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Digital Edition 11/22/2001
By Holiness Data Ministry

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Not "Keep All" -- But "Sell All"

By Duane V. Maxey

When the rich young ruler came to Jesus He asked Him, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Then, after Jesus recited the commandments to him, the young man replied: "**ALL** these **HAVE I KEPT** from my youth up." Whereupon, the Lord replied: "Yet lackest thou one thing: **SELL ALL THAT THOU HAST**, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me" (Luke 18:18-22).

It almost seems as if the Lord "set him up" for the table-turning clincher by quoting the commandments to the young man. Jesus knew that he would respond by saying that he had **KEPT ALL** -- and then He hit him with: "**SELL ALL**"!

And why was that **SELL ALL** far more important than the **KEPT ALL** in that young man's case? Because acquisitiveness was at the root of what separated him from fellowship with Christ, just as "the love of money" lies at "the root of all evil" that separates many greedy souls from Him Who gave His all for a lost world.

Furthermore, Christ saw that in **SELLING ALL** the young man would actually be **KEEPING ALL** that really mattered:-- his closeness with Christ and Christ's people, his heavenly riches, and his own soul.

In many ways, the price of having Christ and having Heaven cannot be measured so much by how much one must **KEEP** as by how much one must **SELL**, and forever forfeit into God's hands in order to obtain and retain those treasures. The keeping of God's commandments is indeed necessary to enter heaven, but he falls far short in his calculations if he figures that it will take little or nothing more than a mechanical doing of those deeds. It will cost you everything on earth to enter heaven.

This latter was how the apostle Paul summed things up for himself. As a young, zealous Pharisee, he too could boast that he had **KEPT ALL**, for he said of himself during that time: "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philip. 3:6). Then, on the Damascus road, he too queried Christ with words very similar to those of the rich young ruler: Acts 9:6 "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Very soon, the Lord made it clear to young Saul of Tarsus that, just like the young ruler, he would have to **SELL ALL** to follow Him. Happily, unlike the young ruler, young **SAUL OF TARSUS SOLD OUT TO FOLLOW CHRIST**. This is clear from a reading of Philippians 3:7-8 following the above quoted verse: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

The entire Bible is a commentary on the fact that it will cost everything earthly to have those spiritual and eternal things that one should value most. Consider Proverbs 4:7, the KJV translation of which reads: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." I like the way the NIV puts it, using words that illustrate my subject: "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. **Though it cost all you have, get understanding.**"

It will indeed cost a man **all that he has** to get the true wisdom and understanding that comes from real regeneration and a continued walk with Christ, and it was in reference to this supreme that the apostle Paul wrote: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:17-18). The price of getting this wisdom to begin with is "all that a man hath," and the price of retaining it remains the same till the end of life.

The only way to have and to "keep the faith" is by selling all to do so, and Jesus made it exceedingly clear that those who were bent on getting and keeping all they could of this world's goods and treasures would, in so doing, forfeit Heaven. His parable about the "pearl of great price" is a prime example of His teaching in this regard:

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matthew 13:45-46).

The merchant is the seeker of Heaven, the Pearl is Christ ("In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." -- Col. 2:3), the cost is "ALL THAT A MAN HAS," FOR TIME AND FOR ETERNITY.

There are many treasures, but only "ONE PEARL," and is it not interesting that the term "one pearl" is only found twice in the New Testament:-- First, in the above passage of Matthew, and Second, in Revelation 21:21, where we read that every "gate was of **one pearl**: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

There is a great paradox concerning Christ's salvation:-- it is free, but it will cost you "all that you have." Those who exclude the latter aspect of the paradox obtain nothing more than a pseudo-salvation.

The "**One Pearl**" in Heaven's Gates is Christ and His Free Salvation -- free because nothing you do can earn or merit Heaven -- "**Of Great Price**" because it will cost you all that you have till the day you die in order to have Christ and in order enter in through the gates into the City.

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THE END