

# THE CHRISTIAN RACE

*AND OTHER SERMONS*

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND

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LONDON  
HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
27 PATERNOSTER ROW

MCM

## PREFATORY NOTE

**A**LTHOUGH the Bishop of Liverpool has published many books—Commentaries, Biographies, and Theological Dissertations—he has never published a volume of sermons.

When his many friends heard that he was about to resign the See of Liverpool, they urged him to publish a volume of his sermons as a “memorial” of his *sixty years’* ministry. The Bishop kindly consented to do so, and invited me to make a selection from his MSS. and to prepare the sermons for the press. I need hardly say that I willingly undertook the task as a “labour of love” for my aged Bishop. The selection I have made for publication sets forth the great doctrines of our Faith—Sin, Redemption, Regeneration, and Sanctification. I have also added sermons which call attention to the *Practical* side of Christianity, and which especially emphasise the “DUTIES” of the Christian life. The closing sermons proclaim the coming of our Lord; the Reward of His Saints; and the Rest of Heaven.

Friends, who knew of the preparation of these sermons for the press, have been praying that the “message of God” which they contain may bring blessing to many thousands. In the sure and certain hope that His Word will not return unto Him void I have prepared this volume of sermons by the first Bishop of Liverpool—and in this hope it is sent forth.

T. J. MADDEN,

*Archdeacon of Warrington.*

LIVERPOOL, *March 1st*, 1900.

The Bishopric of Liverpool was declared vacant on March 3rd, 1900. [Bishop Ryle died a few months later.]

## XVII

### *PROFIT AND LOSS.*

“What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”—MARK viii. 36.

IT is a sad proof, beloved, of our evil and corrupt nature, that our Lord Jesus Christ should have thought it necessary to use such language and to ask such a question. He was preaching to His own people—to the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to the nation which for fifteen hundred years had alone enjoyed the privilege of knowing the true God. He was not instructing ignorant heathen, but Israelites, to whom pertained the adoption and the glory and the covenant, and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises; and yet behold He deals with them as if they had still to learn the first principles of religious knowledge—“What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” But it is far more sad, beloved, and far more deplorable, that at the present hour, eighteen hundred years after Jesus died for men, it should still be necessary for a minister of the gospel to urge upon you the very same words. Who, indeed, would have thought it possible that we should be obliged to remind you that the care of the soul is the one thing needful—needful for all: for the rich, because of their temptations; for the poor, because of their trials; for the old, because death is close at hand; for the young, because life with all its intoxicating follies is before them, and they can never have a more convenient season?—to remind you that, although men have different abilities and fill different stations here on earth, they have one thing at least in common, they have ALL immortal souls, they must all give account of themselves at the day of judgment. And yet, “hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,” we are obliged to tell you, professing Christians, all this. I say *obliged*, and is there not a cause? Mark now what I am about to say, and listen to my proofs.

I appeal, then, to your consciences, whether I do not say the truth in Christ, when I declare my belief that the greater number of baptised persons are living just as if this world was their abiding home and resting place, and the things of this world their only object—as if there was no such text as “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” As if Jesus had never come down on earth, preached, suffered, died and risen again for human guilt; as if the Bible was a beautiful book, but a thing to be admired and respected more than studied; as if churches and ministers were convenient enough for keeping people in order, but not witnesses of truth and messengers of glad tidings to a lost and ruined creation. I often observe, when

persons meet, they ask each other a great deal about their bodily health (“Are you quite well?” they say, “Have you got over that cold, or that fever, or that rheumatism?”) but I never yet met with anyone who made a point of inquiring about his friend’s soul; and yet we are told plainly in the Bible, that the body (comparatively speaking) is vile and perishable, but the soul precious and eternal. Men seem to go blindly forward, intent upon the earth they walk on, and confining all their anxiety to the life that now is; one generation after another is struggling to get on in this world, but few indeed appear to care where they shall be found in the next

Seeing then, beloved, that these things cannot be spoken against, for who shall gainsay them?—seeing that, even in this parish, I have found already, to my deep sorrow, there are some persons quite careless and indifferent about religion, some who drink, some who live immoral lives, some who without good reasons attend church only once a day [there were two services on a Sunday], some who only attend now and then when it is convenient, (think what a profanation for a sinful creature to talk of honouring his Maker and Redeemer and Judge when it is convenient), some who never attend at all, and go nowhere, some who appear to think it no sin to go to sleep and some to talk in God’s own house, before the very eyes of Christ who is now in the midst of you,—seeing that these things are so, I feel it my solemn duty, in love and charity towards you, to begin the year by laying open the first foundations of religious belief. I shall place side by side the world and the soul, and shortly compare their respective value; and if after that you choose to lose your own souls (which God forbid), you shall not say that I did not at least attempt to give you warning. May the Holy Ghost convince you all of the importance of the subject, and give you new hearts, for Christ’s sake.

I. What then shall I say of the things of this world, which men appear to think so valuable—money, houses, land, clothes, food, drink, learning, honours, titles, pleasures, and the like? Beloved, I shall say two things. First, they are all really worthless: capable, no doubt, of being turned to a good use (every creature of God, says the Bible, is good if sanctified by the word of God and prayer), but I mean this, that if you suppose they are in themselves able to make you really happy, you are woefully deceived. If any unconverted person in this parish could have just as much as he wished of every earthly good thing, he would still find in a very short time that he was not one whit happier than before. They are all comfortless without a new heart and a living faith in Christ Jesus. I dare say you think I am mistaken, but let me tell you many a rich man has tried the experiment, and can bear witness that the case is so. Many a one could tell you that he seeks out everything which money can purchase, he passes his life in a constant

round of amusement and excitement, going from one pleasure to another, and yet he must confess that peace of mind has been like a shadow or will-o'-the-wisp, always before his eyes but never within his grasp. And if this does not convince you, read the book of Ecclesiastes, and there you will find the deliberate opinion of the wisest man that ever lived—I mean Solomon—and you will see that he put the question to the proof in his own case; and what was the result? “Vanity of vanities,” saith the preacher, “all is vanity.” “I was great,” he says, “and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever my eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.”

Secondly, I say that all the things of the world are perishable. Surely, dear friends, this cannot require any evidence. You must have seen with your own eyes that none of the things I have mentioned are sure, lasting, permanent, incorruptible, and to be depended on. Money and property may be lost; health may fail; friends may be deceitful; and unless we can make a covenant with death and hell, we ourselves may suddenly be cut off in the midst of our days and hurried to our last account. Oh, remember the parable in Luke xii. 16. We do not read that he was immoral or an evil-liver in any way, yet see the conclusion our Lord draws. There may be times when everything looks bright and sunshiny, but let us not forget the days of darkness, for they shall be many—the days when you shall say in the morning “Would God it were evening,” and in the evening “Would God it were morning,” for the longer you live the more will you feel the truth of Job’s words, “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not” (xiv. 1, 2). There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again; but “man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?”

II. Such is the world; and now what shall I say of the soul, which people appear to hold so cheap?

First, then, let me tell you it is the most valuable part of man, because it is the part in which we differ from the brute creation. It is that wonderful principle by which God made a distinction between ourselves and the other works of His hand, for we read that “God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,” and then what was the grand conclusion?—“man became a living soul.” It was the soul for which Christ was content to take our nature on Him, and suffer death upon

the cross; the soul, of whose interests you are so careless, was the cause which brought Him down from the right hand of God, to give His own blood as the price of its redemption. Think, beloved, I beseech you, what a privilege it must be to have a soul. I once heard an anecdote of a gentleman who was visiting a large lunatic asylum or madhouse near London, when he met with a patient who was only out of his mind upon certain subjects, as I daresay you know is sometimes the case; and this poor creature asked him a startling, a most wonderful question. "Sir," he said, "did you say your prayers this morning?" "Yes," was the answer. "Then, sir, I trust you thanked God that you have the use of your reason." Beloved, I wish you to apply this to your own case. Have you ever thanked God that you have got a soul capable of renewal, of regeneration, capable of eternal life? Oh, if you have not, go down upon your knees this day, and acknowledge the mercies you have received, and your own ingratitude and unworthiness.

This leads me to the second thing I have to say about the soul. It is eternal. This frail body of ours shall one day perish; the worm shall feed sweetly on it; "ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," will probably be read over the fairest and strongest in this church; but the soul shall never perish, and when the earth and all that it contains are burning up, the soul shall enter upon a new state of existence, which shall never change, and that state shall be everlasting life or everlasting fire.

Such is the soul, and such is the world; and may we not wonder, with such undeniable facts before us, that any can be found so foolish as to think of the last more than of the first, to cleave to earth and disregard heaven? This is indeed to come down to the level of the beasts that perish, to call the sword less valuable than the sheath which contains it, and the jewel less precious than the case in which it is enclosed. "Wherefore, asks the prophet Isaiah, "do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

Now, if the heart of man were less deceitful than it is, such general argument might be enough: but I dare not stop here, for it is no light matter—it is your life; and therefore I will bring before your notice the testimony of two most unexceptionable witnesses, the dying and the dead. Ask them for an answer to the question "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" and I would be content to leave the decision of our text in their hands.

Ask the dying sinner; stand by his bedside, and inquire of him, whether it proves a comfortable and supporting thought that he has cared more for the world than for his soul. Perhaps you never saw the deathbed of one who had not got his feet upon the rock. Oh! it is a fearful, an instructive, a soul-

moving sight! When the heart begins to beat faintly and the eyes to grow dim, when friends are weeping around and human medicines avail no longer, when all the intoxication of worldly pleasure or business is past and far away, when each lies in his own silent chamber, with nothing apparently between himself and God, when something whispers “Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die,” in that solemn hour, beloved, we have little idea how small appears this earth and how broad eternity; how much the memory of sin improves; how deeply a guilty conscience darkens. You would then hear him acknowledge that his life had been a grand mistake; you would hear him confess that the care of the soul was indeed the one thing needful, and bitterly repent the time he had lost, the opportunities he had neglected, and the instruction he had despised. God grant I may be spared the pain of seeing any of you in such a plight!

And then, beloved, turn to the bedside of one of God’s own children in his last moments: you might perhaps observe some few doubts and fears, from a strong sense of his own unworthiness, and a knowledge of his own sinfulness—for Satan is strong and the flesh weak—though it is far more probable you would hear him say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at the latter day He shall stand upon the earth, and though after my skin worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God “; “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” But this at least is most certain: you never would hear one single member of Christ declare that he only regretted he had not cared enough about the world, that he had paid too much attention to the welfare of his own soul.

Let us now examine the witness of the dead upon this momentous question. Think not that I am going to incur the charge of intruding into things which I have not seen: I shall simply lay before you one of the most remarkable passages in the New Testament, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. (Luke xvi.) The words are so simple that I should only weaken their force if I were to add any comment; I only ask you to remark that little is said about Lazarus, excepting that he was poor, yet we see he was rich in faith and had treasure in heaven. Nothing is said against the rich man: we do not learn that he was immoral or cruel, and yet it is clear he had laid up all his treasure upon earth. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Beloved, are not these things written for our learning? Are not these the words of Him who spake to the world the things which He had heard of His Father? Is it not then a wonderful and a horrible thing that so many of you can live on in utter carelessness about your soul, setting your affections upon things below, giving God your spare time and the season when you have

nothing to do, but giving all your hearts to that which cannot profit you in this life and will not deliver you from condemnation in the life to come. “Oh that mine head were water and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep night and day for the slain of the daughter of my people!” for unbelief such as this is marvellous, inexplicable, unaccountable, incomprehensible.

I trust, beloved, I have now proved to you how false and unworthy is the estimate men usually place upon the world and upon the soul. I have endeavoured to show you a more excellent way; but I cannot conclude without supplying a few hints, which may assist each of you in finding out whether he is loving his own soul at this minute or not.

Many a one, I dare say, is disposed to think that all this may be very true—you knew it long ago—but it does not apply to yourself: you wish your soul to be saved.

You wish to be saved. There are few that do not; but unfortunately men generally want to be saved in their own way, and not according to the Bible; they love the crown, although they will seldom take up the cross. Friend, you need not be in any uncertainty about it; you may soon know what your state is; it is all to be found in this little Book; the marks, the signs, the tokens, the evidences are so clearly recorded, that he who runs may read. And what are they? Listen, I beseech you.

It is written here, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” “There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not.” Do you know this? Have you been brought to the wholesome conclusion that you are no better than a lost sinner by nature, wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, without one spark of natural goodness, deserving of nothing but God’s wrath and condemnation? Oh! if you have not, tremble for yourself and repent: be very sure you are losing your own soul.

Again, it is written: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”; “Ye must be born again.” Have you gone through that mighty change? Do you feel an abhorrence of former carelessness and indifference, a desire to serve God from the heart, a putting away of old things and a putting on of new? Has godly sorrow wrought in you repentance unto salvation not to be repented of? Oh, if it has not, tremble for yourself: know for a certainty you are losing your own soul.

Again it is written, “He that believeth not shall be damned.” “Without faith it is impossible to please Him.” Have you any of this faith? Have you been convinced of the utter insufficiency of your own righteousness, of the wretched poverty of your own best works? Have you come in humility and lowly-mindedness, renouncing all confidence in yourself, to the Lamb of



God which taketh away the sin of the world, trusting simply in His blood and righteousness, resting solely on His merits and intercession? Oh! if you have not, tremble for yourself and repent. Be not deceived: you are losing your own soul.

Lastly, it is written: “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” What do you know of this holiness? Can you say that God the Holy Ghost has actually begun the blessed and never-dying work of sanctification within you? Do you feel any pure love towards God and your neighbours? Is it your supreme desire to advance God’s glory? Have you any zeal for the extension of His kingdom? Do you strive not to be conformed to this world? Do you profess to regulate every thought and word and action by the Holy Scriptures? Do you hunger and thirst after a complete mortification of sin, and look forward with longing to the time when Satan shall be bound, and there shall be no more struggle between the flesh and the spirit? Are you meek and gentle towards all men? Do you redeem the time daily, looking on every minute as a talent for which you are accountable, and aiming to be employed as far as possible in the things which are just and honourable and lovely and of good report? Are the ordinances of Christ’s Church sweet and precious to your soul? Are prayer and praise a delight—in public, in your family, in private? Is your Bible your daily food, a light to your feet and a lantern to your path? Are you above the fear of men, and can you think lightly of their praise in comparison with that which is of God? Do you count all things but loss if you can but win Christ, and the life that now is as nothing compared with that which is to come? Oh! if you know not something, however little, of these things, tremble for yourself and repent: rest assured you are losing your own soul.

O beloved, be merciful to yourselves. Cease to think so much about this vile body, this perishable world; think more about those precious souls which Jesus purchased with His own blood—about that eternal resting-place where your Saviour sitteth at the right hand of God. “Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you.”

True Christian, a word for you. You know these things; you can say, “By the grace of God I have been brought to see the emptiness of this world, and the value of my soul; by the grace of God I am what I am.” Oh, remember then, to make full proof that you are one of Christ’s flock, by your daily conduct, your habits, your temper.

Let your life throughout the coming year be a silent witness to the Gospel. Strive to assist Christ’s ministers, in your families and among your friends and acquaintances, by speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, by showing them what great things your heavenly Fa-

ther has done for you. Let all take knowledge that to have been with Jesus has made you happier, holier, better in every relation of life; and so perchance it may please God to give some repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and thus their souls may be delivered from the snare of the devil, and saved in the great day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed.