

Japan's Inconceivable Loss: Man Losing His Soul

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

On March 11th, an earthquake and tsunami brought destruction of an unimaginable scale to Japan. Astonishing video showed on a clear sunny day the view of walls of water heading toward the shore, sweeping away buildings, houses, cars, trucks, and people in its path. Whole villages were washed away and at least one city was utterly destroyed.

Police said 215,000 people have fled their homes and the numbers are rising. The tsunami was triggered by Japan's biggest earthquake since records began.

The world has been watching with consternation the meltdown at Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant. The incredible loss of life and environmental disaster in Japan will make it one of the worst in our lifetimes, along with Hurricane Katrina in the U.S.A, the tsunami in Thailand and the Haitian earthquake where over 300,000 people lost their lives.

A survivor from Japan's earthquake shares her ordeal, "I'm alive!!!! The earthquake hit right by the place I live right now. I heard that in some places the tsunami was more than 7 meters high. But where I live is inland so the tsunami did not hit us. We lost power for about 24hrs but it came back about 2 hrs ago. After seeing the damage left by this earthquake on TV, I feel so lucky to be alive."

One man observes, "Flood in Australia, earthquake in New Zealand, War in Libya, unrest in the Middle East, and recently the tsunami & earthquakes in Japan, and Pakistan who's next?"

The people of Japan especially need our prayers at this time. Statistics show that 84% to 96% of Japanese adhere to Shinto and Buddhism. According to a Johnstone survey taken in 1993, about 70 percent of Japanese profess no religious membership. 84% of the Japanese claim no personal religion. And according to a Demerath survey taken in 2001, 64% do not believe in God. These statistics show that Japan is a country cloaked in spiritual darkness.

Although the destruction and chaos of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan is inconceivable, the Bible speaks of a loss far more unimaginable.

The solemn words of Jesus Christ are recorded in Mark 8:36, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and **lose his own soul?**”

Everything man **gains** in this world, be it degrees, fame, riches, or popularity, cannot equal the soul of a man. All the riches or accomplishments a man make in this world will be left behind after death. The Bible tells us the world will pass away and the lust thereof.

And everything man **loses** in this world, be it from tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, fires can not compare to losing his soul in the next life. There are over 6,000,000,000 people in the world today and each day approximately 70 thousand people die.

Most of those deaths are from diseases:
about 5% from murder
20% from cancer
5% from fires
30% from heart diseases
20% from suicide
20% from Malaria/Hiv/Aids/infections/Fever

How many of those 70 thousand people are going into eternity without Christ? Most are not prepared to meet the true and living God. They are not washed in the blood of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. They are not wearing Christ's imputed righteousness. And to their horror and shame, they will awaken and stand naked and condemned before a holy God.

Jesus shows in Mark 8 the worthlessness even of the whole world in comparison with the rewards of the true heavenly kingdom. It is the comparison between the things which are external, and which perish, and the life which is eternal, and which endures. External losses may be repaired, but a lost life can never be regained, for with what shall a man buy it back? The title of my message is, **Japan's Inconceivable Loss: Man Losing His Soul**. The souls of men will live forever in either heaven or hell.

Matthew Henry wrote, “Those meet with an inconceivable loss who let gospel truths, which they had received, slip out of their minds; they have lost a treasure far better than thousands of gold and silver; the seed is lost, their time and pains in hearing lost, and their hopes of a good harvest lost; all is lost, if the gospel be lost.”

There are three points I would like to consider from Mark 8:36.

1. The soul of man is precious because God created it.

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” implies that the soul of man is precious.

And what makes the soul of man so precious?

To answer that question we have to go back to **The Book of Beginnings**, Genesis, and chapter 1 verse 26, “*God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...*”

Man was made in God's image and after his likeness, which denotes the nearest resemblance of any of the visible creatures. Man was not made in the likeness of any creature that went before him, but in the likeness of his Creator.

The image of God sets man apart from the animal world, fits him for the dominion God intended him to have over the earth (Genesis 1:28), and enables him to commune with his Maker. It is a likeness mentally, morally, and socially.

Mentally, man was created as a rational, volitional agent. Man can reason and man can choose. This is a reflection of God's intellect and freedom. A commentator writes, "Anytime someone invents a machine, writes a book, paints a landscape, enjoys a symphony, calculates a sum, or names a pet, he or she is proclaiming the fact that we are made in God's image."

Morally, man was created in righteousness and perfect innocence, a reflection of God's holiness. God saw all He had made (mankind included) and called it "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Our conscience or "moral compass" is a vestige of that original state.

Whenever someone writes a law, recoils from evil, praises good behavior, he is confirming the fact that we are made in God's own image.

Socially, man was created for fellowship. This reflects God's triune nature and His love. In Eden, man's primary relationship was with God (Genesis 3:8 implies fellowship with God), and God made the first woman because "it is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). Every time someone marries, or makes a friend he is demonstrating the fact that we are made in the likeness of God.

It is only some of God's honour that is put upon man, who is God's image only as the shadow in the glass, or the king's impress upon the coin. Jesus Christ only is the express image of God's person, as the Son of his Father, having the same nature (Colossians 1:15).

How did God make man in his image?

We read in Genesis 2:7, "*God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.*"

What makes a man an human being is that he was created in the image of God and God breathed that soul into man. God created Adam with a body and a soul. The body originated from the dust of the ground. Divine energy acted upon the dust of the ground thus resulting in the body of Adam. But God created the soul of man immediately.

William Shed writes, “Man is composed of a material part, resulting from the quickening of the dust of the ground by creative energy, and of an immaterial part resulting from the...inbreathing of God.”

What is a soul? The soul is a real substance. It is not material, but spiritual. It is not “matter” in the sense that we normally think of matter ...a solid, liquid, or gas.

Yet while the soul and the body are distinct, it has to be admitted that there is an intimate and vital union between them.

The body affects the mind and the mind affects the body. For example, fear (which is an emotion of the soul) causes the heart to race. Embarrassment causes the face to blush. Joy causes the physical response of laughter.

Do we understand this? No! Is it a fact? Yes!

Man is unique from the rest of creation because he is God's masterpiece. The soul of man is precious because it comes from God. So how can man lose his soul? This leads to my second point.

2. The soul of man is polluted in sin.

Pollution is defined as an undesirable state of the natural environment being contaminated with harmful substances as a consequence of human activities, befoulment. Pollution is the state of contamination including unwanted substances or factors. On a nice breezy day in Prince George you can smell an odor in the air from the Pulp Mills. That's pollution.

And the world is polluted because the heart of man is polluted in sin. The Bible teaches that man is a cursed and fallen creature. From the day Adam and Eve made that wretched choice and ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, the creation, and all of mankind have been under the curse and bondage of sin.

The pollution of sin is the sense of defilement and impurity, which sin brings to our inner being.

John Owen, the renowned 17th century Puritan theologian wrote, “The spring and fountain of all the pollution of sin lies in the depravation of our natures.

Who is there who considereth aright the vanity, darkness, and ignorance of his mind, the perverseness and stubbornness of his will, with the disorder, irregularity, and distemper of his affections, with respect unto things spiritual and heavenly, who is not ashamed of, who doth not abhor himself?

This is that which hath given our nature its leprosy, and defiled it throughout.

And I shall crave leave to say, that he who hath no experience of spiritual shame and self-aborrency, upon the account of this inconformity of his nature and the faculties of his soul unto the holiness of God, is a great stranger unto this whole work of sanctification.

Who is there that can recount the unsteadiness of his mind in holy meditation, his low and unbecoming conceptions of God's excellencies, his proneness to foolish imaginations and vanities that profit not, his aversion to spirituality in duty and fixedness in communion with God, his proneness to things sensual and evil, all arising from the spiritual irregularity of divine purity and holiness, is sensible of his own vileness and baseness, and is oftentimes deeply affected with shame thereon?"

If we have true spiritual conviction of sin, then we see that our pollution in sin is most serious before a holy and righteous God. We must understand what it means to be polluted in sin. Every thought, word, and deed is sinful in the sight of God. Sin is exceeding sinful. And because the soul of man is polluted in sin he finds himself aimlessly lost. Therefore, man is lost because his soul is polluted in sin.

So how is the soul of man cleansed from the pollution of sin? How can the soul of man be saved? This leads to my third and final point.

3. The soul of man is saved only through Jesus Christ.

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

How can a man’s soul be saved from inconceivable loss? Man must exercise faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross for his sins.

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, from original, as well as from actual sin. The cleansing blood exercises its spiritual, heavenly power in the soul. The believer in whose life the blood is fully working, experiences that the old nature is hindered from manifesting its power.

Through the blood, the soul of man with its lusts and desires are subdued and slain, and everything is cleansed so that the Spirit can bring forth His glorious fruit.

In case of the least stumbling, the soul finds immediate cleansing and restoration in Christ. Even unconscious sins are rendered powerless through the power of the gospel.

When Christ saves, He saves from sin – from its power and pollution, and therefore from its guilt.

The very essence of sin is the determination to have my own way (Isaiah 53:6). Where Christ saves, He subdues this spirit of self-will and implants a genuine, powerful, lasting, desire and determination to please Him.

Christ saves by His blood and sanctifies by His Spirit. It is by the work of sanctification that this pollution or corruption of our nature is in the process of being removed. Of course, it will not be totally removed until we see Jesus in His glory.

A.W. Pink writes, “there are multitudes who are quite ready for Christ to justify them, but not to sanctify. Some kind, some degree, of sanctification they will tolerate, but to be sanctified wholly, their “whole spirit and soul and body” (1 Thessalonians 5:23), they have no desire for. For their hearts to be sanctified, for pride and covetousness to be subdued, would be too much like the plucking out of a right eye.

For the constant mortification of all their members they have no taste. For Christ to come to them as Refiner, to burn up their lusts, consume their dross, to dissolve utterly their old frame of nature, to melt their souls, so as to make them run in a new mold, they refuse. To deny self utterly, and take up their cross daily, is a task from which they shrink with abhorrence.”

But the Holy Spirit cures our sinning precisely by curing our sinful nature. He makes the tree good that the fruit may be good. Our personal sanctification is a progressive and gradual process, not an instantaneous one. In fact, it is a lifetime process which began with our spiritual regeneration and will continue until we see Jesus in glory.

The Holy Spirit lives within us in order to change us in the inner most depths of our person, not merely to influence our emotions and behaviors. He works in order to eradicate our sinfulness and not merely to counteract its effects. He is working toward a radical change in us (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 12:2).

The soul of man is saved only one way and that is through Jesus Christ.

In closing, as we watched the inconceivable destruction wrought by the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, the death of many people, and the dangers at the Fukushima nuclear power plant, we are left stunned at the amount of loss and chaos done. The Bible, however, speaks of a far more unimaginable and unthinkable loss: the loss of man's soul.

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

The soul of man will live forever in either heaven or hell. What place are you going to after you die? Is your soul lost or saved? May the Lord write his Word on our hearts for His name sake. Let us pray!