

great and priceless that no man on earth could buy it. Millions of dollars are too little. No man on earth could earn it. His life would be millions of years too short. No man is good enough to deserve it. It cost God the life blood of His only Son to make the entrance for you into the celestial kingdom. In a million years, in a hundred pilgrimages, you could not earn that entrance, all you can do is to accept it as a token of God's love for you, a sinner."

"Rambhau, of course I will accept the pearl in deep humility, praying God I may appreciate your love. Rambhau, won't you accept God's great gift of eternal life, too, in deep humility, knowing it cost Him the death of His Son to offer it to you?"

Great tears were falling down the cheeks of the old man. The great veil was lifting. He understood at last.

"Sahib, I see it now! I have wanted to believe in the doctrine of Jesus for two years, but I could not accept that exaltation was free. Now I understand! Some things are too priceless to be bought or earned. Sahib, I will accept eternal life on His terms!"

The Biblical View

It is Jesus who is the matchless, "Pearl of Great Price." He gave His life so that those who accept Him as their Savior, can receive the gift which is impossible to "earn" by their own efforts.

Perhaps you are one who believes that man is saved by "grace," but only after all that he can do for himself — sort of a "grace, plus works = exaltation" arrangement. But if you can properly answer just two questions, you will be able to settle this issue in your heart once and for all. The questions are: "What is the 'will' of God?" and "What are the 'works' God requires for exaltation?"

Jesus Himself has provided the answer to both questions. Concerning the "works" required, the Gospel of John says:

"Then said they unto Him, 'What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said unto them, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.'"

John 6:28-29

As far as the "will of God" regarding eternal life, Jesus also said in that same chapter:

"And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 6:40

Don't forget the lesson learned in the story of the pearl—just because a gift is "free" does not mean it is "cheap." Eternal life is *not cheap* because Jesus offers it to you free. Ponder this thought in your heart: the *least* gift from God is far greater than the very best effort of man. How could you hope to add to (and thus improve upon) what God has done at the Cross of Calvary? You cannot, but more importantly my friend, you need not even try to do so! Stop and consider: the very word, "Gospel" means "good news" and *the genuine good news* is that God finished at the Cross what you could not possibly do for yourself!

But it takes a *genuine* humble heart to recognize one's sinful and selfish nature and inability to "earn" God's forgiveness. The only way to "make yourself worthy" is to accept what Jesus has *already* done on your behalf. God wants a sincere and contrite heart given over to Him, not a "whitewashed" life and a long list of boastful dead works done in His name! (See Matthew 7:22-23)

The shock to some is that you don't even need to join someone's "church" to get right with God! Because "religion" won't save — only relationship to God does. But you do have to *join yourself to His Son, Jesus Christ*. Don't let pride keep you from making a heartfelt commitment to Christ. You can do that where you are *right now* by asking Jesus to come into your life and to make you a new creature. (2 Cor. 5:17) Confess your sinful nature to Him and acknowledge your inability to "save yourself." (Prov. 20:9, 1 John 1:8) Tell the Lord that you want to become one of His children by adoption through the shed blood of Jesus. (Gal. 4:4-7) And don't forget to *thank* Him for what He has done for you already and *praise* Him for what He will be doing for you as you walk with Him.

When you ask Jesus into your life with the real commitment of all your heart, you are then born from above (John 1:12-13) as a child of God (Gal. 3:26) and become a joint heir with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:14-17) When you have done this, all of heaven rejoices (Luke 15:7) and so do I!

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The Pearl of Great Price



A heavy splash was followed by many ripples and then the water was still. An American crouched in the boat, his eyes riveted on the place where a stream of little bubbles rose to the surface from deep under the water. In a moment a dark head appeared and a pair of bright eyes looked up. Then the old Indian pearl diver was clambering into the boat, grinning and shaking the water from his shining oiled body.

"As nice a dive as I've ever seen, Rambhau!" cried David Morse, the American missionary.

"Look at this one, sahib," said Rambhau, taking a big oyster from between his teeth. "I think it'll be good."

Morse took it and while he was prying it open with his pocketknife Rambhau was pulling other smaller oysters from his loincloth.

"Rambhau! Look!" exclaimed Morse, "Why, it's a treasure!"

"Yes, it's a good one," shrugged the diver.

"Good! Have you ever seen a better pearl? It's a pearl, isn't it!" Morse had been turning the big pearl over and over and then handed it to the Indian.

"Oh, yes, there are better pearls, *much better*. Why, I have one —" His voice trailed off. "See this

one — the imperfections — the black speck here, this tiny dent, even in shape it is a bit oblong, but good enough as pearls go.”

“Your eye is too sharp for your own good, my friend,” lamented Morse. “I would never ask for a more perfect pearl!”

The two men started down the dusty road to the town. “It is just as you say of your God. To themselves people look perfect, but God sees them as they actually are.”

“You’re right, Rambhau. But God offers perfect righteousness to all who will believe and accept His free offer of exaltation through His Son. Can’t you see that, my friend?”

“No, sahib. As so many times before I have told you, it’s much too easy. That is where your Christian religion breaks down. I cannot accept that. Perhaps I am too proud. I must work to be worthy of my place in the celestial kingdom of God, or I would always be uncomfortable.”

“Oh, Rambhau!” Behind the missionary’s words were years of prayer for this man. “Don’t you see, you’ll never get to heaven that way. There’s only one way to the celestial kingdom. And see, Rambhau, you are getting older now. Perhaps this is your last season of diving for pearls. If you ever want to see celestial kingdom’s gates of pearl you must accept the eternal life God offers you in His Son.”

“My last season! Yes, you are right. In fact, today was my last day of diving. This is the last month of the year, and I have preparations to make.”

“You should be making preparations for the life to come,” said the missionary.

“That’s just what I’m going to do. Do you see that man over there? He is a pilgrim, perhaps to Bombay or Calcutta. He walks barefooted, stepping on the sharpest stones and every few yards he kneels down and kisses the road. That is good! The first day of the New Year I also begin my pilgrimage. All my life I have planned it. I shall make sure of heaven this time. I am going to walk to Delhi on my knees.”

“Man! You’re crazy! It’s almost nine hundred miles to Delhi! The skin will break on your knees, and you’ll have blood poisoning or worse before you even get to Bombay.”

“No, I must get to Delhi. And then the gods will reward me. The suffering and hardship will be sweet, for it will purchase the celestial kingdom for me.”

“Rambhau! My friend! You can’t! How can I convince you Jesus Christ has already died to purchase the celestial kingdom for you?”

But the old man would not be moved.

“You are my dearest friend on earth, sahib Morse. Through all these years you have stood beside me. In sickness and want you have been sometimes my only friend. But even you cannot turn me from this great desire to purchase eternal bliss. I must go to Delhi.”

It was useless. The old pearl diver could not understand, could not accept the free exaltation offered by Christ, convinced that because it was free, it was “cheap.”

One afternoon Morse answered a knock at the door to find Rambhau standing there.

“My good friend!” cried Morse. “Come in, Rambhau.”

“No,” said the pearl diver, “I want you to come with me to my house, sahib, for a short time I have something to show you. Please do not say no.”

The heart of the missionary leaped. Perhaps God was answering prayer at last.

“Of course I’ll come,” he said.

“I leave for Delhi just one week from tomorrow, you know,” said Rambhau as they neared his house a few minutes later. The missionary’s heart sank.

Inside, Morse was seated on the chair his friend had built especially for him where many times he had sat explaining to the diver God’s way to heaven. Rambhau left the room to return soon with a small but heavy English strongbox.

“I have had this box for years,” he said. “I keep only one thing in it. Now I will tell you about it. Sahib Morse, I once had a son.”

“A son! Why Rambhau, you never said a word about him!”

“No, sahib, I couldn’t.”

Even as he spoke the diver’s eyes were moistened. “Now I must tell you, for soon I will leave, and I doubt that I shall return. My son was a diver, too. He was the best pearl diver on the coasts of India. He had the swiftest dive, the keenest eye, the strongest arm, the longest breath of any man who sought for pearls. What joy he brought to me.”

“He always dreamt of finding a pearl perfect beyond all that had ever been found. One day he finally found it. But when he saw it, he had already been under the water too long and had gone too deep. He soon died a horrible and painful death.” The old pearl diver bowed his head and for a moment his whole body shook, but there was no sound.

“All these years I have kept the pearl,” he continued, “but now I am going, not to return, and to

you, my best friend. I am giving my pearl.”

The old man worked the combination on the strongbox and drew from it a carefully wrapped package. Gently opening the cotton, he picked up a mammoth pearl and placed it in the hand of the missionary. It must have been one of the largest pearls ever found off the coast of India. It glowed with a luster and brilliance never seen in cultured pearls. It would have brought a fabulous sum in any market.

For a moment the missionary was speechless and gazed with awe.

“Rambhau! What a pearl!”

“That pearl, sahib is perfect,” replied the Indian with great love and pride.

The missionary looked up quickly with a new thought.

“Rambhau,” he said, “this is a wonderful pearl, an amazing pearl. Let me buy it! I would give you ten thousand dollars for it.”

“Sahib! What do you mean?”

“Well, if that is not enough, I will give you fifteen thousand dollars for it, or if it takes more I will work for the difference.”

“Sahib,” said Rambhau, stiffening his whole body, “this pearl is beyond all price! No man in all the world has enough money to pay what this pearl is worth to me. A million dollars could not buy it. I will not sell it to you. But you may have it as a gift!”

“No, Rambhau, I cannot accept that. As much as I care for you and want the pearl, I cannot take it that way. Perhaps I am proud, but that is much too easy. I must pay for it, or work for it.”

The old pearl diver was stunned.

“You don’t understand at all, sahib. Don’t you see? My son gave his life to get this pearl, and I wouldn’t sell it for any amount of money. Its worth is in the life blood of my son. I cannot sell this, but I can give it to you. Just accept it as a token of the love I have for you.”

The missionary was choked and for a moment could not speak. Then he gripped the hand of the old man.

“Rambhau,” he said in a low voice, “don’t you see? What I said to you a moment ago is exactly what you have been saying to God!”

The diver looked long and searchingly at the missionary and slowly he began to understand.

“God is offering to you eternal life as a free gift. You assumed because it was free, that it was cheap — but nothing could be further from the truth! It is so