

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, THE CHURCH LIFE,
THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE, AND THE COMING OF THE LORD**

(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Three

**The Losing of the Soul-life,
Participating in the Rapture of the Overcomers,
and Receiving the End of Our Faith—the Salvation of the Soul**

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:23-25; 14:26-35; 17:26-36; 21:34-36; Heb. 10:39; 1 Pet. 1:7-9, 13

I. If we want to save our soul-life, we will lose it, but if we lose our soul-life for the Lord's sake, we will save it—Matt. 10:39; Luke 9:23-25; 14:26-35:

- A. In Luke 9:23-25 the Lord Jesus taught the disciples to take up their cross and follow Him by denying their soul-life:
1. To save the soul-life is to allow the soul to have its enjoyment and to escape suffering; to lose the soul-life is to cause the soul to lose its enjoyment and thereby to suffer—Matt. 16:25.
 2. To lose the soul-life is to lose the enjoyment of the soul, and to save the soul-life means to preserve the soul in its enjoyment—Mark 8:35.
 3. To deny the self is to reject the soul's desire, preference, and choice—Luke 9:23.
 4. We must deny our soul, our soulish life, with all its pleasures in this age, so that we may gain it in the enjoyment of the Lord in the coming age—1 Pet. 1:9.
 5. If we allow our soul to suffer the loss of its enjoyment in this age for the Lord's sake, we will cause our soul to have its enjoyment in the kingdom age; we will share the Lord's joy in ruling over the earth—Matt. 25:21, 23.
- B. In Luke 14:26-35 the Lord taught us to be absolute in following Him and to hate everything, even our own soul-life, that distracts, hinders, and frustrates us from following Him faithfully:
1. As the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13), the believers' taste depends on their renouncing of the earthly things—Luke 14:33-34.
 2. Believers may lose their taste—their function in the kingdom of God—by not being willing to renounce all the things of the present life—v. 34.
 3. If the believers lose their taste, their function, they will be fit neither for the land, signifying the church as God's farm (1 Cor. 3:9), which issues in the coming kingdom (Rev. 11:15), nor for the manure pile, signifying hell, the filthy place in the universe (21:8); having been saved from eternal perdition but being unfit for the coming kingdom, they will be thrown out from the glory of the kingdom in the millennium and be put aside for discipline—Luke 14:35.

II. If we lose our soul-life, we may participate in the rapture of the overcomers—17:26-36; 21:34-36:

- A. In order to participate in the rapture of the overcomers so that we may enjoy the Lord's parousia (presence, coming) and escape the great tribulation, we must overcome the stupefying effect of man's living today—17:26-30:
 - 1. The conditions of evil living that stupefied the generation of Noah before the deluge and the generation of Lot before the destruction of Sodom portray the perilous condition of man's living before the Lord's parousia and the great tribulation—Matt. 24:3, 21.
 - 2. As followers of the Lord Jesus, we need to overcome the stupefying effect of the world's indulgent living by losing our soul-life in this age—Luke 17:31-33.
- B. Preserving the soul-life is related to lingering in the earthly and material things—vv. 31, 33:
 - 1. We linger in the earthly things because we care for our soul's enjoyment in the present age—cf. 2 Tim. 4:10.
 - 2. Lot's wife became a pillar of salt because she took a lingering look backward at Sodom, indicating that she loved and treasured the evil world that God was going to judge and utterly destroy—Luke 17:32:
 - a. She was rescued from Sodom, but she did not reach the safe place that Lot reached—Gen. 19:15-30.
 - b. Although she did not perish, she was not fully saved, but, like the salt that becomes tasteless (Luke 14:34-35), she was left in a place of shame; this is a solemn warning to the world-loving believers—1 John 2:15-17, 28.
 - 3. Lingering in the earthly things for the sake of our soul's enjoyment will cause us to lose our soul; that is, our soul will suffer the loss of its enjoyment in the coming kingdom age—Luke 17:33.
- C. Luke 17:31-36 speaks of our reaction to the rapture call:
 - 1. These verses depict the soul-life in its engagement not with sinful things but with the things of earth; the Lord's charge here is related to the believers' overcoming in their practical life—vv. 34-36.
 - 2. Whether or not the living believers participate in the rapture of the overcomers depends on their reaction to the call to go; the rapture will occur secretly and unexpectedly—v. 31:
 - a. This call will not produce a miraculous last-minute change in us that has no relation to our previous life with the Lord.
 - b. In that moment we will discover our heart's real treasure; if this treasure is the Lord Himself, there will be no backward look—v. 32.
 - c. We need the cross to work in us a thorough detachment in spirit from everything and everyone other than the Lord Himself—v. 31.
 - 3. Certain ones are taken because they have overcome the stupefying effect of self-indulgent living in this age to be raptured into the enjoyment of the Lord's parousia—vv. 26-30, 34-36.
- D. In Luke 21:34-36 the Lord Jesus warns us to take heed to ourselves and to be watchful at every time, beseeching that we would "prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man":
 - 1. *Prevail* here means to have strength and ability; the strength and ability to escape the great tribulation come from watching and beseeching—v. 36.
 - 2. *Escape* refers to being raptured before the great tribulation—Matt. 24:21.

3. *All these things which are about to happen* are all the things of the great tribulation.
4. *Stand before the Son of Man* corresponds with *standing* in Revelation 14:1, indicating that the raptured overcomers will stand before the Savior on Mount Zion in the heavens before the great tribulation.

III. The proving of our faith being found unto praise, glory, and honor results in the receiving of the end of our faith—the salvation of our souls—1 Pet. 1:7-9:

- A. As we live under the government of God, we will be made sorrowful by various trials and experience the proving of our faith—vv. 6-7:
 1. The trials in verse 6 are sufferings that test the quality of our life as believers.
 2. These trials are used by God to prove and try our faith to see whether we will follow Christ in suffering—2:19-23; 3:14-18.
 3. The emphasis in 1 Peter 1:7 is not on faith but on the proving of faith by trials that come through sufferings.
- B. The salvation of the soul in 1 Peter 1:9 means that our soul will be saved from sufferings into the full enjoyment of the Lord at His revelation, His coming back—v. 7; 3:17; 4:1, 12-16, 19:
 1. At the Lord's revelation, some believers will enter into the joy of the Lord, and some will suffer in weeping and gnashing of teeth—Matt. 25:21, 23, 30; 24:45-46, 51.
 2. To enter into the Lord's joy is the salvation of our souls—25:21, 23.
 3. At the revelation of the Lord Jesus, His coming, our soul will be saved, and we will be qualified to participate in the Lord's enjoyment in the coming age—1 Pet. 1:9, 13.
- C. If we would receive as the end of our faith the salvation of our souls, we must not be "of those who shrink back to ruin but of those who have faith to the gaining of the soul"—Heb. 10:39:
 1. The gaining, or saving, of our soul depends on how we deal with our soul in following the Lord after we are saved and regenerated.
 2. If we lose our soul now for the Lord's sake, we will save it, and it will be saved, or gained, at the Lord's coming back—Luke 9:24; 1 Pet. 1:9.
 3. The gaining of the soul will be the reward of the kingdom to the overcoming followers of the Lord—Heb. 10:35; Matt. 16:22-28.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," pp. 90-92

Life-study of Luke, pp. 337-339, 414-417