

Lesson Four – Life vs. Death, II

Day One – Future Life and Judgment

Day Two – Living and Dying

Day Three – Washing and Cleansing

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Day Five – A Choice to Be Made

Last week you hopefully got a solid understanding of the process of initial justification – that part of justification dealing with our *spirit*. As we continue to study the concepts of life and death this week you can count on the fact that we will be continuously reviewing previous material as we put more pieces into place in this awesome process of studying God’s Word. So please remain in prayer this week, taking the time necessary to understand each connection we draw and reading each Scripture passage thoroughly. It is amazing how each piece fits together to give us the overall, marvelous picture of God’s plans and purposes.

We ended last week with the idea of the division that exists within each one of us subsequent to our receiving initial life to our spirit. One particular verse states it so well, let’s read it again –

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit...

It is the Word of God – *which is the Spirit of God* – that causes the division between the spirit and the soul, in the same way that the Spirit of God *shone the light* and then *separated the light from the existing darkness* on the first day of restoration in Genesis. But as was the case in Genesis chapter one, we see that there was an ongoing work that God continued to do *subsequent to* that first day. And so is the case with us! Just as God brought light into our being at our spiritual birth, there still needs to be a subsequent, ongoing work of restoration in each one of us. And this ongoing work has to do with our *soul*. Even though our spirit has been justified (i.e. given life, made righteous) at the point of initial faith in Jesus’ death, we now need to experience *the sanctification process* which deals with the justification of our soul. This will be the topic of this week’s Lesson.

Please allow God’s Spirit to continue to enlighten your path as you study this week.

Day One – Future Life and Judgment

Let's review the meaning of the words "righteousness" and "justification." These words are relational in their scope. One who does not meet the standards of another needs *justification* – to be made *righteous/just* – in order to conform to the other's standard of *right*. If the one *does not* conform to meet the standards of the other, that person will incur a judgment or punishment based on their nonconformity. In the specific case of the relationship between man and God we can clearly see who needs to meet the standards of Whom. Man needs to be justified – made righteous – in order to meet God's standards, since man is sinful and God is perfect. If man does not meet God's standard of right, man incurs a judgment.

In the case of initial justification, each individual needs to believe in (put their faith in) the provision that God has given us for redemption – Jesus Christ. His sacrificial death and shed blood on the cross paid the penalty for *and took the judgment in respect of* the sins that we committed up to that point – the sin that we were in bondage to simply because of our birth into this world, according to the likeness of Adam. Our belief in this substitutionary death by God Himself gives life to our spirit, a life that continues on throughout all the ages to come. God then views us as righteous as we are seen positionally "in Christ."

This righteousness is *perfect*, and as long as we choose to continually walk in righteousness (walk according to the Spirit), we would forever have fellowship with God. But the problem is *we will still sin!* We don't always choose to walk in the Spirit; sometimes we walk in the flesh. Let's read again how the Apostle John states this –

I John 1:5-10

5 And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

We studied this portion of the letter from John concerning light and darkness last week. According to John, can a Christian walk in the light?

Can a Christian walk in the darkness?

Do Christians sin (vv. 8-10)?

According to v. 7, can we be in the light and still be in sin?

Confessing these sins allows Jesus to cleanse us. What does John say that Jesus cleanses us from (v. 9)?

That's right – unrighteousness! So a Christian can still be deemed “unrighteous” if that Christian is in sin. Isn't that what John says? But every Christian sins! And that sin, that *unrighteousness*, sets us apart from God for He cannot look upon sin. This sin and unrighteousness is connected to our soul because our soul remains separated from our spirit within us, unredeemed and still separated from God. Our soul is still in darkness, still connected to our body of death, still connected to this world and still under the sway of the *god of this world*.

So what are we to do with this soul of ours? More accurately, what are we to *let God do* with this soul of ours? How do we receive the justification of (*impartation of life to*) our soul? Let's begin to study this *line upon line* by first reading a few Scripture passages concerning what Jesus said in regards to our soul –

Matthew 16:24-26

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever wishes to save his life [psuche, 5590] shall lose it; but whoever loses his life [psuche, 5590] for My sake shall find it. 26 For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul [psuche, 5590]? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul [psuche, 5590]?”

Notice that the English words *life* and *soul* are the same Greek word *psuche*, and they are indeed *interchangeable*. Rewrite this passage using the word *soul* in each instance #5590 is used.

Now rewrite the passage using the word *life* in each instance.

There almost appears to be a contradiction in this passage. How does a Christian both lose their life (soul) and save their life (soul) at the same time? This would have the potential to be confusing if we didn't already have one crucial piece in place from Lesson Two, which is the *timeframe* for restoration, as well as the definition of the term *eternal life*. Remember what you have learned from the story of the rich, young ruler; in particular, these following verses –

Mark 10:28-30

28 Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You." 29 Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, 30 but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal [aionios] life.

From this passage, what is a person to inherit if they have left everything and followed Jesus?

(Please remember that the English translators translated the Greek word *aionios* as *eternal*, but eternity is not in the picture here! As we have seen in our previous days of study, our inheriting *aionios life* as a member of God’s family [inheritance is a family term] has to do with life in the age to come, not with life throughout all eternity. Remember when an adjective is made from a noun, the meaning does not change, just the grammatical usage changes. *Aion* [age] is the noun; *aionios* [age-lasting] is the adjective. And we have already seen that our receiving of *aionios* life is age-lasting.)

By way of review, when is age-lasting (*aionios*) life realized?

Now return to the previous Matthew passage (16:24-26). What must a person do in order to follow Jesus?

A trade-off is mentioned in Matthew 16:25. What does Jesus say is the cost to save your soul?⁷

We see this same picture made even clearer in the following words of Jesus –

John 12:24-26

24 “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 He who loves his life [5590] loses it; and he who hates his life [5590] in this world shall keep it to life eternal [*aionios*: age-lasting]. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

In this context, what does *hating your life* and *losing your life* mean?

The cost for the soul being made righteous is death – the *death of our self*, the *death of our own wants and desires*. In other words, to receive *life* in the coming age we must forfeit *life* in this present age; we must forfeit, *die to*, the life that pertains to this age and this body and all that is connected to our first birth.

⁷ The concept being presented here is the saving of the soul, which is in direct relation to receiving life in the age to come. Therefore we can view “saving” in its simplest sense for now, that it presents the idea of being saved out of death.

Let's look at another verse that pertains to the saving of the soul –

I Peter 1:9

...obtaining as the outcome [Lit., end or goal, 5056] of your faith the salvation of your souls.

What does Peter say is the *end*, or the *goal* of our faith?

Keeping in mind what we have covered in the previous three Lessons, what is the Christian's goal? And when is that goal to be realized?

Now, in putting together the previous three passages, in what time frame does this place the saving of the soul?

Saving your soul *is the same as* saving your life – but we must realize that this is referencing the saving of our life *in the age which is to come*; i.e. *age-lasting life*. These Scripture passages all present the same scenario – deny yourself *now* and put to death your soul/life *now* and you will receive – *save* – your soul, your life *in the coming age*. And as we have seen throughout our studies thus far, this coming age is the 1,000-year reign of Christ, the Millennial Kingdom.

And just as we saw in relation to our initial justification, wherein God imparted righteousness and life to our spirit, the same would be true *in relation to our soul*. But as we will see, this is an ongoing process of sanctification that takes place *now* (e.g. forfeit your soul in this age), culminating with the justification of (impartation of righteousness and life to) *our soul* yet future. And remember, implicit in the very definition of the word “justification” is the idea of a *judgment being passed on the one who is being justified* (remember that judgment passed immediately when we received initial justification). Since the justification of our soul is yet future (cf. I Pet. 1:9), the judgment given in relation to that *must be future as well*. And isn't it great to know that Scripture presents it as so! Let's take a look –

Romans 14:10

...For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.

II Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Who is the “we” that Paul is referring to in these verses?

What is it that we “must all” do?

Has this judgment taken place yet?

According to II Corinthians 5:10, what will occur at the Judgment Seat of Christ?

Judgment will be based on what we have done in our body during this lifetime, right? Compare this with Matthew 16:24-26. What is the judgment based on?

Scripture is clearly presenting the idea that we will all be judged according to our *works*. Isn't that exactly what we just read concerning the Judgment Seat of Christ? Christ will judge us according to whether or not we *Christians* have denied our self, *lost our soul*, lost our life during this age, this world. The works that we do in this body must not emanate out of our fleshly man (the darkness within) for we are to *put to death* our fleshly man. Any works of value must emanate out of faith, from our spiritual man, from the Spirit that is inside of each one of us as Christians.

And because of what awaits us at that Judgment Seat of Christ, we must not let our soul be the governing force within us! If we allow our fleshly (*soulical*) man to have dominion in our life then we are living and walking in darkness and death, in unrighteousness, separated from our Father and Lord, *even though* we have received our spiritual birth, *even though* we have been justified in the spirit.

It is this choice of how we are to live our lives now, *with the future in view*, which is the subject of the remainder of this Lesson.

See you tomorrow.

Day Two – Living and Dying

I hope you're hanging in there! Like I said, this study requires you to think comprehensively and critically as we uncover the pieces in this puzzle, and it is no small task, I know. We are going to pick right up from where we left off yesterday, so refresh your memory of yesterday's work if necessary.

We have seen that we, as Christians, must die to our self. We must forfeit – *put to death* – our soul, our *life in this age*, if we want to gain our life, our soul, in the age to come. We must keep our soul in the place of death, not allowing it to rule us in this life; instead, we must allow *the Spirit* to have dominion over us in this life. We must allow the Spirit, in connection with our spirit, to be the prevailing force within us. And this is done in accordance with God's Word, which is His very Spirit. We must allow ourselves to be led by His Spirit *as we obey His Word* because as we have already seen, we cannot in any way produce the righteousness needed to meet the standard of perfection and holiness that is God's. To be successful and victorious, we must believe *daily* what God has said and accept *daily* His provision for cleansing.

Let's go to the Gospel of Matthew to see what this looks like –

Matthew 10:37-39

37 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.

According to v. 38, what must we do to be worthy of God?

What did Jesus do on the cross?

That’s right, *He died*. He died *in the flesh* –

I Peter 4:1

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin...

What does I Peter 4:1 tell us to do, and why?

Paul tells the Church at Rome (and correspondingly us, the Church at large) how to act as spiritual men –

Romans 8:5-8

5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:12-13

12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

How are we to live in this present time?

If we live according to the flesh, can we please God?

And if we live according to the flesh, what *must* happen (v. 13)?

For the sake of clarification, if we live according to the flesh, when would we experience this death?

If we choose to put to death the deeds of the body, what happens (v. 13)?

And if we live according to the spirit, when would we experience this life?

According to v. 13, how do we put to death the deeds of the body?

We must put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit of God that is within us. This is our choosing to allow God, through His provision of the Spirit (Who was given on behalf of the Son), to accomplish His work of redemption in our life which, when accomplished, will result in the justification of our soul. The putting to death the deeds of the flesh, *by the Spirit*, will require that we maintain that separation within us (remember that *separation* and *death* are the same idea), keeping our corrupted soul (our flesh) in a place of death. In doing so, we are denying our self, picking up our cross and dying just as Jesus did when He died on that cross. *He suffered and died in the flesh*, giving us a picture of what it really means to follow Him, as we die *to* the flesh.

Let's read what Paul says about "the flesh." (Remember that the word "flesh" in this context is not referring to the physical, organic body, but rather is speaking about our sin nature, the darkness within, *our soul*.) Paul also calls "the flesh" our "old man" or "old self." He writes –

Romans 6:1-13

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? **2** May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? **3** Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized in to Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? **4** Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. **5** For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, **6** knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, the we should no longer be slaves to sin; **7** for he who has died is freed from sin.

8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, **9** knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. **10** For the death that He died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. **11** Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. **12** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, **13** and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

According to v. 3, what have we been baptized into?

And because of this, how should we walk (v. 4)?

What does v. 6 tell us about our “old self”?

Why were we crucified with Him (v. 6)?

If we stay “united with Him in the likeness of His death,” what are we free from (v. 7)?

Verse 11 gives us two concurrent actions. What are we to do?

Verses 5 and 8 tell us why we are to do this. Explain.

Verses 12 and 13 are of particular importance, as they give more detailed instructions on how we are to live presently. Rewrite these verses in your own words, and spend the time necessary to comprehend what they are saying.

As we continue on in Romans chapter six we see Paul’s entire discourse headed to an end goal. This discourse, you’ll remember, is addressed to members of the body of Christ, *the Church*, which is comprised only of redeemed individuals. And Paul saw it necessary to comment on their behaviors in order to get them to change their behaviors. Let’s read and then answer some questions –

Romans 6:14-23

14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. 22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal [*aionios*] life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God [Lit., grace freely given] is eternal [*aionios*] life in [Lit., through] Christ Jesus our Lord.

According to vv. 14-16, what happens when you present yourself as a slave to sin, allowing it to be master over you?

And if you are sin's slave, what will it result in (v. 16)?

According to the same verse, what will obedience to God result in?

And accordingly, if you are obedient to God, what are you a slave of (v. 18)?

Paul states exactly why he is saying the things that he is. What is his reason (v. 19a)?

According to v. 19b, if you are a slave to righteousness, what will it result in? (I am hoping that you are drawing to mind the verse from I Thess. 5:23!)

And finally, vv. 22 and 23 bring this entire process to its desired outcome, an outcome that is promised to those who would follow the stated instructions. What is the outcome for those who consider themselves dead to sin and alive to Christ, putting to death the deeds of the body and presenting themselves to the Lord as an instrument of righteousness?

When will those who do these things receive age-lasting life?

And in v. 23, what would be the outcome for those who *don't* die to self, and *don't* receive the sanctification that leads to life in the age to come?

In closing this incredible exhortation to the Church in Rome, Paul states *how* this whole process is possible – *by Whom* and *through Whom* it happens. Did you see it? *Age-lasting life is accomplished in (through) Christ Jesus! And this life is freely given to us by a loving, merciful Father who desires to see us succeed at every point.*

We will receive life in the age to come if we choose to live in Christ while simultaneously choosing to keep our old self dead. We must choose death of self now, life *in Christ* now, in order to receive life for our soul in the kingdom which is to come.

And these things that Paul tells us to do are not automatic; *our flesh does not want to, nor can it put itself to death.* It can't and it won't. But the Spirit of God who lives within us *can* put to death the deeds of our flesh. The action needed on our part is *to choose to allow Him.*

See you tomorrow.

Day Three – Washing and Cleansing

We'll continue today with the picture of the division within each Christian, the division between the spirit and the soul. This division makes necessary a concurrent lifestyle choice – we either put to death the deeds of flesh while living in Christ by the power of the Spirit, or we live by the flesh, allowing the soul to have dominion, while we quench the Spirit. It's a choice we make moment by moment, day in and day out. And as we have seen, we must be victorious in this if we are to receive life in the age to come. Paul states it similarly –

Ephesians 4:22-24

22...in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

According to v.22, what are we to do regarding our old self? (You can also pull from what you learned in yesterday's study time.)

And according to this same verse, what is happening to our old self?

What are we to do as we lay our old self aside?

In doing this, you will be putting on the righteousness you need to stand in God's sight. Do you see this?

We can clearly see that, even as a Christian, we are still in this body of death, possessing a sin nature that battles against us at every point. And because of this, we will time and time again find ourselves in sin, following after the flesh, failing to keep that old man in the place of death.

Let's now address what we must do when we find ourselves in this position (*which we all will*) –

I John 1:8-9

8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess [3670] our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive [863] us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

What must we do with our sins?

Look up the word “confess” (Strong's #3670) in the Lexicon in the Appendix and write down its definition.

The idea of confessing something means that we align our thoughts and words with the one who receives the confession. In other words, we need to align *our thoughts* with *God's thoughts* and see His viewpoint on any matter. If we find ourselves in sin, we bring that sin to the Lord and agree with Him that it was wrong *according to His Word*.

When we confess our sins, what does the Lord do?

Look up the word, “forgive” (Strong's #863) and write down its definition.

With this definition in mind, explain further what it means to be forgiven of our sins.

Our Lord takes our sins away when we confess them. That means that they are remembered no more! And since He cleanses us at the same time, we can know that those sins – the unrighteousness – can in no way be counted against us. *We are clean.*

Let's view another portion of Scripture that gives more detail –

Ephesians 5:25

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; 26 that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.

Why did Christ give Himself up for the Church?

Notice in v. 26 the *present conditional* aspect of His *past act*. Christ died for the church in order that He *might* sanctify her. This is obviously not saying that Christ might not be able to sanctify, for we know He is most able. The *might* is in reference to the free will on the part of the individuals within the Church, who may or may not allow themselves to be washed and sanctified.

Then we see a *future* action, which will be based on the *now present* action, which is based on Christ's *past* action. According to v. 27, why does Christ need to sanctify the Church by washing her?

Let's tie this back in with a passage from I Thessalonians –

1 Thessalonians 5: 16-23

16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not quench the Spirit; 20 do not despise prophetic utterances. 21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil. 23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We should be quite familiar with v. 23 and the goal which it presents to us. The goal is to be sanctified (made holy) *entirely* – spirit, soul, and body, **blameless** when our Lord Jesus Christ returns.⁸

Compare this passage from I Thessalonians to the passage from Ephesians above. What are the similarities in the messages that are given?

What are the instructions being given in I Thessalonians 5:16-22?

In particular, what does v. 19 say?

So the sanctification process (Eph. 5:26; I Thess. 5:23) is dependent upon an individual's willingness to allow God's Spirit to have His way. This *may* or *may not* happen. Therefore the result (Eph. 5:27; I Thess. 5:23b) *may* or *may not* happen.

Let's relate the idea of "quenching the Spirit" to the passage from Romans that we studied yesterday –

Romans 8:5, 13

5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

13...for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Comparing this passage with I Thessalonians 5:19, what then would be the result of "quenching the Spirit"?

⁸ We haven't addressed the idea of the justification of the body, nor will we in this Lesson. This will be handled in detail next week with the concept of the redemption of the body. It must be noted now, however, that in keeping with the idea of the inextricable link between the soul and the body (Lev. 17:11) that the justification/life imparted to the soul at the Judgment Seat will result in the same being imparted to the body, for the soul and the body are linked together. Remember that we are not talking about organic, physical life versus organic, physical death; *this is not referencing the resurrection of the body*. Life means fellowship and togetherness with God and death means separation from God. Also remember that man never ceases to exist for he is an immortal creature, and all persons – *all persons that have ever existed* – will be resurrected to stand in judgment before God at some point. This will be explained next week.

We are to live by the Spirit while putting to death the deeds of the flesh. And in this manner of living we are to consistently allow Christ to wash us and cleanse when we sin *by continually confessing our sins*, which allows God to produce in us the sanctification necessary to stand blameless before Him at that future Judgment Seat.

This is a choice, *an action*, that needs to be made by each individual –

Psalms 51:2

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

II Corinthians 7:1

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

James 4:8

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

John 13:8

Peter said unto him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash thee, you have no part with me.”

Hebrews 9:11-14

11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

And if we choose this daily, we overcome our flesh and we will live.

See you tomorrow.

Day Four – Suffering and Overcoming

Yesterday we expounded on the idea of the flesh versus the spirit, specifically the division that exists within each one of God’s redeemed people. It is clear that we are to choose to follow the Spirit as He leads us into the truth of God’s Word, and in doing so we are to live our lives – *put our faith into action* – in accordance with God’s Word. Our flesh, our soul/life *now*, has no place in that and must be kept in a place of death for the remainder of our time in this earthly body.

We also clearly saw that the example given to us by Christ Himself was one of suffering and death on the cross as He died in the flesh. This, of course, happened to Him in a physical sense in order to give us a spiritual picture of the same path we are to follow (for there would be nothing gained by purposefully

inflicting pain to our physical body). However, the reality in the beginning of the establishment of the Church was that many, many individuals did suffer physically in their flesh. But this was indicative of a determination on their part to live their lives by the Spirit, dying to self and following the truth of the Spirit *wherever that would lead them*. And unfortunately for most during that violent and barbaric time, it led to their torture and/or execution.

The focus of Scripture is the putting to death of the soul/life by the Spirit and thereby living in the Spirit so as to have life in the age to come (the coming Seventh Day). So let's see a bit more about this suffering in relation to the flesh –

II Thessalonians 1:4-7

4 ...therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. 5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. 6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire...

What was the Church at Thessalonica enduring (v. 4)?

What did this indicate and why?

For what were they suffering?

When was their relief from these afflictions promised to come?

The idea of suffering is *suffering for God, in accordance with His will and His Word*. This righteous suffering is explained in the following passage –

II Timothy 1:8-12

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, 10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. 12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

According to v.8, for what does Paul suffer?

Paul states his reason for suffering the things that he did, and for this he is not ashamed. What is the reason he gives? (Give details as seen in vv. 9-11.)

Paul is not ashamed because he sees his whole life in relation to the end that is in view. Of what is Paul convinced (v. 12b)?

Note how James views suffering –

James 5:10

As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

What is the example of suffering and patience we are to follow? Extrapolate if you can.

We (you and I, today) are included in this call to suffer. It comes along with the job, so to speak –

Philippians 1:29

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake...

For Whom are we to suffer?

We are not alone in our suffering, as Peter explains in the following passage –

1Peter 5:8-10

8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10 And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal [aionios] glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

Notice how Peter links our suffering to our enemy, who seeks to devour us. Our enemy, the devil, is the god of this world and we are currently living within his dominion. Our soul is connected to this world which is currently under his sway. Can you see why we are to keep our soul in a place of death and live by the power of the Spirit of God, who has already won the victory?

And *after we have suffered for a little while* (our lifetime in this body), what will Christ Himself do?

And when/where will He establish us? (Draw your answer from what you have already learned in this study.)

Do you see that *we must overcome our flesh*? We *must* take the actions necessary to have victory. And *the only way* that this can be accomplished is through the power of God, through the power of His Spirit. And if we do this (follow the Spirit), we will receive something much more valuable than anything we could ever receive in this life, for after all, “...**what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul?**” (Matt. 16:26).

God gives us seven instances in the Book of Revelation where Jesus makes promises to the overcomers within His Church. These are recorded for us so that we may always keep the end in view as we make our choices day to day. These promises are prophetic in that they are *actual* proceedings that occur at the Judgment Seat of Christ, yet future⁹. Read the following verses –

Revelation 2:7

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Revelation 2:11

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.

Revelation 2:17

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.

Revelation 2:26

And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS;

⁹ It is simple to determine that the events recorded in the Book of Revelation occur at a time yet future, for John records that he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” (Rev. 1:10). The Lord’s Day is referring to the day of the Lord, the Seventh Day, as was noted in Lesson Two. There are many other reasons to determine this, and you can find more information concerning the Book of Revelation in the book titled, “The Time of the End” found at www.lampbroadcast.org.

Revelation 3:5

He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.

Revelation 3:12

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Revelation 3:21

He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

In the beginning, the entrance of death barred Adam and the woman from eating of the Tree of Life. What do you suppose it means that the overcomer *will* be able to eat from it (Rev. 2:7)?

And correspondingly, what would the *non-overcomer*, the one who cannot eat of the tree of life, (Rev. 2:11) be hurt by?

Revelation 2:26 states the overcomer will be given authority over the nations. Can you expound on this a little bit more, relating it to what you have learned so far concerning the purpose of man?

Revelation 3:5 relates *overcoming* once again to *life*. What does this verse say and what do you suppose that it means?

And according to Revelation 3:21, the overcomer will sit on the throne with Christ. What correlation does Christ make in this verse?

How did Christ “overcome”?

Any thoughts?

See you tomorrow.

Day Five – A Choice to Be Made

Today we’ll be discussing a bit more about the choices we Christians have. We truly do possess free will, and God allows us to exercise it even when our choice would not be in our best interests. Therefore, let’s make sure that we understand what God’s Word says so that we can choose to live our lives by faith, living by the Spirit, dying to our self, all with a clear view of that Judgment Seat out ahead.

As we wrap up this Lesson we’ll be looking at some portions of Scripture from the Old Testament that teach us clearly about our choices. There are many reasons to study the Old Testament, but of primary importance is what Paul says –

I Corinthians 10:1-11

1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.

6 Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved.

7 And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY." 8 Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. 9 Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. 10 Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Describe what Paul does not want us to be unaware of (vv. 1-5).

Why did these things happen as examples for us (vv. 6 and 11)?

Consequently we are exhorted *not* to act like they did. How does Paul describe them?

In particular, note vv. 9 and 10. What was the result of their disobedient actions?

Our understanding the examples given to us in the Old Testament are *vital* to our understanding of our calling, for there is nothing in the New Testament that is not in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh (John 1:14), and how are we to abide in Him *and eat His flesh* (cf. John 15:6; 6:53) if we do not understand the Old Testament? As He Himself said to two of His disciples when they lacked understanding –

Luke 24:25-27

25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

So let's go back to that first generation of Israel that came out of Egypt through the substitutionary deaths of the Passover Lambs. Moses led them out of slavery and they all journeyed onward to the land that was promised to their forefathers through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was a land in which they were to dwell permanently and securely, wherein they would be a kingdom of priests within a theocracy, bringing blessings to all the nations as promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3 (which we'll be looking at in more detail next week). But along with this promise came a condition –

Exodus 19:4-6

"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. 5 Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is

Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

What were the conditions stated in v. 5?

What would be the outcome for them if they obeyed God's voice and kept His covenant?

And implicitly, what would be the outcome if they didn't obey God?

We should be familiar with the result. The entire first generation, except for Caleb and Joshua, chose NOT to obey God's voice concerning entering the land; they instead chose to believe a false report given to them by ten of the Nation's leaders. As a result, God refused to allow the disobedient generation in to receive their inheritance in the land (except for Caleb and Joshua, of course; however, they had to wait nearly 40 years to receive it). It is told to us by the author of the Book of Hebrews why this story is so important to us –

Hebrews 3:5-12, 3:16-4:9

5 Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; 6 but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. 7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, 8 DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, 9 WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED [Me] BY TESTING [Me,] AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. 10 THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART; AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS' 11 AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.'"

12 Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God.

6 For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? 17 And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? 19 And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

1 Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, "AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL

HIS WORKS"; 5 and again in this passage, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST." 6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. 9 There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

What does Hebrews 4:9 tell us?

Take a look at the timeline again that is printed on page 30 of Lesson Two. What is the Sabbath Day of Rest that yet remains for us? And does this have anything to do with *forever and ever* (i.e. the ages to come)?

According to Hebrews 3:16 - 4:2, why do *we* need to fear? And why do *we* need to spend time studying the examples given to us in the Old Testament?

The nation of Israel was promised an earthly land and an earthly inheritance in that land. Christians are promised a heavenly land and a heavenly inheritance in that land. Israel was to dwell in the land in a theocracy; Christians are presently being called out to dwell in a land within a theocracy, yet future.

Yet the conditions still remain: choose to obey His voice in order to enter the land and receive your inheritance, or choose **not** to obey His voice and be rejected. It is each individual's choice. (And of course we are dealing solely with saved individuals here!)

It can be clearly summed up as we read what God said, through Moses, to the second generation of Israel as they stood on the brink of entering into a land that their fathers rejected. He reminds them of this choice –

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

15 "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; 16 in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the Lord your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. 17 But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, 18 I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You shall not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it.

19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, 20 by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to

Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the Lord swore to your father, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

What was God setting before the people of Israel (vv. 15 and 19)?

According to v. 16, what did He command them to do and why?

What would happen to them if they did not do as He said (vv. 17 and 18)?

Do you see what God is saying? “***So choose life in order that you may live... for this is your life...that you may live in the land...***” It is the same thing being told to us today! We Christians are a nation on the brink of entering a kingdom, *a land set before us*. We were brought out of slavery in order to be built into a kingdom of priests (I Pet. 2:5), to dwell in a theocracy. We are being offered *life* in the age to come, in the kingdom which is to come.

But we too have a choice. We can choose to *lose* our soul/life now in order to receive it then; or we can choose to *keep* our soul/life now and lose it then. As Paul says –

Galatians 6:8-9

8 For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal [*aionios*, age-lasting] life. 9 And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.

Romans 8:13

13...for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Please sum up what you understand your choice to be, as a *Christian*. Be specific and give as much detail as you can.

That’s it for this week. Keep up the good work and we’ll meet again next week!