

The Pearl Of Great Price:



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A heavy splash was followed by many ripples and then the water was still. The American crouched over the side of the boat, his eyes riveted on the place where the bubbles rose to the surface from deep down in the water. In a moment a head broke through the surface, and a pair of bright eyes smiled up at him. Then the old Hindu pearl diver was climbing into the boat, grinning and shaking the water from his shining 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 his teeth. “I think it will be a good one.”

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

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

“Yes, it is a pretty good one,” shrugged the diver rather casually.

“Just pretty good? I have never seen a better pearl! It's perfect, isn't it?” said Morse as he turned the big pearl over and over.

“Oh yes, there are better pearls, much better! Why, I have one myself that...” His voice trailed off. “Look at this one carefully, sahib. See the imperfections: the small black speck here, this tiny dent, even in shape, it is a bit oblong, but rather good for pearls from this lagoon.”

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

A short while later, the two men started down the dusty road to the town. “It is just as you say of God. To themselves, people may look and act almost perfect, but you say God sees them as they really are!”

“You're right, Rambhau. But God through His grace, offers perfect righteousness to all who will believe and accept His free gift of eternal life through His Son. I wish you could see that, my friend.”

“No, sahib Morse, that sounds much too easy! This is where Christian teaching falls short. For years, you have been telling me that your Jesus has paid for it all but, I just cannot accept that. I feel I must do something myself; to obey the laws and commandments of the gods to earn my place in the celestial kingdom. Otherwise, I would never feel worthy! You tell me too, that I must become a child of God, and I believe I am already a child of the gods and I must strive to become one like them.”

“Oh, Rambhau!” (Behind the missionary's words were years of concerted prayer for this man.) “Don't you see, you'll never get to the place where the only true God dwells that way. All of mankind got here the same way -- by physical birth. So also, there's only one way to enter the celestial kingdom -- by the spiritual re-birth and adoption into God's family. Here and now is the time and place for you to face this issue, there is no second chance later! Rambhau, you are getting on in years. This is perhaps 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 only in His Son.”

“My last season? Ah yes, at least on that you are right! In fact, today I am finished with diving. This is the last month of the year, and I have special preparations to make.”

“You should be making preparations for the life to come,” chided the missionary in a gentle, friendly way.

“That's just what I'm going to do! Do you see that man over there? He is a religious pilgrim, perhaps to Bombay or Calcutta. He walks barefooted and picks the sharpest stones to step on as he goes along. And see, every few rods he kneels down and kisses the road. That is good! It shows his devotion and faith in the gods of our people. The first day of the New Year I also begin my pilgrimage. For years I have planned it. I shall make sure of my place in the celestial kingdom -- I am going to walk to Delhi on my knees.”

“Oh my! Rambhau, you can't be serious! It's almost nine hundred miles to Delhi. You will never last. 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 because then the gods will *have* to reward me. The suffering and hardship will be sweet, for I will earn my place in the highest part of the celestial kingdom!”

“Rambhau! My friend! You can't! How can I convince you Jesus Christ has already died to purchase your place in the celestial kingdom for you?” But the appeal fell on deaf ears; 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. Nor would he accept the free gift of eternal life offered only through the Lord Jesus Christ. He was convinced that because it was free, it was somehow “cheap.”

A couple of days later, 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 I have something I have to show you. Please do not say no!” The intensity of the old man's voice made the missionary's heart leap, for perhaps God was answering his prayers at last!

“Of course I'll come,” he said. “You know, I leave for Delhi just one week from tomorrow,” said Rambhau as they neared his house a few minutes later. The announcement again made the missionary's heart sink with disappointment. Once inside, Rambhau quickly left the room. Morse seated himself on the chair his friend had built especially for him. The missionary thought to himself about the many times he had sat in this very chair, sharing the love of Jesus and how that we must all be born again.

The old Hindu soon returned with a small but heavy English strongbox. “I have had this box for years,” he said. “I keep only one thing in it. And now I have to tell you the story behind 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 became moist with emotion) “But now I must tell you, for soon I will leave, and I doubt that I shall return. My son was a diver, too. In fact, he was the best pearl diver on all 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. On the day he finally found it he paid the ultimate price for it. He had already been under the water much too long and had gone far too deep. He died in my arms that evening -- a slow, horrible and painful death!” The old man buried his face in his hands and for a long moment his whole body shook silently.”

“All these years I have kept the pearl,” he continued, “but now I must leave, not to return. And you, being my best friend, I want you to have my pearl.” The old man worked the combination on the strongbox and drew from it a carefully wrapped package. Gently opening the frayed cotton cloth, 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 of the world's markets. For a moment the missionary was totally speechless and gazed silently in awe.

“Rambhau! What a pearl!”

“Unlike the one you were so impressed with last week, this pearl, sahib IS perfect!!” replied the old Hindu with great pride. The missionary looked up quickly with a new, inspired thought. “Rambhau,” he said, “this is a wonderful pearl, an amazing pearl. Let me buy it! My means are limited but I could give you at least, ten thousand rupees for it.”

“Sahib! What do you mean?” said the old diver with shock in his voice.

“Well, if that is not enough, I could probably raise as much as fifteen thousand rupees or if it takes more I would work for the difference. We are almost like family, you know you can trust me for it.”

“Sahib,” said Rambhau, stiffening his whole body, “I did not bring you here to try to sell it to you! 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 rupees could not buy it. I will not sell it to you or anyone else. But because I love you as much as my son whose very life paid for obtaining this pearl, I want you to have it as a gift!”

The missionary paused a moment and then said, “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 would have to pay for it, or work for it.”

The old pearl diver was absolutely 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 very life blood of my only son. I cannot sell this pearl but I can give it to you. I want you to accept it as a token of the great love I have for you.”

The missionary was choked up for a moment and 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 all these years as you refuse the gift of eternal life offered you through the death of God's Son, Jesus Christ!”

The old Hindu diver looked long and searchingly at the missionary and suddenly he began to understand. “God has been offering 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 great and priceless that no man on earth could buy it. Tons of these giant pearls would be too little. No man on earth can earn the price. His life would be millions of years too short. No man is good enough to be “worthy” of it. It cost God the life blood of His only Son to pay for your

entrance into the celestial kingdom. In a million years, in a thousand pilgrimages, you could not earn that entrance, all you can do is to humbly and gratefully accept the gift as a token of God's love for you, a sinner.”

“Of course I would be glad to accept the pearl in deep humility, praying to God that I may be worthy of the love it represents. Rambhau, won't you accept God's great gift of eternal life, too, knowing it cost Him the death of His Son to offer it to you?”

Great tears began to fall down the cheeks of the old man. The great veil was lifting from his mind and his spirit. He understood at last!

“Sahib, I see it now! I have wanted to believe in what you have said about Jesus for almost two years, but I could not accept that eternal life could be free. Now I understand! Some things are too priceless to be bought or earned. Yes, sahib, I will accept the gift of eternal life on God's terms!”

The Biblical View

The Bible tells us that Jesus gave His life so that you too can receive as a gift that which cannot be earned by your own effort. The real “Pearl Of Great Price” is your immortality and eternal life! Jesus Christ purchased that pearl for you with His own sacrificial blood which He shed on the cross. That pearl can be yours if you too will accept the true and living Jesus Christ as your own personal savior.

Like many thoughtful people, perhaps you believe you are saved by grace, but only after all you can do yourself. You know, sort of a “*God's grace + my works = exaltation*” formula. Do you feel you have to earn your way to the celestial kingdom by “cleaning up your act” first? Not quite! Invite Jesus into your life, and He will begin to clean up your life from the inside out, for you! God doesn't want you to just get religious, He wants you to get born again and adopted into His family. Like the old Hindu pearl diver who thought he was born a child of the gods, you too must learn how to become a child of God:

But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:12-13

And you need to understand that you can only become a child of God by adoption into the family of God:

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Galatians 4:4-5

Have you ever thought about what is the “will of God?” and what are the “works” God may require of us to gain eternal life? Jesus Himself has provided the answer to both questions:

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...And this is the will of Him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life"

John 6:28-29 & 40

What was the main lesson learned in the story of the old pearl diver? Just because a gift is "free" does not mean it is "cheap!" Exaltation is certainly not cheap because Jesus paid for it Himself, and offers it to you for free! This action is by definition, a gift, and the least gift from God is far greater than the very best effort of any man. How could you or I hope to add to and try to improve upon the finished work God did on the cross?? That finished work is the "Gospel" meaning the "good news!" God finished at the Cross what you could not possibly do for yourself! As the old hymn says, "*He paid a debt He did not owe, lowed a debt I could not pay! I needed someone to wash my sins away!*"

But it takes more than a simple intellectual agreement to a set of doctrinal statements to gain eternal life. Coming to Jesus actually means surrendering the control of your life! You must also combine that surrender with a recognition of your pride filled, 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. Jesus Christ wants a sincere heart given totally over to Him, not a "whitewashed" life and a long list of boastful religious dead works done in His name:

Many will say to me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Matthew 7:22-23

You don't even need to join the "right church" to get right with God! You only have to join yourself to His Son, Jesus Christ. That is done by being born again and asking Jesus Christ into your heart. Don't let your religious traditions or pride keep you from making a genuine and personal commitment to the Jesus Christ of the Bible. You can do that where you are right now. You just pray quietly and tell Jesus you want to give Him control of your life and ask Him to come into your heart and to make you a new creature:

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away; behold, all things are become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Confess your sinful nature to Christ and acknowledge your inability to "save yourself:"

Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?... If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Proverbs 20:9 & 1st John 1:8

Tell God that you want to become one of His children by adoption through the shed blood of Jesus. When you ask Jesus into your life with the real commitment of all your heart, you are then born again from above (*John 1:12-13*) and become a child of God through faith. (*Galatians 3:26*) When you have done this, all of heaven rejoices for you -- and so will I.

You see, I was once as you are now -- a sinner separated from God. My prayer for you is that you will set aside any misguided faith in "religion" and enter into a personal relationship whereby you too, may become a joint heir with Christ:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear,... but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father" The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

Romans 8:14-17a

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