

The Salvation of the Soul

by Watchman Nee

The question we wish to bring up today is one to which many, as far as I know, have not paid attention. It is the matter of the *salvation of the soul*. Concerning salvation, we should emphasize very much that there is a great difference between the spirit and the soul. First Thesalonians 5:23 says, “Your spirit and soul and body.” This word clearly divides man into three parts. Simply put, the spirit is the part of man that fellowships with God. Lower animals do not have this; therefore, lower animals cannot worship God. The soul is the organ of man’s thought, will, and emotion. Lower animals also have this part. The soul is just the life that we have as an animal. The body is the part of man that communicates with the material world. Man is of three parts—spirit and soul and body; therefore, the meaning of salvation is that all three parts have to be saved.

First Corinthians 5:5 says, “His spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.” This speaks of the salvation of the spirit. Romans 8:23 says, “The redemption of our body.” This speaks of the salvation of the body. Today we wish to examine the salvation of the soul. We will look carefully into many places in the New Testament where the salvation of the soul is mentioned so that we may understand what the salvation of the soul is and what its significance is.

Matthew 16:24-28 says, “Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life? For the Son of Man is to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will repay each man according to his doings. Truly I say to you, There are

some of those standing here who shall by no means taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

“Then Jesus said to his disciples.” From this word, we know that the Lord Jesus spoke the following words to his disciples, not to outsiders. Since they were the disciples, they were saved people. Therefore, we should remember that the following words were spoken to saints who were already saved, not to sinners who were not saved.

“If anyone wants to come after Me.” *Anyone* means anyone among the saved ones who will come after the Lord. *Anyone* still refers to the saved disciples, those who particularly want to follow the Lord. The words *come after Me* indicate that the following words are the conditions of coming after the Lord.

“Let him deny himself.” To deny the self does not mean to conquer the self. It does not mean to ignore oneself or renounce one’s rights. To deny the self means to not follow one’s own mind in everything and to not consider oneself the center. It means putting oneself aside and seeking God’s mind. The Lord says that only this kind of person can come after Him. This is very obvious because in order to follow the Lord, one surely cannot follow himself.

“Take up his cross and follow Me.” This is even deeper than denying oneself. To deny oneself is to forget about oneself, but to take up the cross is to submit to God. To take up the cross is accepting all that God has arranged and being willing to suffer according to God’s will. If we deny the self and take up the cross, we will be able to follow the Lord.

“For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but

whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.” The word *soul-life* is *psuche* in the original text, which means “soul.” This verse speaks of the matter of saving one’s soul and losing one’s soul. This sheds light on the question we are about to examine.

“For.” This is a continuation of what was said before. The word *for* shows us that the denying of the self and the taking up of the cross to follow the Lord in the last verse is the same thing as the saving and losing of the soul spoken of here.

“For whoever wants to save his soul-life.” This means that though a person wants to follow the Lord, he is not willing to deny himself or take up the cross. From this, we can understand to some extent the meaning of saving one’s soul. It means to be unable to disregard oneself or renounce one’s rights; it means to be unable to allow oneself to suffer and submit to God. This word shows us that saving the soul is opposite to denying the self and taking up the cross. Therefore, if a man understands what it is to deny the self and take up the cross, he understands what it is to save the soul.

The Lord tells us that if a man cares for himself so much and is unwilling to deny himself, take up the cross, suffer, or submit to God, the ultimate end of saving his soul will be losing his soul. Losing the soul means to suffer ultimately, losing what one delights in and failing to receive what pleases him.

“Whoever loses his soul-life for My sake.” This is the denying of the self and taking up of the cross spoken of above. To lose the soul means the same as denying the self. The Lord reckons that if a man is willing to forsake all the pleasures of the soul for His sake and suffer according to God’s will, he “shall find” his soul. This means that whoever is willing for the Lord’s sake to forsake his own mind and what he takes pleasure in, to prohibit his heart from finding satisfaction in the things of the world, and to endure much pain and suffering, the Lord will cause him to gain what his heart takes pleasure in, obtain satisfaction, enjoy blessing, and become happy at another time.

After reading the above verse, we know what the meaning of the salvation of the soul is. This verse shows us that *salvation of the soul* means to make the soul happy, to follow what the heart desires, and to gain satisfaction. *Losing the soul* means to deprive the self of happiness, not following what the heart desires, and not having satisfaction.

Hence, to lose the soul is definitely not what we usually refer to as perdition. The Lord Jesus shows us that saving

the soul means to be unwilling to deny the self or take up the cross, and losing the soul means to be willing to deny the self and take up the cross. It is obvious that this is not related to what we commonly know as salvation or perdition. If saving the soul means gaining eternal life, why does the Lord Jesus say that one should lose the soul for His sake? If losing the soul means going to the lake of fire, is it conceivable that the Lord Jesus wants us to go to the lake of fire for His sake when He told us to lose our soul? Therefore, this verse does not refer in the slightest to the matter of gaining eternal life and going to the lake of fire. Losing the soul in the first part of the verse must mean the same as losing the soul in the second part of the verse. If we take “whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it” to mean that whoever does not deny himself shall go to the lake of fire, then the next part “whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it” would have to mean that whoever goes to the lake of fire for His sake shall find eternal life. This is absurd. Therefore, the meaning is simply that if a saved Christian will not let his soul (all his senses) suffer, his soul will certainly suffer in the future. If he is willing to

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let his soul suffer for the Lord’s sake, in the future his soul will certainly not suffer.

Moreover, if saving the soul means gaining eternal life and losing the soul means going to the lake of fire, what the Lord Jesus says here is not connected to what went before. This word was spoken to the disciples who had eternal life already. Furthermore, a non-Christian could never deny himself, take up the cross, or follow the Lord. If the Lord wanted them to gain eternal life, the Lord would certainly have told them to believe; He would definitely not have told them to deny the self in order to gain eternal life. Only one who has already gained eternal life possesses the possibility of denying the self, taking up the cross, and following the Lord. What a sinner, who is without eternal life, should do is not follow the Lord but believe in Him so that he can gain eternal life.

“What shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?” Our Lord continues to

speak of the unprofitability of a man losing his soul through saving it. He means that if a man does not deny himself, take up the cross, and closely follow Him, but acts according to the pleasure of his soul in order to give satisfaction to his soul, even to the extent of gaining the whole world, a time will come when he will lose his soul. A momentary saving of the soul with the result of losing it in the end is unprofitable in the Lord's eyes. Although a man can gain much happiness through going after his own desires, the Lord says that in the end he will lose his soul and lose all happiness. According to the Lord, gaining the soul at the end is much better than gaining the soul at the beginning. He says that there is nothing a man can exchange for the satisfaction of the soul at the end. This means that a man should lose his soul beforehand rather than to lose it at the end.

The Lord tells us that whoever will save his soul will lose it. At what time will he lose it? If a man saves his soul now, when will he lose it? The Lord says that whoever loses his soul for His sake will find it. When will this be? To answer this question, He goes on, "The Son of

The Lord's coming and His repaying particularly refer to His kingship in the kingdom because after the Lord tells us of His coming, He tells us where His coming is. Verse 28 says, "The Son of Man coming in His kingdom." Therefore, the Lord means that when He comes to earth to be king for a thousand years, some shall reign with Him, but some shall not.

The main point of this portion of the Word is that there are two kinds of disciples who have believed in the Lord and have eternal life. One kind denies the self and takes up the cross; the other kind is not willing to deny the self and take up the cross. The latter, seeking to gain the pleasures of the world for the self, are not willing to lose the soul; the former are willing to forsake all and lose their soul for the Lord's sake. A disciple is a person set apart from the sinners. But the Lord sets the self-denying disciples apart from the non-self-denying disciples. We should know that our future position in the kingdom will be determined by our deeds today. What is gained today is the same in nature as what will be gained in the future. What is lost today is also the same in

nature as what will be lost in the future. If today's gain means gaining the world and the denial of suffering, then the future's gain must be the gaining of the world and freedom from suffering. If today's loss means forsaking the world and the denial of one's own will, then the future's loss must also be losing the world and the non-fulfillment of one's own will. The Lord means that whoever receives full satisfaction from the world now will lose his reigning position with the Lord in the future. From this we see that the salvation

of the soul is very different from what we usually refer to as the salvation of the spirit (which means the salvation of gaining eternal life).

How is the spirit saved? "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). John 3 tells us that "he who believes...has eternal life" (v. 36). Once a man believes, his spirit is saved. Hence, saving the spirit means gaining eternal life. How is the soul saved? This portion of the Word tells us that only when a man loses his soul for the Lord's sake can his soul be saved. The salvation of the spirit is the gaining of eternal life, while the salvation of the soul is the gaining of the kingdom.

My spirit is saved by Jesus bearing the cross for me, whereas my soul is saved through my bearing of the cross.

The spirit is saved because Jesus denied Himself for me, while the soul is saved by my denying of my self and following the Lord.

The salvation of the spirit is based on believing. Once a

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Man is to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and *then* He will repay each man according to his doings."

His doings means his deeds in this life. His doings can be divided into two aspects: the saving of one's soul in this life and the losing of one's soul for the Lord's sake in this life. To "repay each man according to his doings" is to cause those who save their soul to lose it and to cause those who lose their soul for the Lord's sake to find it. According to the Lord's word, when will he who saves his soul lose it, and when will he who loses his soul for the Lord's sake find it? He says that it will be at the time of His coming. Therefore, we need to see clearly that if a man cares for himself now, makes himself happy, and is not willing to suffer for the Lord, at the Lord's coming he will be rebuked by the Lord, not obtain the Lord's glory, and may even weep and gnash his teeth. If a man is willing to forsake his rights now, be totally separated from the world, and faithfully submit to the will of God, at the time of the Lord's coming he will win the praise of the Lord, enjoy the joy of the Lord, and be fully satisfied in his heart and mind.

man believes, the matter is settled forever and cannot be shaken. The salvation of the soul depends upon a life-long matter and a journey that has been completed.

The salvation of the spirit is based on faith because “he who believes...has eternal life” (v. 36). The salvation of the soul is based on deeds because “He will repay each man according to his *doings*” (Matt. 16:27). Even if all the demons rise up from hell to confound me, they cannot make me perish, and even if all the angels come down from heaven to smite me, they cannot make me perish either. Even the Triune God Himself cannot make me perish. Once the spirit is saved, eternal life is assured. But the salvation of the soul cannot be settled today; it can be gained only at the time of the Lord’s second coming.

The salvation of the spirit is a matter of today because, once a man believes, he has eternal life. The salvation of the soul is experienced at the time of the coming of the Son of Man.

The salvation of the spirit is the gift of grace today because “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). The salvation of the soul is a reward. It is a reward gained at the Lord’s second coming by those who follow the Lord faithfully all their life.

For a man’s soul to be saved, he must be one whose spirit is saved first. If the spirit is not saved, there is no possibility for the soul to be saved. We often speak of the salvation of the “spirit-soul” [a Chinese idiomatic expression]; actually, according to the Bible, it is the salvation of the soul.

Mark 8:31-38

The record in Mark 8:31-38 is largely the same as in Matthew, but there is a little difference, which I shall now point out.

“Whoever will lose his soul-life for My sake and the gospel’s shall save it” (v. 35). Here three words are added: *and the gospel’s*. Most people think that this refers to those who preach the gospel for the Lord. But if this is the case, would it not mean that only the soul of the preachers will be saved? It does not say “the preaching of the gospel’s”; it only says “the gospel’s.” What gospel is this gospel? It is the gospel spoken of in Mark 1:1: “The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” This gospel is the great salvation mentioned in Hebrews 2:3-4, which is “in leading many sons into glory” (v. 10). This is not the gospel of leaving Egypt and being freed from the slavery of sin; it is the gospel of entering into Canaan to receive glory.

“Loses his soul-life for My sake” (Matt. 16:25) is the result of being constrained by love. To “lose his soul-life for...the gospel’s [sake]” (Mark 8:35) is for the benefit of one’s own future, which is for the sake of the kingdom.

“Whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation” (v. 38). This indicates that he who is not willing to lose his soul-life is not willing to suffer for the Lord and His words in this age. In an adulterous and sinful generation, witnessing for the Lord’s words indeed requires the losing of the soul. Unless a man really loses his soul, he cannot, in such a generation, witness for the Lord, much less shamelessly witness for Him. Many of God’s children are never willing, nor do they dare, to witness before man for the Lord who purchased them. The reason is that they want to save their faces and are afraid of others’ ridicule. This is to save one’s soul in this life. Such a person will definitely suffer loss at the time of the kingdom. Everyone who is not willing to lose his soul in this age will not see the glory of the Lord. Everyone who will be a co-king with

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the Lord will have to lose his soul. Everyone who loses his soul in this age will find it in the coming age.

Luke 17:26-37

“Even as it happened in the days of Noah, so will it be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day in which Noah entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, even as it happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day in which Lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be in the same way on the day in which the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who will be on the housetop and his goods in the house, let him not come down to take them away; and he who is in the field, likewise, let him not turn back to the things behind. Remember Lot’s wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his soul-life will lose it, and whoever loses it will preserve it alive. I tell you, In that

night there will be two on one bed; the one will be taken and the other will be left. There will be two women grinding together; the one will be taken but the other will be left. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left. And they answered and said to Him, Where, Lord? And He said to them, Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered together.”

These verses tell us the time when the soul is either saved or lost. The words in verses 34 through 35, “I tell you, In that night there will be two on one bed; the one will be taken and the other will be left. There will be two women grinding together; the one will be taken but the other will be left,” refer to the time of *rapture*. The difference here is that one will be raptured and one will be left. The word *taken* means to be *raptured* to heaven (Gen. 5:24); therefore, what is spoken of in verse 33, “Whoever seeks to preserve his soul-life will lose it, and whoever loses it will preserve it alive,” means that whoever saves his soul in this age will be left behind at the appearing of the Son of Man; whoever loses his soul in this age will be raptured at the appearing of the Son of

A Christian believer who saves his soul in this age, gaining the joy of ears and eyes and the happiness of the heart and mind, will lose joy and happiness in the coming age.

Man. There is no difference between the two persons, neither any difference in their work nor any difference in the place. But in the matter of rapture, there is a difference. In an instant, there will be a tremendous difference.

This is a sober matter. If we wish to be raptured, to see the Lord and enter into the kingdom, we must first lose the soul in this age. We must forsake the world for the Lord’s sake and forsake everything that is not in accord with the Lord’s will; we must abandon all that entangles us and hinders our heart from going upward. If we want to save our soul and cannot bear to forsake everything, we will, like Lot’s wife, not be able to arrive at the place where the Lord will rapture us, even though we will not perish in Sodom and Gomorrah together with the sinners. There may not be any difference in gaining salvation and receiving eternal life, but there has to be a difference in the matter of the rapture.

Luke 12:15-21

What is the meaning of losing the soul? We can find the

explanation from reading Luke 12:15-21: “He said to them, Watch and guard yourself from all covetousness, for no one’s life is in the abundance of his possessions. And He told them a parable, saying, The land of a certain rich man brought forth abundantly. And he reasoned in himself, saying, What shall I do, for I have no place where I may gather my crops? And he said, I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and I will gather there all my wheat and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; rest, eat, drink, be merry. But God said to him, Foolish one, this night they are requiring your soul from you; and the things which you have prepared, whose will they be? So is he who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

We can say that “to gain the soul” is to let the soul gain satisfaction and happiness and to let the soul have enjoyment, while “to lose the soul” is to let the soul be sorrowful, painful, and poor. Because of the abundance of his food and his goods, the soul of this rich man is already happy and satisfied in this age. He has already given his soul enjoyment; he has gained his soul in this age.

Therefore, to gain the soul is to let the soul have happiness in this age, and to lose the soul is to leave nothing for the soul in this age. Our eyes see, our ears hear, and our hands and feet touch; but the one that is conscious of the happiness in them is the soul.

The soul is the seat of our natural desires. The soul causes us to have sentiments and enjoyment. The desires of the soul strongly demand satisfaction. Beautiful music can soothe emotions; literature and philosophy can elevate thoughts. But if we gain satisfaction from these things in this age, we will lose satisfaction in the coming age. If we have already gained the comfort given by these things in this age, we will lose the glory of the kingdom in the coming age.

Therefore, the one who saves his soul in this age is a Christian believer who has gained in this age the joy of ears and eyes and the happiness of the heart and mind; in the coming age he will lose such joy and happiness. Whoever gains that which belongs to this age will not gain that which belongs to the coming age. If a man loses in this age, he will have gain in the coming age. We should now understand the meaning of the salvation of the soul. To gain all the glory, joy, and satisfaction in the kingdom is to gain the soul; to lose all the glory, joy, and satisfaction in the kingdom is to lose the soul.

After we are saved, we cannot be unsaved. But our deeds have much to do with our position in the kingdom. What

are you now pursuing? It is very difficult for the young ones to forsake the pleasures of the world. Many want to get satisfaction from housing, food, clothing, and entertainment. This is to save their soul today; hence, they will surely lose their soul in the future. A saved person will not go to hell, but in the kingdom there are blessings that he will miss!

The Lord does not teach us asceticism. However, the Lord does not want us to be attracted by these things. These things are all legitimate, but legitimate things are not all profitable. Therefore, Paul says, "All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable" (1 Cor. 10:23). Whether clothing, food, or housing, you should not have the consciousness that you are enjoying something. Instead, you should realize that these things are just good for glorifying God. Whenever you have any enjoyment, there is a problem. All that gives enjoyment to your soul saves your soul. The important thing is that one should not enjoy any kind of happiness that is not proper.

The one who loves the world is the one who saves his soul. But sin has entered the world. You should not, therefore, gain anything from this sinful world.

Matthew 10:34-39

Verse 34: "Do not think that I come to bring peace on the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." Why did the Lord say this? It was because people held the concept that He came to bring peace to the earth. To counter such a thought, He told them clearly, "I have not come to bring peace."

Later we shall see that *peace* here refers not to the absence of war but to a situation in the family.

"I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." The sword here does not refer to a sword used in battle; neither does it refer to causing warfare on earth. In the original text it means to cast a sword to the earth. Many people do recognize this fact. In Luke 2:35 Simeon said to Mary, "A sword will pierce through your own soul also." The word *sword* here signifies that we will not be happy throughout our entire lifetime and that something like a sword will pierce through our hearts and cause us to suffer. What the Lord meant is that He came not for our blessing but to cause us hurt.

Verse 35: "For I have come to set men at variance: a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." This verse begins with the word *for*. This indicates that this verse explains the last verse; that is, it explains what it means "to bring...a sword." Initially, there was a sweet relationship between father and son; now, there is alienation. The

daughter is against the mother, and the daughter-in-law is against the mother-in-law.

Verse 36: "A man's enemies will be those of his household." There are enemies and there is bitterness. The loved ones within one's family have turned against him and have hurt him. Within the family there is enmity and malice.

Verse 37: "He who loves father or mother above Me is *not worthy* of Me; and he who loves son or daughter above Me is *not worthy* of Me." *Not worthy* is mentioned twice in this verse. Have you ever wondered why one should love the Lord above his parents and children? If you love just one person in this whole world more than you love the Lord, you cannot be His disciple. You can be His disciple only on the condition that you love Him wholly. This is the condition for becoming the Lord's disciple. You cannot love equally the Lord and men at the same time; this is not possible.

Verse 38: "He who does not take his cross and follow

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after Me is *not worthy* of Me." This verse sums up what has been said before—this is a cross! What is it to take the cross? The Lord did not say, "He who does not take up his burden and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." He said, "He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." A burden is not a cross. Burdens are unavoidable; taking the cross is optional.

How the first cross was, so will the hundreds and thousands of crosses thereafter be. Just as the first cross was the Lord's *choosing*, the crosses should be something that we *choose*.

Some people think that when they are in difficulties or in want, they are bearing the cross. Actually, this is not so, because even if they were not believers, situations like these may naturally happen to them. Every cross must be of our own *choosing*. However, we must be careful that we do not create a cross for ourselves. We ought to *take* the cross, not *make* a cross.

It is a fallacy to regard everything which befalls us as a

cross. It is just as wrong to create a cross by producing our own suffering. None of these are bearing the cross in reality.

What then is the cross? It must correspond to what the Lord Jesus said, “My Father, . . . Your will be done” (26:42). The Lord asked the Father to not do according to what the Son wills but according to what the Father wills; this is the cross. To take the cross is to *choose* the Father’s will. Let me say an honest word: if we do not choose the cross daily, there will be no cross for us to take. If the Lord were to wait for the cross to come to Him before He would bear it, how could a cross go to Him in heaven? The Lord chose the cross! He “emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross.” The Lord said, “No one takes it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again” (John 10:18). Accordingly, our cross must also be out of *our own choice*.

If, on account of the Lord,
we choose not to pursue the
things that we naturally enjoy and
the things that we earnestly desire, we are
losing our soul-life for the Lord’s sake.

Concerning the necessities of life, we also have a choice. We can choose what to wear, what to eat, and how to dwell. However, we should seek these things only to the extent of meeting our physical needs. If our emotion expects to derive pleasure and satisfaction from these necessities, we are not taking the cross. We cannot impose on others what sort of dress to wear, what kind of food to eat, or what type of house to live in. Nevertheless, whoever intends to be satisfied through these things is not bearing the cross. No one dares to say what one should or should not have, but everyone should ask himself whether or not his clothing, food, and shelter are, in fact, affording pleasure and satisfaction to his soul.

Anything that is for the supply of our needs, God sanctions. Clothing, food, and shelter are all necessary. Even the Old Testament shows us how God provided for the children of Israel. He was mindful of their needs, yet He never intended that His children should indulge in those things. If we indulge ourselves in the matters of clothing, food and shelter, we are not taking the cross.

Too often people dress and eat not to protect their body, or to fill their hunger, but for sheer pleasure. Indeed, our physical needs must be met. But we should not gratify our emotion and its demands in the least.

Does God really interfere with man’s clothing, eating, dwelling, and all his dealings? Yes, He does. And this constitutes the cross. Let us cite an example. When Adam was in the garden of Eden, whatever he needed was supplied to him. He could freely eat of every tree, but he was not to eat of one tree, that is, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If one were to eat of that tree, not because he wanted to satisfy his need, but because the fruits were pleasant to the sight, good for food, and enabled one to know good and evil, that would be a lust. God allows whatever is within the bounds of the necessities of our human living and nothing more. Clothing, food, shelter, and all such things of the world must be for the purpose of supplying our *needs*, not for gratifying our *lust*! Regarding these matters, we should live absolutely according to God’s will. If we do not, we may ill-treat our own bodies according to the self-will of

our flesh and may esteem ourselves holier than others when, in fact, we are practicing the doctrine of asceticism mentioned in Colossians 2, which is “not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh” (v. 23). At the same time, we should remember that God has not allowed us to indulge in the things of this world.

Verse 39: “He who finds his soul-life shall lose it, and he who loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.” This verse concludes this portion

of the Word. What is it to take the cross? It is to lose the soul-life for the Lord’s sake and to be in sorrow and distress for the Lord’s sake. Those who refuse to be sorrowful and do not restrain their emotions, choosing rather to gratify their souls, will lose their soul-lives. To lose the soul-life for the Lord’s sake is to deny the soul its satisfaction, requests, and desires. If, on account of the Lord, we choose not to pursue the things that we naturally enjoy and the things that we earnestly desire, we are losing our soul-life for the Lord’s sake.

The meaning of gaining the soul-life today must be the same as the meaning of gaining the soul-life in the coming age. Likewise, the meaning of losing the soul-life today must be the same as the meaning of losing the soul-life in the coming age. The meaning in both cases must be the same.

To lose the soul-life for the Lord’s sake means not allowing the soul to have satisfaction and enjoyment in this age. To lose the soul-life in the coming age means that the soul will not find satisfaction and enjoyment in the

kingdom. In that day, there shall be a kind of people whose soul-life will be satisfied and another kind whose soul-life will not be satisfied. Whoever has satisfied his soul-life in this age and has had all things his way, having taken a supply in excess of his needs and having enjoyed a great many things, will not find anything in the coming kingdom. Whoever loses all these things in this age for the Lord's sake will be satisfied by God in the kingdom. Everyone who overcomes the world will definitely have satisfaction in the kingdom.

The salvation of the spirit is determined at the time we believed on the Lord. The salvation of the soul is determined by how we walk in this age. If you dress, eat, make friends, and do everything the way you like, I will tell you by the Lord's authority that you will have no share of the glory in the kingdom. The Gospel of Luke says, "Blessed are those who weep now....Woe to you who are satiated now" (6:21, 25). Why is it woe to those who are full? It is because they have already been filled. Why are those who weep now blessed? It is because they shall be filled in the coming age. Herein lies the distinction between woe and blessing.

Luke 14:25-35

Verse 25: "There were great crowds going along with Him, and He turned and said to them..." Why was there a great crowd with Jesus? It is because He had just preached the gospel by means of a parable (vv. 16-24). And just like the parable, many were invited, and whoever would eat came. The "many" are the Christians. It is a joy to be saved, and it is wonderful to continue in the enjoyment of God's grace. But to the very people who were with Him, the Lord turned and had a further word for them. He meant, "Yes, you are saved, but to follow Me there is a condition." The Lord raised the standard of the truth. Even such a great crowd was not enough reason for Him to lower the standard that God had prescribed. Therefore, though the truths concerning the kingdom and the kingship be high, we should not refrain from speaking them on account of men.

The gate that opens to salvation through faith in Jesus is wide, but the gate that opens to following the Lord and being glorified with Him is narrow. "Him who comes to Me I shall by no means cast out" (John 6:37). This is to be saved. However, to follow the Lord and be His disciple, there are certain conditions.

Verse 26: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and moreover, even his own soul-life, he *cannot* be My disciple." The Lord brought up the matter of the soul-life again. First He mentioned the father,

mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters. Finally, He mentioned the soul-life. If man would only not value his soul-life, all would be well. We should lay aside anything that brings our soul delight and pleasure.

The Lord did not say that you should cast out your father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters; rather, He said to do away with your natural life, that is, to channel all the love you have for these things to Him. This is absolutely necessary. When anyone follows Him, He specifically sets this huge obstacle in front of them. If they are able to go through it, they can go through anything in the future. The Lord does not wait for them to come through the gate before placing the obstacle before them; He makes it difficult right from the start. They are qualified to be His disciples only if they get through.

After the Lord has saved a person, He lays down this condition at the gate. He does not give one the condition after he has become a Christian for three or five years. Whether or not one can be His disciple is determined from the very beginning.

The salvation of the soul is determined by how we walk in this age. If we dress, eat, make friends, and do everything the way we like, we will have no share of the glory in the kingdom.

Verse 27: "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." This verse explains the foregoing verses, which are on the bearing of the cross.

Following this, the Lord speaks of three parables, which explain the matter of the bearing of the cross.

The Parable of Building a Tower— Verses 28 through 30

Verse 28: "Which of you, wanting to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" When the Lord spoke of "calculating the cost," do we not take it to mean that we should just forget about the building of this tower if we do not have the money? If that is the case, does it mean that He has not called many to follow Him? If they do not have sufficient funds, does it mean that they should give up building the tower? No, they should not give up, for if everyone were to put in every single penny he has, it would definitely be sufficient, and no one would dare to

say that he does not have enough. What the Lord was saying was that when a man wants to build a tower, it is a question of whether or not he is willing to put in *all* his money for the building. For example, if five hundred dollars is required to build a tower, but the man is willing to put in only three hundred, keeping the remaining two hundred, one cannot say that his funds are inadequate. It is inadequate only because a portion of his money is kept for some other use. If one keeps back a portion of his love for others, he will not be able to love Christ. He must hate his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters and must turn his heart away from them. The Lord does not ask how much you have given Him; He asks if you have given Him your all.

Verses 29 through 30: “Lest perhaps, once he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all those looking on will begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish.” This is the end of him who would not wholly love the Lord. He can only lay a foundation without building the tower, because he is holding back something from the Lord.

To be the Lord’s disciple, one must renounce all that he has. He cannot hold on to the world with one hand and hold on to the Lord with the other. He must abandon one—either the world or Christ.

The Parable of War— Verses 31 through 32

Verse 31: “What king, going to engage another king in war, will not first sit down and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet the one coming against him with twenty thousand?” This does not mean that ten thousand soldiers are all the king has; it means *only* ten thousand *are mobilized*. If he is willing to send out the entire nation, he will certainly win.

Verse 32: “Otherwise, while he is yet at a distance, he sends an envoy and asks for the terms of peace.” This means that if he is not willing to mobilize the entire force, it would be better for him to ask for terms of peace while there is still time and acknowledge defeat.

If everyone is willing to give his *all*, whether to build a tower or fight a battle, it will be enough; if everyone holds back a portion, it will come short. Suppose I go into the Bible Society with sixty cents, and the book I want costs sixty cents. If I pay ten cents for it, it will

be inadequate. If I pay fifty-nine cents and keep one cent, it will still be inadequate. Whosoever does not bear his cross and follow after the Lord surely is not worthy of being, and cannot be, His disciple.

Whoever loves the world a little is not fit for the kingdom. But even those whose hands are on the plow are not fit for the kingdom if they look back.

It is not a question of being sufficient or insufficient but a question of whether or not we have given our all. This is the cross. We must bear the cross. We must put our all on the cross. Some may ask, how do you know that this parable teaches us to lay our all on the cross? We know it from the Lord’s own word in the next verse.

Verse 33: “In the same way therefore everyone of you who does not forsake all his own possessions cannot be My disciple.” This verse is a continuation of the previous verse. The Lord said that the problem with the above two cases was not that they did not have but that they would not renounce all they had. Often we cannot make up our mind; we want both. On the one hand, we love the world; on the other hand, we love the Lord. We cannot give ourselves to absolutely love the Lord, and yet we are ashamed to absolutely love the world for fear of offending the Lord. There is the unwillingness to commit everything for the building, and yet there is also a sense of misgiving if we do not at least put in a certain amount. The result of this is to lay a little of the foundation and leave the tower unfinished. If there is not the willingness to mobilize the entire force, one can only leave some to defeat or send an envoy to negotiate for peace. Those who are this way should not even consider being the Lord’s disciples. To be His disciple, one must renounce all that he has. He cannot hold on to the world with one hand and hold on to the Lord with the other. He must abandon one—either the world or Christ.

The Parable of Salt— Verses 34 through 35

This parable shows us the outcome of the two kinds of persons previously mentioned. According to Matthew 5:13, which says, “You are the salt of the earth,” the salt refers to the Christian.

Verse 34: “Therefore salt is good; but if even the salt becomes tasteless, with what will its saltiness be restored?” Salt is good and is beneficial to men. Taste signifies separation. It is most important that a Christian be separated from others. If the salt becomes tasteless, nothing will restore its saltiness. Suppose someone buys a piece of meat and wants to season it with salt. If he has

the meat but has no salt, there is still the possibility of having the savor; but if he has both the meat and the salt, yet the salt has lost its taste, there is no possibility of having the savor.

Verse 35: "It is fit neither for the land nor for the manure pile; they will throw it out." If we lose our taste, that is, if we are not separated, the consequence will be what is in this verse; we will be thrown out.

The land signifies the kingdom. It is not fit to put the Christian who has lost his taste into God's kingdom.

The "manure pile" is a filthy and unclean place; it signifies Gehenna, which is the lake of fire. Neither is it fit to put the Christian who has lost his taste into the lake of fire, because he is already saved.

"They will throw it out." Since he is fit neither for the kingdom nor for the lake of fire, he is cast out, that is, cast outside of the glory of the kingdom.

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear." This is a warning. Anything that severs us from Christ also causes us to lose our taste. To preserve the taste is to have strength; to lose the taste is to lose strength. This is a serious matter! We must not love the world; we must wholly love the Lord. Otherwise, the kingdom will have nothing to do with us. It is not a question of how much we have done. Rather, is our all on the altar? Today is the time for consecration to the Lord; to consecrate on that day will be too late.

These three parables depict the life of a believer who is not willing to lose his soul-life in this age. The reason for his unwillingness to give his all to build and fight and the reason for his becoming tasteless salt as a consequence of mingling with the world is that he loves his own soul-life. He cannot bear to have the self suffer. He is not willing to forsake the pleasures of this world. He can only care for the present age because he has but a dim vision of the glory of the coming kingdom. If we are willing to renounce the demands of our soul, deny the self, bear the cross, and do God's will, it will not be difficult for us to build, fight, or hate our father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters. It will not even be difficult to be completely separated from the world and be the salt with taste. If we do not lose our soul-life but walk according to our likes and dislikes in this age and if our consecration is not thorough, we shall be thrown out during the kingdom age and be mocked as those not befitting the Lord's discipleship.

Luke 21:5-19

By reading through Luke 21:5-19, we know that this

portion of the Word also speaks concerning the salvation of the soul. "In your *endurance you will possess your souls*" (v. 19). I have said before that the Bible always mentions faith when it talks about our salvation. However, here it says that by your endurance you will gain your souls. Hence, there must be a difference between the salvation of the soul and the salvation of the spirit.

If I remember correctly, the Gospel of John mentions the matter of receiving eternal life through faith on thirty-five occasions. In the whole New Testament, justification by faith, receiving eternal life by faith, and salvation through faith are mentioned one hundred fifty times. Here, however, it mentions endurance. To endure is not to believe; *it is a work*. So the salvation of the soul is very different from the receiving of eternal life.

Let us see how these verses talk about the salvation of the soul. Verses 5 through 7 say, "As some were speaking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and consecrated offerings, He said, As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in

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which there will not be left a stone upon a stone which will not be thrown down. And they questioned Him, saying, Teacher, when therefore will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" The temple is the holy temple in Jerusalem. *You* refers to the disciples. *These things* in verse 7 refers to what the Lord Jesus said in verse 6: "The days will come in which there will not be left a stone upon a stone which will not be thrown down." This signifies the coming destruction of the temple. Take note of verse 7. The questions asked are very similar to those in chapter 24 of Matthew; nevertheless, there is a difference. Let us compare the two.

Matthew 24:3: "As He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, Tell us, When will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your *coming* and of *the consummation of the age*?" Matthew is concerned not only with the destruction of Jerusalem but also with the Lord's coming and the completion of the age. Luke 21 is concerned only with the matter of Jerusalem's destruction. In Luke the disciples asked

when these things (Jerusalem's destruction) would be and what would be the sign before these things take place. They did not ask anything about the Lord's coming back or the completion of the age. We should remember that three things were asked in Matthew. The first was, "When will these things be?" The second and the third were, "What will be the sign of Your coming and of the consummation of the age?" Only one thing was asked in Luke, that is, when would these things be and what would be the sign before these things take place? The questions recorded in Luke are identical to the first question in Matthew.

The destruction of Jerusalem was fulfilled in A.D. 70. The Lord's word about there not being one stone left upon another was fulfilled.

Verses 8 through 9: "He said, See that you are not led astray, for many will come in My name, saying, I am the Christ! and, The time has drawn near! Do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified, for these things must take place first; but the

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end does not come immediately." This is what the Lord instructed the disciples to watch for at the time when Jerusalem would be destroyed. Church history can attest to the fact that when the Lord ascended, some did come in His name saying, "I am the Christ." The Lord meant that when some come claiming to be Christ and when the disciples hear of wars and revolutions, they must realize that the end has not yet come.

Verses 10 through 12: "Then He said to them, Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. But before all these things they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for the sake of My name." All these were fulfilled during the age of the apostles. They were apprehended, persecuted, scourged, and imprisoned, and they were brought before kings and governors.

Verse 13: "It will turn out to you for a testimony." They

suffered so much, yet those sufferings became the very occasions for them to testify. They testified in synagogues, before Felix, and before those in Rome.

Verses 14 through 18: "Settle it therefore in your hearts not to take thought beforehand how to reply in defense, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all those opposing you will not be able to resist or refute. And you will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all because of My name, yet a hair of your head shall by no means perish." Here the Lord prophesied concerning what they would experience.

Verse 19: "In your *endurance you will possess your souls.*" The disciples are held responsible for this last matter. When all these sufferings and persecutions come, they must endure; in this way they will possess their souls.

To possess the soul means to reign with the Lord and share in His glory when He comes. If possessing the soul means the same as receiving eternal life, then the words *possess your soul* in verse 19 do not make sense. It is saying that if, in the midst of extreme hardship, we are able to endure, we will possess our soul. Through faith we have eternal life and are saved. But here we are told that to possess our soul we need to endure all these sufferings.

John 12:25

John 12:25 says, "He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life." The Lord says here that it is possible for one to lose his soul-life. One loses his soul-life only because he loves it.

What is it to love the soul-life? It means to gratify our desires and to please our emotions. For example, the Lord calls us to stay away from a certain matter; if we want to obey Him, we must lay down our self. Each time we want to obey the Lord, we must lay down the self. If we seek to do His will while loving our soul-life, we will fail. Perhaps the Lord wants us to drop something that we enjoy doing or give up a person or an object we like. If we love our soul-life, we will not succeed. Many times we are entangled with a person, thing, or matter. Many are beset by friends; they would rather have the friends than lose the soulish enjoyment in this age.

We recognize that many of the bad things are sins. However, we do not realize that we can be entangled also by the things we normally enjoy. We are aware that money is too base and contemptible a thing to be

mentioned, yet many cannot part with it. Even a dress or a meal may ensnare a person. Why is it so difficult for man not to love his soul-life? Because not loving the soul-life means to cause it to suffer, while loving the soul-life means not to allow it to suffer. Such a person, however, will undoubtedly lose his soul-life because he has already cared for his soul-life and allowed it to enjoy!

When does one lose his soul-life? It will be when the Lord establishes His kingdom. Whoever loves his soul-life in this age will not enjoy glory or reign with the Lord at that time. To have eternal life through faith is certain. But to reign as a king and ensure that the soul-life will find enjoyment in the millennium requires that we do not love our soul-life today.

God gives Christians a choice between the kingdom and the world. Do we choose the kingdom? Or do we choose the world? How sad that although a sinner prefers heaven, many Christians prefer to have the world! We think that it is good enough to be saved, yet after we are saved, God still puts the coming kingdom before us for us to choose.

Those who are full now will not be filled in glory; they will lose their enjoyment. The Lord said that whoever loves himself shall lose his soul-life; whoever hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life. Our soul is linked to the world. To love the soul in this world means to care for ourselves in this world. Good food, nice clothing, friends, happiness, compliments, fame—all are desirable. However, they nourish the soul-life as food nourishes us. To nourish the soul-life now is to lose the soul-life in the kingdom.

To lose the soul-life is not to be cast into hell. It is to cause the soul to suffer in that it cannot reign with the Lord. In the kingdom age the Lord will assign ten cities or five cities for us to rule. According to the Old Testament prophets, this will be such a pleasant time. How pleasant it will be to rule ten cities or five cities in such an atmosphere! However, whoever has already gained his soul-life in this world shall lose his soul-life in the kingdom. This is serious! Whoever is full now and has satisfied his soul-life in the present age will not gain anything in the kingdom. I have said this many times, and I will keep saying it: to hate the soul-life in this world is to not allow the soul-life to have satisfaction and enjoyment in this age. It is to turn your back to the world and your face to God and to be armed with a will to suffer, whatever the situation may be. If one does this, he will gain his soul-life in the kingdom. If you gain something here, it follows that you will lose something there. Either you gain or you lose. To gain today is to suffer loss in the future. To gain in the future, you must suffer loss today.

Once a person believes, it is definite that he has eternal life, and it is definite that every believer will be in the New Jerusalem. But before heaven and earth pass away, some believers will have no part in the kingdom. “He who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.” Therefore, please pay attention to this: the Lord hates two things. First, He hates our sins; second, He hates our soul-life, which is just our self. Because the Lord hates our sins, He died for us. By believing in Him, we receive eternal life. Because the Lord hates our soul-life, He wants to do away with it (that is, to eliminate the soulish life, not the function of the soul).

Here is the difference between the soul-life and sins: whatever the soul desires may not be sinful. Lying, pride, jealousy, etc., are sins. But to wear what you should not wear or eat what you should not eat is the soul-life. Nice clothing, good food, and extravagant spending cannot be considered sinful, but they certainly gratify the soul.

Madame Guyon was one who was very deep in the Lord during the seventeenth century. She clearly realized the

The Lord hates two things: He hates our sins, and He hates our soul-life, which is just our self. Because the Lord hates our sins, He died for us. Because the Lord hates our soul-life, He wants to do away with it.

difference between sins and the soul-life. She did not express it in the same way we do, yet her experiences verified the same thing. She was born and raised in France; her family was related to the class of nobility, and she had the title of *Madame*. Each time she visited Paris, she was fearful because she knew very well that her heart would be moved by the things she saw. Later, she overcame this. However, she became fearful of another thing: to look into the mirror. She was very attractive; the more she looked at herself in the mirror, the more she was conscious of her beauty. She even thought that when she walked, she carried herself far more gracefully than all the other women. This is the soul-life. The soul is man’s natural nature, that is, the nature he has as a creature.

If a person puts away the soul-life and overcomes it, he can enter the kingdom. The reason God does not allow us to indulge ourselves in the matter of clothing, food, and shelter in this age is that these things have already been infected with the world. To possess these things is to be contaminated with the world. Today even a dress

or a meal readily causes us to fall into the world. However, when we are in the kingdom, no matter how much we appreciate the beautiful scenery, it will cause us only to praise God's creation the more. Even the appreciation of ourselves at that time will only motivate us to praise God for His salvation. There will be no trace of sin in the kingdom because Satan will be bound and sin will not be in this world.

When God's Son was on the earth, the only thing He took was the cross; the rest was borrowed. The manger was borrowed; the inn was borrowed; the donkey that carried Him into Jerusalem was borrowed; and the room where they kept the Passover feast was borrowed. Finally, even the tomb was borrowed. He had nothing that was not borrowed. How different we are from Him!

Those who overcome the world go to the kingdom. This is certain. God is calling us for this one thing—to not love the world and desire only the kingdom. He wants us to hate our self and seek after the kingdom.

We either shrink back to ruin or come forward to the saving of the soul. Only a Christian has the possibility of shrinking back. A believer should be rewarded for his works on earth, but because he shrinks back, all is lost.

Hebrews 10:38-39

Verse 38: "My righteous one shall live by faith." The righteous ones here are we who have been saved through faith in Jesus. For the righteous ones to live by faith means that those who are saved shall live by faith day by day. Many have asked me, "If justification is by faith, and the justified ones still have to live by faith, are there then two faiths?" Well, I shall talk about the second faith later. For now, just remember that every justified person must live by faith.

"If he shrinks back, My soul does not delight in him." *He* refers to the righteous one: "If he shrinks back." Only a believer has the possibility of shrinking back. Although a justified person is saved, it is still possible for him to shrink back. *My* refers to God. God has no pleasure in a justified person who shrinks back.

Verse 39: "We are not of those who shrink back to ruin but of them who have faith to the gaining of the soul." What happens when one shrinks back? He shrinks back to ruin. Believers have eternal life and shall not perish.

However, it is still possible for us to shrink back to ruin. What is ruin? It means that everything has become vain, destroyed, and finished. But we are "of them who have faith to the gaining of the soul." Here again, this word speaks of the salvation of the soul. To shrink back is to shrink back to ruin; to come forward is to come forward to the saving of the soul. We either shrink back to ruin or come forward to the saving of the soul.

Some think that since "shrink back to ruin" sounds so unpleasant, it must not refer to Christians. However, only a Christian has the possibility of shrinking back. Sinners have nowhere to shrink back to. Where can they shrink back to? Whoever does not believe in the Son, his sins are condemned already. Only a Christian has the possibility of shrinking back. A believer should actually be rewarded for his works on earth. But because he shrinks back, all is lost. Although he has preached the word in the Lord's name, cast out demons in the Lord's name, and performed many miracles, the Lord will not acknowledge any of those. Instead, He will say to him, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matt. 7:23).

However, "we are not of those who shrink back to ruin but of them who have faith to the gaining of the soul." Here it speaks of the salvation of the soul through faith. What is this faith? What is meant by *but of them who have faith to the gaining of the soul*? Let us read Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the *substantiation of things* hoped for, *the conviction of things not seen*." This is the faith for the salvation of the soul. This is the faith that the righteous ones live by. Chapter 11 should immediately follow the last verse of chapter 10. This faith is "the substantiation of things hoped for"; it is not the faith in Jesus. This faith can save your soul. This faith is "the conviction of things not seen"; it is not faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel of John mentions many times that one receives eternal life by believing in the Son. Those instances refer to the faith in the Lord. Here *faith* refers to a *thing*.

What is the thing? Let us read Hebrews 11:13-16: "All these died in faith, not receiving the promises but seeing them from afar and joyfully greeting them and confessing that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth. For those who say such things make it manifest that they seek after a country of their own. And if indeed they continued to remember that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return; but as it is, they long after a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them." Have we seen it? What does it say this faith is? It

is believing that God has prepared a city for them in the kingdom; it is believing that they are but strangers and sojourners on this earth, that this earth is not their country, and that everything they have is in the future and not in this present age. A city standing firmly cannot fall. The righteous ones believe in this daily, and they live by this faith. The soul is saved by this faith. Unfortunately, many believers forget that they are merely strangers and sojourners on the earth!

James 1:17-21

Verses 17 through 18: "All good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variation or shadow cast by turning. He brought us forth by the word of truth, purposing that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." Verse 17 mentions the gift; verse 18 says that God brought us forth by the word of truth so that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. These two verses go together. Verse 17 says that God gave a gift; verse 18 says that this gift is the eternal life that God has given us. This shows that those who received this Epistle of James already had the gift. They were already the firstfruits; they had already been brought forth of God by the word of truth and were already saved.

Verses 19 through 21: "You know this, my beloved brothers; but let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God. Therefore putting away all filthiness and the abundance of malice, receive in meekness the implanted word, which is *able to save your souls*." That the hearers were addressed in verse 19 as the beloved brothers proves that they were saved already. It is as if James is saying, "You know that you have been regenerated and are saved, but this is not enough; you still need to 'receive in meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.'" James shows us very clearly that even though a man is regenerated, his soul is not yet saved; he still needs to receive the word that is able to save his soul. The salvation of the soul is a matter that comes after regeneration. If a person is not regenerated, it is not possible for his soul to be saved. God has preached to us the word, which is the gospel of the kingdom. Now we must lose our soul-life today. I have already mentioned that there are many things that we ourselves are unable to do. However, if we are willing to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, He can do these things for us. Gaining the soul is similar to gaining eternal life. Whoever will, may certainly drink freely the water of life. Nevertheless, if one is not willing to come to the Lord, He has no way to save him. Likewise, if we are not willing to lose our soul-life, neither will the Lord put us

into the kingdom. We must ask the Lord to bring us to the point where we are willing to lose our soul-life; then the Lord can have a way.

1 Peter 1:3-9

Verses 3 through 4: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has *regenerated* us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, kept in the heavens for you." These two verses tell us that those who received this Epistle have been saved.

Verse 5: "Who are being guarded by the power of God *through faith* unto a *salvation* ready to be *revealed at the last time*." What is the faith referred to here? It is the same faith that the righteous live by in Hebrews 10:38. Although they are saved, they still have not obtained the salvation that is ready to be revealed at the last time. It is good to be regenerated, but it is not sufficient. We still need to gain the salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.

The final end of every saved person is the same, but in the kingdom there are differences. It is true that once we believe in the Lord, we are saved. But our soul also must be saved.

Verses 6 through 8: "In which time you exult, though for a little while at present, if it must be, you have been made sorrowful by various trials, so that the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory." These verses say that because of the salvation that is to come, one is able to rejoice in spite of the various trials.

Verse 9: "Receiving the *end of your faith*, the *salvation of your souls*." Again, this verse clearly speaks of the salvation of the soul. Peter is also one who says that those who have been regenerated need a further salvation, the salvation of the soul. When will one receive this salvation? It will be received *at the last time*, which is the time of the Lord's manifestation on the earth. The final end of every saved person is the same, but in the kingdom there are differences. It is true that once we believe in the Lord, we are saved. But our soul also must be saved.

1 Peter 4:17-19

First Peter 4:17-19 says, "It is time for the judgment to begin from the house of God; and if first from us, what will be the end of those who disobey the gospel of God? And if the *righteous man is saved only with difficulty*, where will the ungodly and sinner appear? So then let those also who *suffer according to the will of God* commit *their souls* in well-doing to a faithful Creator." Let us lay hold of God's word. We are God's house already. Yet judgment begins from the house of God. Some of the righteous ones are scarcely saved! So, brothers and sisters, we must suffer according to the will of God and commit our souls to the faithful Creator! We must not hold back anything for the soul-life or allow the soul-life to have enjoyment. Rather, let us suffer according to the will of God.

2 Peter 1:10-11

"Therefore, brothers, be the more diligent to make your

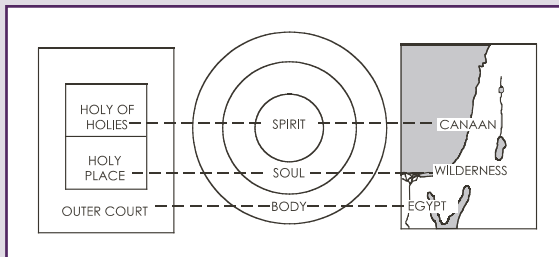
calling and selection firm, for doing these things you shall by no means ever stumble. For in this way *the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly and bountifully supplied to you.*"

The fact that these ones were called brothers shows that they were saved. However, they still needed to be more diligent to make their calling and election firm. Eternal life, once received, cannot be shaken. But in the kingdom, some shall be shaken.

Let us compare the two phrases: *saved only with difficulty* and *the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly and bountifully supplied*. The one is scarcely saved and has not advanced any further than regeneration. It is like obtaining only a mark of 70 when the lowest passing mark is 70. This is a half salvation. We must be one unto whom the entrance into the kingdom is richly and bountifully supplied. **LAC**

Excerpt from *The Economy of God* by Witness Lee

After the Israelites were delivered and saved from the land of Egypt, they were brought into the wilderness with the intention that they should go on into the land of Canaan. The land of Canaan was their land of rest, a type of the all-inclusive Christ. Christ is the good land of Canaan, and He is our rest. If we are going to enter into the rest, we must enter into Christ. But where is Christ today? We answer that He is in our spirit. The Israelites, who were delivered out of Egypt, instead of going on into Canaan, wandered for many years in the wilderness. What does this typify? It means that many Christians after being saved are simply wandering in the soul. The reason the book to the Hebrews was written is that many Hebrew Christians were saved, but they were wandering in their soul. They would not press on from the wilderness into the good land—that is, into Christ, who dwelt in their spirit. We must not continue to wander in our soul but press on to enter into our spirit, where Christ is our rest. Let us illustrate further by the following diagram:



faces. Yesterday it seems they were in the heavens, but today they are down. They are wandering in the soul, the wilderness, without rest, circling in the same rut day after day. They may have been following the Lord for twenty years, but they are still going in circles, just as the people of Israel, who wandered for thirty-eight years with no improvement and no progress. Why? It is because they are in the soul. When we are in the soul, we are in the wilderness.

This is why the writer to the Hebrews emphasized the need to divide the soul from the spirit. The word of God must pierce us so that we may know how to press on from the soul into the good land and the Holy of Holies of our human spirit. A soulish believer is one wandering in the wilderness of the soul, where there is no rest. (pp. 31-33, published by Living Stream Ministry)

...Even though we may have been saved for years, we must ask ourselves whether we are presently a Christian living in the body, in the soul, or in the spirit. Are we now in Egypt, in the wilderness, or in the good land of Canaan? Ask the Lord and search yourself in order to be clear where you are. Frankly, many Christians are wandering all day in the soul, that is, in the wilderness. In the morning they have smiling faces, but by afternoon they are sorrowful with long