

How Much For Your Soul?

By Patrick Wyett

I'm going to role-play for a moment.

I have a business proposition for you. A simple fiscal transaction, if you will. Now I go by many names, Old Scratch, Son of the Morning Star, Prince and Power of the Air (I really like that one), the Dragon, Lucifer, Satan and the Devil. I'm sure you've heard of me. And despite what some have told you, I do exist. I'm out in the world. I own the world. Every Sunday I go to church. I don't mean to brag, but I own quite a few churches too.

Legion, are *my* wolves in sheep's clothing in what were once *God's* pulpits. Uncharacteristically for me, and just this once, I'm not going to lie. I seek to destroy you by any means possible. I'll make any promise, distort any truth, and tempt you with whatever weakness you have to achieve my goal. I have 6,000 successful years of experience with humanity. Hell's enormous population attests to my mastery.

Think you're strong enough to stand against me on your own? I hope you do. I'll show no mercy and have no pity. I never rest. I deceived one-third of the angels to follow me in rebellion against God and a majority of mankind as well—all to their eternal destruction. And I want you too. I may even have somebody reading this right now. Now where's that list...? Oh well, it doesn't matter.

Let's get down to business. I have a box here next to me with five million dollars in it. I have many such boxes and more. Will you sell me your immortal soul for five million dollars?

That's a pretty straightforward offer, isn't it? Come now, everyone has a price. Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of stew. Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

What's your price?

In Matthew we're reminded of an offer similar to the one that I just made to you. Except that offer was real; the stakes were everything, and Satan himself made the sales pitch. Jesus, weakened from forty days of fasting, he had been taken into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. The initial temptation is relatively mild.

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungry. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” (Matthew 4:1-3)

Notice that Satan first tempted Jesus with His immediate physical needs.

*“But he answered and said, **it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**”* (Matthew 1:4)

Jesus defends with His superior knowledge of Scripture. Never give the devil an inroad, no matter how minor.

“Then the devil took him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto

him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” (Matthew 4:5-6)

Now Satan appeals to the pride of who Jesus is and attempts to twist Scripture to his needs.

“Jesus said unto him, ***it is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God***” (Matthew 4:7).

Another Scriptural response...

Now Satan makes his play for what he’s really after.

“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “***Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’***” (Matthew 4:8-10).

Imagine what Satan was offering.

Satan doesn’t have to offer the whole world or even five million dollars. Sadly, many sell their souls for far less than that. You see while Satan may not offer you the whole world as he did Jesus, he has a whole world of offers for your soul. Take your pick. He would have you choose anything but the blood of Christ.

“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?” (Matthew 16:26)

This is a very powerful perspective in the form of questions that cut to the very heart of this life we live. It’s one of my favorite verses in the Bible, a perspective you must always be aware of. You must never forget, no matter the temptation.

There have been many who have, by worldly standards, achieved great things (fame, fortune, power, possessions and position). They may not have gained the whole world but they got a good-sized chunk. Along the way and in that process many have lost their souls. God wasn’t number one. Other things took priority.

We all go out into eternity upon crossing the threshold of death. Any person who’s not accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior faces inescapable judgment. What would such an unsaved person give in exchange for their soul? All that they gained in life? Every moment lived in sin? Everything.

The first of the Ten Commandments is found in Exodus Chapter 20, verse 3.

“You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3).

That’s pretty simple to understand. False religions come to mind. Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, as example. But there are other gods that exist outside of a defined religion. Many times that god is self, our wants and desires. Jesus digs a little deeper into what the First Commandment means in a practical way when asked about what was the greatest commandment.

“Jesus said to him, ***‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment’***” (Matthew 22:37-38).

Do you do that? What does that mean? “All” doesn’t mean part, or what’s left over after we’ve done what we want to do. Scraps are what we give dogs. First fruits are what God requires. You know the difference. What are you excited about? What’s your passion? Maybe it’s things like the house, a car, or a boat, perhaps the football game or a fantasy football league. We attend to our priorities.

Are you too busy to read your Bible daily? To meditate on God’s Word? Pray? Then why don’t you? What could possibly be more important than your relationship with God? Do you know that George Washington, while president, excused himself every morning at 9:00 a.m. for an hour of Bible reading and prayer? You think the first president of a new nation was busy? This great man of faith made the time.

At what price your soul?

Some ruin their lives and sell their souls for easily identifiable sin. Substance abuse like drugs and alcohol, sex is one of Satan’s most alluring temptations (adultery, fornication, homosexuality). What about pornography? But I haven’t sold my soul, one might say.

What does Jesus say?

“Jesus replied, ***I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin***” (John 8:34).

If you’re a slave to sin, can God be your Master? If you’re holding something back from God, it’s more important than your relationship with Him. At one time or another we’ve all done it. Are you still doing it? How much for your soul?

What about your career? Saving for retirement? Does God know what you need? Do you trust Him? These are questions, not accusations.

“For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:32-34).

Have faith. Life is fleeting; the things of life are temporary. While living in Colorado, one of my weekend ventures was visiting ghost towns. Amongst the remote ruins of yesteryear were, of course, cemeteries. I’d read tombstones of people who’d lived and died a hundred years before I was born. The span of their lives covered a mere few inches of stone; date born to date died. Who were they? What were the circumstances of their life and death? There were no loved ones to ask as they, too, had long since passed into eternity. Only strangers like me went there, listening to the sound of the wind, pondering the unknowable.

At one of those quiet times, I read a headstone inscription that still touches me by its poignant truth. “My dear friend, as you pass by, as you are now so once was I. As I am now, soon you’ll be. Prepare yourself to follow me.”

Are you ready? Gives you goose bumps, doesn’t it. How much for your soul?

Some pursue dreams, be it athletics, singing, doctor's degrees, etc. That's fine as long as we keep perspective, but we more often don't. What you pour your heart into becomes your treasure.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

Where is your treasure?

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24).

The world loves mammon, money. Look at the state of the world. Do you see righteousness and virtue?

“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:10).

But what about those things we are to give high priority? What of family? Maybe something as innocent, as a child's soccer game. Love of family is rightfully a high priority. God ordained marriage and the family structure. But our love of those closest in life cannot ascend, cannot surpass our love of God.

“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37).

If you love your family, and you do, you'll put God first; for their sakes and yours. Army Rangers have a saying: “Rangers lead the way.” Husband, wife, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, son, daughter or friend, you can only lead in the direction that you're going. When words and actions contradict, it's our actions that define us. That's where we're going, that's our priority. That's where we are.

Whoever or whatever's god in your life, those under your influence, those who know you best, will know. That's the example we set. And God knows. As humans, we have a remarkable capacity to rationalize, justify and convince ourselves that sometimes, in our special case, 2 plus 2 can equal 5. But it never does. It's there, at those times when our so-called reasoning comes to bear. God will understand, we tell ourselves. Understand what, disobedience? Rebellion? Sin?

We want to reserve something to ourselves, something that we know we shouldn't, something that we place ahead of God; a thing, a relationship, a situation. If you're thinking of that something right now, your soul is conflicted. That pang of conscience is the Holy Spirit pleading with you, by the love of God, for your sake.

Give it to God.

God, the sovereign, omniscient, omnipresent, All-powerful Creator, created you in His Image. He did so with specific thought, purpose and plan. You are not a mistake or merely a blurred face amongst the multitudes. You are uniquely God's, ordained and loved as a masterpiece by the Master Himself.

You belong to Him by virtue of His creating you and doubly His through the blood of His Son Jesus who died for you as a sacrifice for your sins. Yet God gives you a choice: Jesus or the world. Satan offers only the

world, anything but Jesus. How much for your soul? Would you take five million dollars? Or is the blood of Jesus enough?

Some of you might be wondering about that five million dollar offer I made. Let's me check the box. Not surprisingly, it's as empty as the lies and promises that Satan makes to you. But even if it weren't, even if five million dollars was in there for your soul, what would you really gain? What would you lose?

The touching movie, *Brian's Song* was based on a book written by football great, Gayle Sayers. The book is titled, "I Am Third". The meaning? In Mr. Sayers own words, "The Lord is first, my friends are second, and I am third." What a beautiful perspective. How many people live empty lives, having altered Mr. Sayers' biblically correct sequence? What good will it do at the inevitable end?

The God-sized hole inside you can only be satisfied with God. Other things can distract you, and can give a temporary fix to that need. But nothing except God can fill you and satisfy the longing for your Creator. He made you that way. Yet people spend wasted lives seeking other things. Seeking in vain. They sell their souls for any variety of things, just as I've mentioned. And go out into eternity to face God as their Judge instead of Jesus as their Savior.

Your soul has already been purchased: By the blood of Jesus. He died for you on the cross. It wasn't an easy or quick death. Do you think in the three hours that Jesus hung on the cross by the nails in His hands and feet that He was thinking of faceless strangers that He was dying for? Or did He know you, even then? Is it possible that the image of your face, the knowledge of who you would become, flashed through His mind as He hung there, dying?

You have Jesus' blood offered for your soul. Will you sell it for less? Have you sold it for less? If you have, it's time to void that sale and accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Or maybe you've accepted the blood of Christ but have allowed other things to take His place in your life. You know your relationship with God isn't where it should be. Maybe you pray but it seems that your prayers aren't getting through. There's a haze between you and God. You read the Bible on occasion but it has no power for you.

"Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

That haze between God and ourselves, we put it there. And He loves us so much, has given us so much, yet we do that to Him, to ourselves. If you need to make things right with God, now's the time. Don't let pride or excuses keep you from what your soul longs for. Satan may be telling you, don't do it now, you've got other things to do. Sins to enjoy. There's always later. Is there?

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:16-21, emphasis added).

Remember who Satan is and what he wants.

In Syria and Egypt right now, and in many other areas of the world, the offer being made for a person's soul is their life. Convert or die. We cannot quickly dismiss the agony of our brothers and sisters in other lands. They are scared, hurting, bleeding and dying for our faith. Don't look the other way and think to yourself that at least we're safe here. The day is coming. The only question is, will you be here to experience it?

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Dearly beloved of God, for what price, your soul?

Patrick

patrickwyett@excite.com