misery by studying and applying the solid economic principles taught in the Bible. God's instructions to Israel of old alone are a vast groundwork for economic policies, and whole textbooks have been published doing exactly that. But, as valuable as these studies are, and as relevant as they may be to our times, let's face it, the Bible was not written as a textbook for business school. It is

preeminently **spiritual** and not material in purpose. And surely no subject today, or any other day, could be more relevant or more urgent than God's economy **for the soul**.

The economies of the world governments affect us all profoundly, to be sure. Nevertheless, the effect extends no further than the bounds of **this** life, while the economy of the soul will go on with us throughout the endlessness of eternity! Surely this is the knowledge urgently needed by every man, woman, and child—especially in the light of life's uncertainties. As you well know, on any given day, indeed, on any given hour, the economies of **this** world may cease to have **any** meaning to you or to me. When you breathe your last breath, the economies of this world will cease to have any more relevance **for you**.

So then, what does God say about the “economy of the soul”? The answer is found in our text. **“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me, For**

whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 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?"

Here is the basic formula for success spiritually:

"GAIN MINUS LOSSES EQUALS PROFIT". Unlike the popular jargon coming out of Washington, this really is a simple principle.



If I may be allowed a personal word at this point, let me share with you a story. When I was in college, I was a theology major; and so I had no use for business courses at all. But as it happened, I came up to the time for graduation and found out that I was two credits short of my requirements. My counselor recommended that in my last semester I jump into an entry-level business course that was available, just to fill my credit requirements. Surely, that would be easy enough, right? Well, all I can say is that I

passed, barely! I remember that after the final exam, my professor offered me some good advice. As I remember, he suggested that I had no business in business!

As true as that may be, I did learn this basic economic principle early in life—it became clear to me as a little boy. When I was in elementary school—a very long time ago—all of us boys played marbles at recess. I figured out very quickly that if I went out to the playground at recess with ten marbles in my pocket and came back in with fifteen, I made profit! But, if I went out with ten marbles and came back with only two, I lost!

There you have it—fundamental Bible economics. Here it is in our text. Listen to it again: **“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?”**

The Lord asks a question. What is the profit—what’s on the right side of the equal sign—if a man “gains the whole world” and then “loses his own soul”?

Imagine, then, gaining the whole world! Very, very few men in history can claim that distinction.

Nebuchadnezzar of ancient Babylon, Cyrus of Persia, Alexander the Great of the Greek Empire, and Caesar Augustus of Rome all succeeded. Adolf Hitler of Germany attempted it but failed. Very few, indeed, actually “gained” the whole known world; but just try to imagine yourself there. Try to imagine, for a moment, yourself owning “the whole world” personally. Now, with that vision in place, ask yourself this question, “What have I **gained** if, at the end of this life, I lose my own soul?”

To help you with that, let me remind you of some things. When you die and leave this world, you’ll leave **everything in this world behind!** It won’t matter how much you’ve amassed in this life, you’ll take **nothing** with you when you leave—only your soul! The Scripture is very clear that **“...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27).**

So, here you stand, before the judgment bar of God;



everything in this world is lost,
everything left behind, and you
stand before God to be judged.

The God Who made you “a living

soul” (**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.”**) calls you into account

for that soul, and there you stand—stripped of everything in this world and **accountable to Him Who made you**. You’ve

“gained the whole world” in this life, but now you stand to

“lose your own soul”—the only thing you had to take out.

You now realize the truth of what God had said all along, that,

“the wages (another economic term) of sin is death.”

(**Ezekiel 18:4, 20: “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that**

sinneth, it shall die...The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The

son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the

father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”) Again, more economic terms: **Romans 14:11-12: “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”** You will then answer to God by His rules of economy. He has clearly taught in **Ecclesiastes 12:13: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man”**—and you have disobeyed.

You may have “gained the whole world,” but now you stand, stripped of all that, and you “lose your own soul.” This means eternal separation from God and punishment in hell. I ask you again: What is on the right side of the equal marks now? What is your profit?

Oh, dear soul, consider this economic plight; consider it now!
Consider it while there's still time for you to adjust your
principles.

But now, here is a second question of spiritual
economics that our Lord asks in this text, "What shall a man
give in **exchange** for his soul?" Exchange? Now there's an
economic concept that
surely every one of us understands.
We know that when we travel
to a foreign country, we have to
"exchange" our American dollars for their currency, e.g.
English pounds, German marks, etc. We simply give one thing
in exchange for another. So, now, when you stand before
God in that awesome day of accounting, stripped of "the
whole world" that you've gained, exactly what **now** will you
give in **exchange for your soul**? Even if you still had "the
whole world," you couldn't offer it to Him—He already owns
it! He created it! It's His! So I ask you again, "What will you



give?” Clearly, you have nothing. That raises a vital question, “What would He accept, if anything could be given?” I’m glad you asked. Here’s the simple answer in the words of a hymn writer, Robert Lowry, in 1876:

*What can wash away my sin? Nothing but
the Blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again, Nothing
but the Blood of Jesus.
O precious is the flow that makes me white
as snow;
No other fount I know, Nothing but the
Blood of Jesus.*

But not just any blood - only innocent blood. **“For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.” (Hebrews 9:19-22) “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and**

washed us from our sins in his own Blood..." (Revelation

1:5). This is the only acceptable payment for lost souls!

Only Christ has blood untarnished by sin: born of a virgin (**Luke 1:27: "...and the virgin's name was Mary..." Luke 2**), tempted in all points (**Hebrews 4:15: "...but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin..."**), judged by other men (**Luke 23:4: "Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man."**). Only that blood is acceptable to God to give in exchange for a lost soul.

So, when you stand before God to be judged, to give an account, to be assessed as to your profitability, by the economic principles which God Himself has given, what shall it profit you if you have gained the whole world, but lost, for all eternity, your own soul? Your lot is described in **Matthew 13:42: "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."**

But those who have gone to Jesus for life are described in **verse 43: “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”**

I ask you now, “Do you have ‘ears to hear’?”
(Matthew 16:26: “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?”) Will you come to Christ now?

Dear Reader,

It is our prayer that you have a saving relationship with Christ. The Bible teaches that you may have salvation by repentance (turning from your sin) and by faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ means simply to trust in the obedience and shed blood of Christ to cover your sins. If this booklet has been used by God to bless your life, please let us know so that we may pray for you in the days ahead.

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