



## **LESSON FOUR**

### **Dispensational Punishment, the Kingdom Reward and the Gaining of the Soul**

Scripture Reading:

#### **HEBREWS 10: 25 - 39**

- 25 Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.
- 26 For when we sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice *of bulls and goats* for sins,
- 27 But a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fervor of fire, which is to consume the adversaries.
- 28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without compassion on *the testimony of* two or three witnesses.
- 29 By how much do you think he will be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has considered the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing and has insulted the Spirit of grace?
- 30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay"; and again, "The Lord will judge His people."
- 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
- 32 But call to mind the former days, in which, having been enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings;
- 33 On one hand, being made a spectacle both in reproaches and in afflictions, and on the other, having become partakers with those who are treated the same.
- 34 For you both sympathized with those in bonds and accepted with joy the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves have a better possession and one that abides.
- 35 Do not cast away therefore your boldness, which has great reward.
- 36 For you have need of endurance in order that, having done the will of God, you may obtain the promise.
- 37 "For in yet a very little while the Coming One will come and will not delay.
- 38 But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul does not delight in him."
- 39 But we are not of those who shrink back to ruin but of those who have faith to the gaining of the soul.

## **QUESTIONS:**

### **Section 1:**

1. What should our viewpoint be regarding the matter of salvation as revealed in the Bible? Please refer to these two words: “eternal perdition” and “dispensational punishment”.
2. Please list and explain using at least three things to prove that our salvation is secured eternally.
3. What is the context of Hebrews 10:29 according to verse 25 and 26?

### **Section 2:**

1. What is God’s intention to chastening or discipline the believers?
2. Please use some verses to show us that believers will receive “dispensational punishment” or chastisement in this age?
3. Please refer to some verses to show us that the believers can even receive chastisement in the next age? How should our response be in knowing such words?

### **Section 3:**

1. What is the kingdom reward?
2. When will this reward be decided and when will it be given?
3. What was Paul and Moses’s attitude toward the reward?

### **Section 4:**

1. What does “the gaining of soul” mean?
2. What does it mean to lose our soul? Please share some examples.

-----[SECTION 1]-----

**NOT ETERNAL PERDITION,  
BUT DISPENSATIONAL PUNISHMENT**

This message, entitled “Not Eternal Perdition, but Dispensational Punishment,” is necessary that we might have a basic foundation ... because many Christians have confused the matter of dispensational punishment with eternal perdition. According to the New Testament, these are clearly two separate things, having nothing to do with one another. Eternal perdition is for unbelievers, whereas dispensational punishment is for believers. A great deal of trouble has been caused by mixing together these two things.

In today’s Christianity, there are two main schools of theology regarding salvation. One school says that salvation is eternal. According to this school, once we have been saved, we are saved eternally, regardless what we do after we are saved. Salvation can never be lost. The second school claims that if we are not careful after being saved, we might be lost again. Most of the so-called holiness churches belong to this school, believing that a person may be saved and lost again and again. Because their salvation goes up and down like an elevator, we may call this concept of salvation “elevator salvation.” Once, when I was less than thirty years of age, a preacher came to our town saying that we could be saved in the morning and lost again that night, and then by repenting and confessing our sins we could be saved again the next morning. When I heard about this, I boldly told the saints in that town that this was nonsense and that our God would never give us such a salvation.

Apparently those who preach and teach “elevator salvation” have some ground in the Bible; actually they do not. They are like those who see the letter C and, having poor eyesight, mistake it for a G. They make a big mistake in interpreting certain passages in the Bible. They use all the verses which speak of dispensational punishment to support their belief that a saved person can be lost again. Those who follow this school of theology never have any assurance. If, as far as salvation is concerned, they are up when they die, they will be saved forever. But if they are down, they will be lost eternally. What kind of gospel is this? It is terrible!

However, it is also wrong to teach that no matter what you do after you have been saved there will be no problem and you will continue to be saved.

According to this teaching, as long as we have the assurance of being saved for eternity, it is all right. We need to be unloaded and drop the teaching of both these theological schools and see what the pure Word of God says concerning this matter.

**I. THE SECURITY OF GOD’S ETERNAL  
SALVATION  
FOR THE BELIEVER**

God’s salvation is eternal. Once we have received it, it is secured eternally. This is proved by eleven things.

**A. By the Will of God**

God’s eternal salvation is secured by the will of God. Ephesians 1:5 says that we have been predestinated according to God’s will, and John 6:39 tells us that the Father’s will is that none of those whom He has given the Son should be lost. This is the will of God concerning our salvation. God’s will is more steady and stable than a rock. Although heaven and earth may be removed, God’s will remains forever. It does not go up and down like an elevator.

**B. By the Selection and Calling of God**

God’s salvation is secured by the selection and calling of God. He has chosen us, selected us, before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). It is not we who selected Him but He who selected us (John 15:16), and His selection is not of our works but of Himself who calls (Rom. 9:11). He has not only predestinated us but also called us (Rom. 8:30), not according to our works but according to His own purpose (2 Tim. 1:9). His calling is irrevocable. He will never repent of it nor regret having called us. His selection and calling have nothing to do with our works; our works can never affect them, for they are unchangeable. Both God’s selection and calling, being initiated by Him, not by us, are the security of our salvation.

**C. By the Love and Grace of God**

The salvation we have received of God is also secured by His love and grace. It is not we who loved Him, but He who loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10). Nothing whatsoever shall be able to separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38-39). We are changeable, but the love of God is unchangeable. Furthermore, God has not saved us according to our works, but according to His grace which was

given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9). Our works may often fail, but God's grace never fails. Our salvation is secured not by our works but by God's prevailing grace which comes out of His unchanging love.

#### **D. By the Righteousness of God**

God's eternal salvation is secured by the righteousness of God which is revealed to faith (Rom. 1:16-17). For the showing forth of His righteousness, God must justify us, and He has justified us who believe in the Lord Jesus (Rom. 3:26). It is the righteous God who has justified us (Rom. 8:33). His righteousness is the foundation of His throne (Psa. 89:14, Heb.). His throne is established forever and nothing can shake it. Our salvation, being secured by God's righteousness, is as unshakable as God's throne.

#### **E. By the Covenant of God**

Our salvation is secured by the covenant of God. God has saved us by His new covenant (Heb. 8:8-13). It has definitely been covenanted that He has written the law of life within us and that He will never remember our sins. As the faithful God, He will never break His covenant (Psa. 89:34). Not only His righteousness but also His faithfulness binds Him. Hence, His covenant with His faithfulness is a security of our salvation.

#### **F. By the Power of God**

The security of God's eternal salvation is also by the power of God. The Lord Jesus said that His Father is greater than all, and that no one can snatch us out of the Father's hand (John 10:29). God the Father is more powerful than anything. He has a mighty arm, and strong is His hand (Psa. 89:13). No one can pluck us out of His hand.

#### **G. By the Life of God**

Our salvation is eternally secured by the life of God. The Lord said, "I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever" (John 10:28, Recovery Version). Do you believe that the eternal life can be recalled once it has been given to us? To say that once we are saved we can be lost again means that the eternal life which has been given to us would be called back. This is altogether illogical. Once we have the eternal life, we shall never perish.

#### **H. By God Himself**

Our salvation is secured by God Himself. God has chosen, predestinated, called, justified, cleansed,

and saved us. With Him there is no shadow of change (James 1:17); He is unchangeable (Mal. 3:6). After doing so much for us that we might be saved, do you think that God would change in this matter? Can our condition or situation affect God's nature? Can it change God's doing? No, it is impossible. Our salvation is secured by the unchangeable God Himself.

#### **I. By the Redemption of Christ**

Our salvation is secured by the redemption of Christ. Christ has died for us (Rom. 8:34), and the redemption accomplished by His death is an eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). By offering Himself once to God He has perfected us forever (Heb. 10:14), and His eternal redemption issues in our eternal salvation (5:9). Thus, He is able to save us to the uttermost, not only in extent but also in time (7:25).

#### **J. By the Power of Christ**

Our eternal salvation is also secured by the power of Christ. In John 10:28 and 29 the Lord assures us that not only the Father's hand but also His hand will keep us from perishing. The Father is strong, and He is powerful. No one can snatch us out of the Father's hand, nor out of His hand. We are secured by two divine hands, the Father's hand of love and the Son's hand of grace, both of which are powerful to keep.

#### **K. By the Promise of Christ**

Finally, our salvation is secured by the promise of Christ. The Lord Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37, Recovery Version). Here we see that the Lord promised that He would never reject or forsake anyone who came to Him. All these verses are very clear and unambiguous, giving a solid foundation for the security of our salvation. Nothing can annul these clear verses. Thus, all God's children may have the proper faith to believe that His salvation is eternal.

Those who believe that a saved person can lose his salvation appeal to such verses as Hebrews 10:29, which says, "By how much do you think he shall be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" We must deal with this verse very carefully. It speaks of a saved person, for it mentions one who has been

sanctified by the blood of Christ. Yet such a one may be worthy of worse punishment because he has trampled under foot the Son of God, regarded the precious blood of Christ as common, and insulted the Spirit of grace. Undoubtedly, the Spirit of grace was working graciously in him, but he did not listen to it.

In order to understand this verse, we must consider the context beginning with verse 25, which speaks of “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom with some is.” As we have seen, for the Hebrew believers to forsake the assembling of themselves together meant that they were forsaking the church to return to Judaism to offer the animal sacrifices again. Then verse 26 speaks of sinning willfully “after receiving the full knowledge of the truth.” As we pointed out in the last message, truth here refers to the things disclosed in the foregoing chapters and verses, which afforded the Hebrew believers the full knowledge that God had annulled the old covenant and established the new. If after receiving this knowledge, they still went back to offer the sacrifices for sin, they would have been sinning willfully. They knew that, according to God’s economy, there no longer remained a sacrifice for sin because all the sacrifices had been terminated by the unique sacrifice of Christ. By considering verse 29 in its context, we see that it refers to a truly saved person. All the Hebrew Christians were saved, but they were in danger of forsaking the Christian assembly, that is, forsaking the church, and returning to Judaism. If they had done this, they would have been worthy of some punishment. Although this verse indicates that a saved person may be punished, it does not mean, as those who follow the second school misinterpret it, that a saved person can be lost. It certainly does not refer to eternal perdition but to a type of punishment of believers.

-----[SECTION 2] -----

## **II. THE ETERNAL PERDITION FOR THE UNBELIEVERS**

The “worse punishment” in 10:29 is different from suffering the second death (Rev. 20:6, 14; 21:8). To suffer the second death is to perish in the lake of fire for eternity, that is, to suffer eternal perdition. This is most terrible. Some argue that there is no such thing as eternal perdition, saying that God is love and could not bear to have His creatures suffer in the lake of fire for eternity. But they seem to forget Revelation 14:10-11; 19:20; 20:10, 14-15; and 21:8. These

verses tell us that the lost, the perished ones, will suffer in the lake of fire for eternity. God is God. When He loves, He truly loves. But when He is severe, He is surely severe. Since the unbelievers face such a terrible eternal perdition, they certainly need the gospel.

## **III. THE DISPENSATIONAL PUNISHMENT FOR THE FAILURES OF THE BELIEVERS**

### **A. God’s Discipline or Chastening**

Although the believers cannot be lost, they may suffer some dispensational punishment for their failures (10:29). In these days we all have heard the call to come forward and not to shrink back. But suppose some would shrink back. They would not be lost, but they would be dealt with by God, undergoing some dispensational punishment. In the Bible dispensational punishment is called chastening, discipline, or chastisement. God’s punishment is His discipline. When parents punish their children, it does not mean that they permanently cast them away. Rather, parents discipline their children with a good intention. I know of one Christian couple who warned their children about their schoolwork. They told their children that everything had been prepared for them and that it was their responsibility to do well in school. If at the end of the school year they had earned A’s, they would receive a great reward, but if they failed, they would be put into a dark room for a day. This Christian couple kept their word. At the end of the year, the child who earned the A’s received a reward, while the one who failed received some punishment. One of the parents disciplined him, even shedding tears, saying, “Child, I love you, but I cannot help it. You must go to that room for the day and have nothing to eat.” They did not cast him away. That dark room was not even a temporary prison—it was a closet of love. The child’s parents displayed the best love for him, and the next semester he also received A’s in school. This is an illustration of dispensational punishment.

Our heavenly Father is loving and wise. Do you think that He will always allow us to fail? Certainly not. What then will He do if we fail? He will give us a loving discipline and put us in a dark room of love for a time. There, in the darkness, His children will be disciplined for their own good.

## **B. Some in This Age**

All sound fundamental Christian teachers of the Bible believe that God chastises His children. In Hebrews 12:5-11 we have a word of warning concerning us. Verses 5 and 6 say, “You have completely forgotten the exhortation which reasons with you as with sons, My son, do not make light of the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when reproved by Him; for whom the Lord loves He disciplines and scourges every son whom He receives.” This word mainly refers to God’s discipline in this age. Are you a son of God? If you are, then you may be scourged. Verse 7 says, “It is for discipline that you are enduring; God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom the father does not discipline?” When this book was written, the Hebrew believers were suffering chastisement. God was dealing with them as with sons. Although I have disciplined my own children, I have never disciplined the children on the street, because they are not my children and I have nothing to do with them. Verse 8 continues, “But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are bastards and not sons.” If we are without the Father’s discipline, then we must be bastards, not sons. I certainly would not want to be a bastard. “Furthermore, we have had the fathers of our flesh as discipliners and we respected them; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed disciplined us for a few days as it seemed good to them, but He for our profit that we might partake of His holiness” (vv. 9-10). Since holiness is God’s nature, to partake of God’s holiness is to partake of His nature. It was common, unholy, for the Hebrew believers to remain in Judaism. They needed to be separated to God’s new covenant that they might partake of God’s holy nature. For this purpose, persecution was aroused to discipline them that they might be separated from the common to the holy.

## **C. Some in the Next Age**

Although all the fundamental teachers of the Bible believe that God chastens His children, nearly all of them would say that His chastisement is only in this age, not in the coming age, claiming that God will never chastise us after we die. But I cannot find such a teaching in the Bible. Luke 12:45-48 reveals clearly that when the Lord Jesus returns, He will chastise His unfaithful servants. At the judgment seat of Christ, all the believers will be judged concerning how they have lived and what they have done after they were saved. Then the judgment will be

made whether they will receive chastisement or not. This is similar to the end of the school year when the children present their parents a record of their grades, and the parents decide whether the children will receive a prize or a punishment. At the Lord’s coming back, we all will present our record to Him, and He will decide what we shall receive. God’s discipline is not only in this age but also in the coming age. As we have pointed out, the next age will still belong to the old heaven and the old earth. Thus, even the coming age of the kingdom will be a time for the Father to deal with His children.

What is mentioned in 10:27-31 as a warning does not refer to eternal perdition for the unbelievers but to God’s dispensational punishment of His children who do not obey His word. We must be assured that once we have God’s salvation, we shall never lose it. However, if we do not care for God’s word, we shall be punished. To be punished by God is not to be hated by Him. Rather, it is a sign that God the Father loves us. He disciplines whom He loves, not treating them as bastards but as dear sons. Surely the Father will discipline us.

How we must thank the Lord that He has opened His economy to us and that He has given us the warnings that we might go along with His economy! If we do not heed God’s warnings, we shall be punished. The time of our punishment is altogether up to Him, not us. It is the parents who determine what is the best time to deal with their children. They decide whether to deal with them immediately or to wait. Likewise, our Father knows the right time to deal with us, whether it is in this age or in the coming age. Luke 12:45-48; 19:22-26; Matthew 24:48-51; and 25:26-30 reveal clearly and definitely that when the Lord Jesus comes back, He will deal with His unfaithful servants.

By now we should be clear that the salvation which we have received from God is eternally secure. Nevertheless, we must be careful regarding our way of going on with God after we have been saved, especially after receiving the full knowledge of the truth as it has been given to us in these messages on Hebrews. If these messages do not help you to go on, then they will be unprofitable as far as your welfare is concerned. If we know the Lord’s will and yet do not do it, we shall be beaten more. But if we are ignorant of the Lord’s will and do not do it, we shall be beaten less. Luke 12:48 says, “He that

knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” If you do not have the heart to go on with the Lord, you are better off to be left ignorant. But we are no longer ignorant. May we all heed the warning to come forward and not to shrink back. May our prayer be, “Lord Jesus, help me to come forward.”

## -----[SECTION 3]-----

### **I. THE KINGDOM REWARD**

Hebrews 10:35 uses the word “reward,” and 10:27 speaks of “fiery zeal.” Moreover, 12:29 says, “Our God is also a consuming fire.” This consuming fire deals not with the faithful ones, but with the unfaithful, and it is not for reward but for punishment. As we have seen, such punishment has nothing to do with eternal perdition. We must always discern between punishment and perdition, just as we discern between reward and salvation.

The reward mentioned in verse 35 is the kingdom reward because it will be given to us for our enjoyment in the coming kingdom, not in this age. Today in the church life the kingdom is an exercise. If we are faithful in the kingdom exercise today, we shall be rewarded with the kingdom as an enjoyment in the coming age. Then it will be the kingdom reward.

#### **A. By Righteousness**

Eternal salvation is by grace, but the kingdom reward is by righteousness. In 2 Timothy 4:8, Paul says that a crown of righteousness, the symbol of this reward, not a crown of grace, was laid up for him. So in verse 18 of the same chapter, he has the assurance that the Lord will save him into His heavenly kingdom. This was due to his faithfulness in following and serving the Lord. The Lord, the “righteous judge,” will give him this reward of the kingdom according to His righteousness, not according to His grace.

#### **B. According to Work**

The kingdom reward will be according to our work. In Matthew 16:27 the Lord Jesus said that at His coming back He will reward us according to our works. In Revelation 22:12 He says, “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” As we have already seen, 1 Corinthians 3:8

says that we shall be rewarded according to our labor. Eternal salvation has nothing to do with our works, but the kingdom reward will be altogether according to our works which we have by the Lord’s life after being saved.

#### **C. Decided by the Judgment Seat of Christ**

This reward will be decided by the judgment seat of Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 says, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” The judgment seat of Christ will be set up at His coming back. At the judgment seat the Lord Jesus will judge all His believers. None of the unsaved will be judged at that time, for all of them will be judged at the white throne a thousand years later (Rev. 20:11-15). There, at the judgment seat of Christ, the decision will be made regarding what reward we shall receive—the enjoyment in the kingdom or some punishment.

#### **D. Given to Us at the Lord’s Coming Back**

This reward will be given to us at the Lord’s coming back. In 1 Corinthians 4:5 Paul says, “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.” At His coming back, the Lord will judge everything and will reward every one of His believers. We must take heed to the warning in this verse. At His coming back, the Lord “will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” Today we can hide the things of darkness and the counsels of our hearts. But all this will be brought to light and made manifest at the Lord’s coming back. Then every one of us shall receive a reward accordingly.

#### **E. Enjoyed in the Coming Kingdom**

The kingdom reward will be enjoyed in the coming kingdom. Both Matthew 25:21 and 23 say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” According to the context of Matthew, to enter into the Lord’s joy is to enter into the coming kingdom. The faithful servants will participate in the Lord’s joy in the kingdom as a positive reward.

## **F. Participating in the Coming Sabbath Rest**

The kingdom reward is to participate in the coming Sabbath rest. As we have seen in previous messages, this coming Sabbath rest will be Christ's joy and reign in the millennium (Heb. 4:9; Rev. 20:4, 6). There, in the thousand-year kingdom, we shall share Christ's joy and participate in His reign as kings.

## **G. Paul Having Strived for This Reward**

Paul strived for this reward. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, he tells us that he was running the race for the reward. Then in Philippians 3:13 and 14, he was still running the race. Only at the time immediately before his martyrdom did he know for certain that the reward was awaiting him and that the crown of righteousness had been prepared for him and for all who love the Lord's appearing (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

## **H. Moses Having Looked to This Reward**

Because Moses was willing to suffer the reproach of Christ, he will receive the reward of the kingdom (Heb. 11:26). He was not allowed to enter into the rest of the good land because of his failure at Meribah (Num. 20:12-13; Deut. 3:26-27; 32:50-52). But he will be with Christ in the kingdom (Matt. 16:28—17:3). By referring to this, the writer surely intended to encourage his readers, who were suffering persecution for Christ's sake, to follow Moses by esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the things they lost and by looking away to the reward.

## **I. In Addition to Eternal Salvation**

The kingdom reward is in addition to the eternal salvation which is mentioned in 5:9. Based upon Christ's eternal redemption (9:12), eternal salvation has been given to us freely and eternally according to God's eternal selection of us. That is eternally secured. However, after receiving this eternal salvation, how we would behave ourselves is a problem. Hence, according to God's wisdom, in addition to this eternal salvation, a reward is promised as an incentive to us that we may be faithful in our living by the Lord and in our working for Him.

Eternal salvation is by faith, having nothing to do with our work (Eph. 2:8-9), whereas the kingdom reward is for our work after we are saved (1 Cor. 3:8, 14). We may not receive the kingdom reward even though we are saved, because we are void of

the work which the Lord would approve (1 Cor. 3:15). The Hebrew believers were here charged not to miss the kingdom reward—the coming Sabbath rest, the enjoyment of Christ and the reign with Christ in the coming age.

## **J. Of the Promise Differing from the Promise of the Eternal Inheritance**

The kingdom reward is of the promise mentioned in 10:36, which is different from the promise in 9:15. The promise in 10:36 is the promise of the Sabbath rest mentioned in 4:9, in which we shall participate in the reign of Christ in the coming kingdom. That will be the great reward mentioned in verse 35 for the gaining of the soul mentioned in verse 39. This is conditioned on our endurance and doing the will of God. The promise in 9:15 is the promise of eternal inheritance based upon Christ's eternal redemption, not on our work. The eternal inheritance in the promise in 9:15 is by the eternal redemption of Christ, whereas the great reward (v. 35) in the promise in 10:36 is for our reward in doing the will of God.

The will of God mentioned in 10:36 was for the Hebrew believers to take the new covenant way (vv. 19-23) and remain with the church (v. 25), not shrinking back to Judaism (vv. 38-39) but suffering persecution (vv. 32-34). For this they will receive the promise of a great reward at the Lord's coming back. The promise of eternal inheritance is included in God's eternal salvation. The promise found in 10:36 is the reward for the overcomers, while the eternal inheritance is for all the believers who have received eternal salvation.

Verse 34 speaks of "a better possession, and an abiding one." This better and abiding possession is "the eternal inheritance" and the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (1 Pet. 1:4). Under the old covenant, the Jewish people inherited earthly things as their possession; but under the new covenant, the believers inherit the heavenly riches as their possession. This better and abiding possession was a great incentive to the Hebrew believers to suffer the loss of earthly things.

Verse 39 speaks of shrinking back to ruin. For the Hebrew believers to shrink back to Judaism would have been to shrink back to ruin, which is not eternal perdition, but punishment by the living God. The ruin mentioned here will be the punishment, as mentioned in verses 27 through



31, to those who would forsake the new covenant and return to Judaism, thus trampling under foot the Son of God, regarding Christ's precious blood common as animal blood, and insulting the Spirit of grace. As the kingdom reward is a positive reward, so the punishment must be a negative one.

-----[SECTION 4]-----

## **II. THE GAINING OF THE SOUL**

Verse 39 speaks of "the gaining of the soul." The Greek word translated "gaining" may also be rendered "saving," "preserving," "possessing." Very few Christians understand the meaning of this phrase. Some refer it to the salvation from hell. That is not accurate. The gaining of the soul is different from the salvation of our spirit. In 1 Corinthians 5:5, speaking of a sinful brother who was to be put out of the church, Paul said to "deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Even such a fallen, sinful brother would have his spirit saved, because the salvation of the spirit is eternal. However, the gaining of the soul is conditional. There is no need for us to be sinful in order to lose our soul. Even if we shrink back from God's economy, we shall lose it. Most Christians have only one thought—going to heaven or going to hell, being saved or perishing. But neither the Bible nor our wise Father is that simple. Our Father has many ways of dealing with us. As we shall see, this gaining of the soul is somewhat related to the kingdom reward.

### **A. For Our Whole Being to Enjoy the Coming Sabbath Rest**

The gaining of the soul is for our whole being to enjoy the coming Sabbath rest, that is, to share in Christ's joy and glory in the coming kingdom (4:9). Our being is of three parts—spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23), and our soul is different from our spirit. At the time when we believed in the Lord Jesus and were saved, our spirit was regenerated with the Spirit of God (John 3:6). But we must wait until the Lord Jesus comes back for our body to be redeemed, saved, and transfigured (Rom. 8:23-25; Phil. 3:21). As to the saving or gaining of our soul, it depends upon how we deal with it in following the Lord after we are saved and regenerated. If we lose it now for the Lord's sake, we shall save it (Matt. 16:25; Luke 9:24; 17:33; John 12:25, Gk.; 1 Pet. 1:9), and it shall be saved, or gained, at the Lord's coming back (Heb. 10:37). This will be the reward (10:35) of the

kingdom to the overcoming followers of the Lord (Matt. 16:22-28).

### **B. A Great Reward to Our Suffering for Following Christ**

To gain our soul in the coming age will be a great reward (v. 35) to our suffering for following Christ in this age. If we care for the enjoyment of our soul, the psychological pleasures, and do not follow Christ faithfully today, we shall suffer the Lord's discipline in our soul in the coming age. If we are willing to lose the enjoyment of our soul for the Lord's sake today, we shall have the full enjoyment of the Lord for our whole being, especially for our soul, in the coming age. That will be a reward to our suffering today.

### **C. Conditioned on Our Losing of the Soul in This Age for the Lord's Sake**

The gaining of the soul is conditioned on our losing of it for the Lord's sake. In the Gospels the Lord tells us many times that if in this age we lose our soul for His sake and the gospel's, at His coming back in the next age we shall gain it (Matt. 16:25; Luke 9:24; 17:33). Although these verses are very familiar to so many of the saints, not many know what they really mean. As human beings, we have a spirit, but we are a soul. A human being is a soul. To lose our soul in this age means to suffer for the Lord's sake and for the sake of the gospel. When we suffer, our whole being suffers. This means that we lose our soul. Those who are rich and comfortable today, enjoying their physical life, are having enjoyment for their soul. Not many Christians are willing to pay the price to follow the Lord strictly, because they do not want to suffer in their soul; they want to enjoy their life today, desiring luxurious cars, large houses, and many worldly things. They are unwilling to lose their soul.

Losing our soul in this age is to suffer for the Lord's sake in a human way. If we follow the Lord today, we shall certainly suffer for His sake. Because you are a faithful and straight follower of Jesus Christ, your teachers may not give you the higher grade, and you may not receive a promotion on your job. Many such things are related to losing our soul. Our destiny in this age is to lose our soul and all human enjoyment. This loss of our soul today is the condition of our gaining it in the next age. To gain our soul in the next age is to enter into the Lord's joy and reigning. According to the parable in Matthew 25, the Lord said to the faithful servants, "Enter thou

into the joy of thy lord.” To enter into the Lord’s joy is to enter into His reign in the coming kingdom. This age is for us to suffer; the next age is for our enjoyment.

In these last two messages we have seen clearly the matters of dispensational punishment, the kingdom reward, and the gaining of the soul. The punishment which the defeated Christians will suffer is simply the losing of the soul. If in this age you gain your soul, being unwilling to pay the price to follow the Lord, you will lose your soul at the Lord’s coming back. That will be a real punishment. While the overcomers enter into the Lord’s joy and reign, you will be put aside. To lose our soul in the coming age does not mean that we ourselves shall be lost. It means to be excluded from the enjoyment and reign of Christ when He rules over the nations in the millennial kingdom. Those who gain their soul in this age and lose it in the next will not be co-kings of Christ in the coming age of the kingdom. If we lose our soul in this age for the Lord’s sake, we shall gain it in the next and enter into the Lord’s joy and reign, having the full enjoyment of human life as we rule with Him over the nations. This is a great reward.

The gaining of the soul equals perfection, and perfection equals glorification. To be glorified, to be perfected, and to gain our soul in the next age all refer to one thing—the reward. What then is the reward? It is the goal of God’s salvation. God’s salvation has a goal. This goal is not that we go to heaven. The goal of God’s salvation is to make us the same as His Firstborn Son. Romans 8:29 says that we have been, “predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be the firstborn among many brothers” (Recovery Version). Here we see God’s goal—that His many sons, who are Christ’s many brothers, might be conformed to the image of His Firstborn Son. God is working today to bring the many sons into glory, that is, to bring all the saved ones into the glorification of the Firstborn Son of God. God has not saved us with the goal that we might go to heaven, but that we might be transformed and conformed to the image of His Son so that God might have for eternity a corporate expression of Himself. This is the goal of God’s salvation.

In His foresight God saw that many of His selected ones would not cooperate with Him, not give Him the opportunity to work out the goal of His salvation. Thus, in His wisdom, He decided

to make the goal of His salvation a reward to the selected and saved ones. If there were no weakness, lack, or failure on the part of the saved ones, God would have no need of making the goal of His salvation a reward, for whoever was saved would come into that goal. But only those who cooperate with Him will reach the goal, and that goal will become a reward to them.

Consider the example of the children of Israel. God’s intention in calling, saving and bringing them out of Egypt was to make them a kingdom of priests (Exo. 19:4-6). Every Israelite was to be a priest. But when they came to Mount Sinai, they fell short of God’s goal through worshipping the golden calf. Immediately, the goal of the priesthood became a reward for one tribe, the tribe of Levi, which stood with God. Although the other eleven tribes did not perish, they did not reach the goal of God’s salvation. The priesthood, which was the goal for every tribe, became the reward for just one tribe.

The principle is the same with us today. God’s goal is to make us all the same as His Firstborn Son. If we cooperate with God, He will work within us day by day, and every day we shall enjoy Christ to the uttermost. This is the highest enjoyment. If we have this enjoyment of Christ today, when He comes to reign, we shall enter into His reign as His co-kings and partners. This is God’s goal. But many of God’s selected ones do not cooperate with Him to such an extent today. They are missing the full enjoyment of Christ which they can have now. Although they have been saved, they have no enjoyment of Christ, living each day in the same way as those who do not have Christ. Although they belong to Christ, having Him as their life and Savior, they do not give Him the opportunity to live within them. As a result, they are missing the enjoyment of Christ today and will certainly miss the enjoyment of reigning with Him in the millennial kingdom. Due to their negligence today, they will miss the goal of God’s salvation in the coming age.