

Accomplished Plan of Salvation (13)

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1 Corinthians

3:11 After all, no one can lay any other foundation than the one that is already laid, and that is Jesus the Messiah.

3:12 Whether a person builds on this foundation with gold, silver, expensive stones, wood, hay, or straw,

3:13 the workmanship of each person will become evident, for the day of judgment will show what it is, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's action.

3:14 If what a person has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

3:15 If his work is burned up, he will suffer loss. However, he himself will be saved, but it will be like going through fire.

[International Standard Version]

2 Corinthians

5:10 For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of the Messiah, so that each of us may receive what he deserves for what he has done in his body, whether good or worthless.

In our previous meetings, we tried to find answers to three questions. Firstly, is it possible for anyone who was born from above to perish? Secondly, how should we hope for the salvation? Thirdly, what may the ones who were reborn possibly lose?

Today, I would like to discuss quickly about the seat of the Lord Jesus we will be awarded. We are destined to rule this world forever along with Jesus. This is our calling. We cannot fulfill this calling unless we are sanctified, bear some fruit and surrender our entire life.

When we stand in front of the seat to receive a reward from Jesus, it will be revealed whether we have fulfilled the call of heaven or not. After the Rapture of Churches and the Second Coming in the air, we have to stand before Jesus' seats of reward. There, all things will be explained. All things will be illuminated in the light and then, brothers and sisters will be separated between those who will be rewarded and those who won't. Let me read again the chapter 5, verse 10 of the Second Corinthians.

2 Corinthians

5:10 For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of the Messiah, so that each of us may receive what he deserves for what he has done in his body, whether good or worthless.

John

5:24 Truly, I tell all of you emphatically, whoever hears what I say and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged, but has passed from death to life.

Whoever listens to the words of God, understands and believes in them has received an eternal life; they have already been transferred from death to life. And thus, they no longer have to be judged as stated in the Scripture. Those who believed in Jesus and accepted him will never be judged. Then what does "the judgment seat" in the Second Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 10 refer to?

Actually, it should be more suitable to call it "the reward seat." In Greek language, "the judgment seat" mentioned in here has three meanings, which are the throne of the prince, seat of judgment and the seat of the reward.

In his epistle to the Corinthians, Paul used a plural word, 'us,' which indicates that this verse was meant for all those who have accepted Jesus as their savior, that is to say, all brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus. All believers have received an eternal life as a gift. Paul used the word, 'reward.' We receive the eternal life as a gift and it has nothing to do with our humanly efforts. As we can see from this, the 'reward' mentioned in here was prepared for all believers.

It is not a matter of whether we will live or be destroyed. Because we do not receive the eternal life as a reward of our work. The reward mentioned in the verse above is offered to all those who have been saved and come to believe in Jesus.

Let us look again at chapter 3, verses 11 to 15 and read what Paul wrote to the people in Corinth in his first epistle to them. Although, they had been, certainly, saved once, they remained exactly as they used to be, which was their problem. Paul wrote this letter to help them understand the importance of continual growth and becoming vessels which the Lord could use. Let us read these verses again.

1 Corinthians

3:11 After all, no one can lay any other foundation than the one that is already laid, and that is Jesus the Messiah.

3:12 Whether a person builds on this foundation

with gold, silver, expensive stones, wood, hay, or straw,
 3:13 the workmanship of each person will become evident, for the day of judgment will show what it is, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's action.
 3:14 If what a person has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.
 3:15 If his work is burned up, he will suffer loss. However, he himself will be saved, but it will be like going through fire.

After all, he will never perish. How clear and definite are the words of the Lord! Believers in Corinth once had the true salvation. Their foundation was Jesus. Because Jesus is alive forever, this foundation will last forever. Whoever was born from above will never perish.

The true Believer would never perish. However, there is, needless to say, a huge difference between gold, silver, expensive stones, wood, hay, or straw, although they are built on the same foundation. Gold, silver and expensive stones are not burnable, while wood, hay, or straw burn down instantly.

1 Corinthians

3:14 If what a person has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

If a person has worked with gold, silver or stones, what he has built on that foundation will survive and he will receive a reward. If he has built it with wood, hay, or straw, in other words, if it was built based on his own intelligence or strength, it would burn down one day and his work will perish meaninglessly. Actually, regardless of whether what he has built will burn down or not, he still will be saved.

Because it is impossible for whoever has been born from above to perish. What about us? Will we be joyfully awarded the seat in front of Jesus? Are we sincerely willing to receive this reward? Or, will we let what has been built throughout our life burn down and turn into ashes?

Are we waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus wholeheartedly? Do we truly love Jesus from the bottom of our hearts? What is the reward after all? The Bible expresses the reward promised to us as the crown. Those who receive this crown are destined to rule the world together with the Lord Jesus. The New Testament tells us that there are four kinds of crowns. To begin with, the word, 'the crown of glory' appears. Let us see these verses.

1 Peter

5:1 Therefore, as a fellow elder, a witness of the Messiah's sufferings, and one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I appeal to the elders among you:
 5:2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is among you, watching over it, not because you must but because you want to, and not greedily but eagerly, as God desires.
 5:3 Do not lord it over the people entrusted to you, but be examples to the flock.
 5:4 Then, when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the victor's crown of glory that will never fade away.

It is written that we will receive the victor's crown of glory. This crown of glory is not offered to all believers.

Peter urged his fellow elders to become shepherds of God's flock. The elders in here do not necessarily refer to older people in terms of age, but to those who have grown spiritually and have finally come to look like Jesus.

"Become shepherds of God's flock." This is the mission given, not only to missionaries, pastors or evangelists, but also to all those who seek to receive the crown of glory. What does it mean to have Pastoral Care? It is to lead someone to Jesus and let him or her meet Jesus. Those who acquire souls will receive the eternal crown of glory. Let me read another verse from the Old Testament.

Daniel

12:3 Those who manifest wisdom will shine like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who turn many to righteousness will shine like the stars for ever and ever.

In some earlier translation of the Scripture, it was expressed as "those who lead many to the righteousness." What we are expected to do is to introduce Jesus to the people. "Be shepherds of God's flock." In the Greek Bible, an expression "small flock" is used instead of just 'flock.'

There are actually quite a few people who truly rely on Jesus and love the Lord Jesus. We will be blessed if we love each other with the love of Jesus. It will be the time when we receive the crown of glory. Paul wrote to believers of those times.

2 Corinthians

5:15 He died for all people, so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for the one who died and rose for them.

The Bible mentions in many places the privilege of

living for Christ. We will be truly blessed if we love each other with the love of Jesus. If we do, we will obtain the crown of glory. When you judge your brothers and sisters, you are not participating in the true Pastoral Care. You are actually breaking up the flock. It will be revealed when we stand in front of the seat of the reward, whether we have been truly faithful to the command of Jesus to “become the shepherd of God’s flock” or not.

Now, let us move on to another crown, which is “the crown of life.” The Bible also explains many things regarding this crown of life.

Revelation

2:10 Don’t be afraid of what you are going to suffer. Look! The devil is going to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested. For ten days you will undergo suffering. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the victor’s crown of life.

James emphasized the same thing when he wrote this letter;

James

1:12 How blessed is the man who endures temptation! When he has passed the test, he will receive the victor’s crown of life that God has promised to those who keep on loving him.

It seems that this crown of life too is not offered unconditionally to all Christians. Only those who endure the ordeals, those who are faithful until the last breath and those who never stop to love the Lord Jesus wholeheartedly will receive this crown of life.

The third kind of crown is called “the crown that will last forever.” Paul wrote to the people in Corinth about this crown that will last forever.

1 Corinthians

9:24 You know that in a race all the runners run but only one wins the prize, don’t you? You must run in such a way that you may be victorious.

9:25 Everyone who enters an athletic contest practices self-control in everything. They do it to win a wreath that withers away, but we run to win a prize that never fades.

9:26 That is the way I run, with a clear goal in mind. That is the way I fight, not like someone shadow boxing.

9:27 No, I keep on disciplining my body, making it serve me so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not somehow be disqualified.

Paul thought that he might be disqualified. He stated that he was running and that he kept on disciplining his

body in order to make it serve him. It was not for his own salvation. What Paul was seeking when he wrote this was, as I just mentioned, the crown that will last forever.

Paul stated that we need to practice self-control in everything in order to win the crown that will last forever. When Paul wrote that he would keep on disciplining his body and he would make his own body serve him as if it is was his slave, what he meant was that he would surrender himself to the control of the Holy Spirit so that all aspects of his life would be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

This was an incident in Germany. An elderly lady called a plumber when the water bulb of her house was broken and she had water leakage. The young plumber came and fixed the problem quickly. The old lady was pleased and offered him a pack of cigarettes. The young man refused it telling her that he did not smoke, which surprised this old lady. To this lady, this young man explained that it was because he was an athlete and whoever participated in a race would neither drink alcohol nor smoke cigarettes.

In an Olympic game, one lady won in the equestrian section. She had a physical handicap. Her limbs had been paralyzed because of cerebral palsy. She had been suffering since she was a child and could not move her hands and legs freely. In fact, she could not even ride a horse by herself. Although she needed the help of others to get onto her horse, she won the championship.

She kept on disciplining her body in order to make it serve her and it brought her the gold medal. How is our attitude as compared with hers? Whoever believed in Jesus and accepted him has become a child of God. They all have a calling from heaven. The crown is prepared for each one of those who believe. To fulfill the calling given to you by the Lord, you have to give up some of your personal pleasures. There is nothing wrong about having personal pleasures.

However, these things steal your time. In order to win the crown that will last forever, we need to practice self-control in everything. Nothing is more important than having fellowship with Jesus and we will be blessed if we are always prepared to make time for this fellowship.

Paul confessed that he would never run without a clear goal in his mind. When we try to accomplish something without Jesus, we are actually running with no clear goal in our mind. Whenever we testify, if we do so depending on our strength alone, again we are running without a clear goal in our mind.

Those who run without a clear goal are called drifters. Drifters will never get to their goal, that is to say, they will never obtain the crown of life. Each moment of each second, each second of each minute and each minute of each hour is extremely important. It is unthinkable to live each moment in a fellowship with the Lord, praying and relying on him. Paul declared that he would never run without having a clear goal in his mind. It can be seen from these frequently quoted verses from Philippians;

Philippians

3:13 Brothers, I do not consider myself to have embraced it yet. But this one thing I do: Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,

3:14 I keep pursuing the goal to win the prize of God's heavenly call in the Messiah Jesus.

The last crown is what is called the crown of righteousness as Paul expressed in his letter. He wrote to his beloved disciple, Timothy;

2 Timothy

4:6 I am already being poured out as an offering, and the time for my departure has come.

4:7 I have fought the good fight. I have completed the race. I have kept the faith.

4:8 The victor's crown of righteousness is now waiting for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on the day that he comes, and not only to me but also to all who eagerly wait for his appearing.

This crown of righteousness is the crown which is offered to those who wait for the second coming of Jesus eagerly and are already prepared to see him. Believers who wait for Jesus are the believers who have sacrificed themselves for him, who have fought the good battle, who have completed the race and who have kept the faith.

It is unimaginably important for us to always keep the second coming of the Lord in our mind and eagerly wait for that day. It stands as a proof that we love Jesus wholeheartedly. As I mentioned earlier, what matters for us most is the maturity.

Just like all babies are born with their lives, all believers who have been born from above are given a new eternal life. Little children are not yet privileged to receive any reward. Only mature sons are allowed to inherit the legacy of their fathers and bear the honor and responsibility of their fathers. Likewise, it is only mature Christians who are privileged to inherit the legacy with Jesus, to be crowned, to sit on the throne

of Jesus and to be richly rewarded.

Only those Christians who lead sanctified lives will be allowed to inherit the legacy with Jesus. Only those Christians who bear fruit will be crowned. It is only those who suffer on behalf of Jesus who will be allowed to sit on the throne of Jesus. The good deeds of Christians help them to bear rich fruits and receive rich rewards. However, we need to fulfill the required conditions in order to complete the callings of heaven. It is explained in the next verse;

Hebrews

3:6 but the Messiah was faithful as the Son in charge of God's household, and we are his household if we hold on to our courage and the hope in which we rejoice.

The word 'if' is used. We are not his household if we fail to meet the condition explained in here.

2 Timothy

2:12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us.

[New International Version]

If and then. It is clearly shown that there is a condition.

Revelation

3:21 To the one who conquers I will give a place to sit with me on my throne, just as I have conquered and have sat down with my Father on his throne.

We will never be crowned unless we meet all conditions. It is also stressed in the Epistle to Hebrews.

Hebrews

12:14 Pursue peace with everyone, as well as holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

12:15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up and causes you trouble, or many of you will become defiled.

12:16 No one should be immoral or godless like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

12:17 For you know that afterwards, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected because he could not find any opportunity to repent, even though he begged to repent with tears.

Esau was a son of Isaac and he had a birthright. Esau, having belittled his own birthright, sold it for some bread and lentil stew. Later, he claimed his birthright, but could never take it back. Those who believe in Jesus and accept him have eternal lives. Therefore, they will never perish. An eternal life is a life that will never be taken away.

However, it may happen to any Christians that they lose their birthright, that is to say, the call from heaven. Although Esau continued to be a son of Isaac, he lost his birthright. All those who have received the salvation of the Lord are destined to rule this world with the Christ. This is the call assigned to them. The branch of a vine tree would be thrown away if it does not bear any fruit at all. In other words, they will never be rewarded.

John

15:6 Unless a person abides in me, he is thrown away like a pruned branch and dries up. People gather such branches, throw them into a fire, and they are burned up.

Thorns and thistles are worthless and in the end, will be burned.

Hebrews

6:8 However, if it continues to produce thorns and thistles, it is worthless and in danger of being cursed, and in the end will be burned.

Maturity, calling of the heaven and crowns; these are the things that matter to us. Are we prepared to surrender everything to the Lord? However, it is meaningless to surrender ourselves with intent to receive something from the Lord in return. When we surrender ourselves to the Lord, we ought to do so through being embraced by the love of Jesus, unlike merchants seeking benefit.

What is the intention of the Lord?

John

6:40 This is my Father's will: That everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him to life on the last day.

What the Lord God has in his mind is for each one of us to be saved and to obtain an eternal life of Jesus. But, that is not all. It is not the end of the story. Let us look at what Paul wrote to the people in Thessaloniki;

1 Thessalonians

4:3 For it is God's will that you be sanctified.

We need to go through sanctification, transformation and growth in order to become someone who pleases the Lord God. However, the sanctification is not an ultimate goal of our life, but is a stepping stone on the way to being transformed to the image of the Lord Jesus.

Romans

8:23 However, not only the creation, but we who have the first fruits of the Spirit...

this refers to something like a forgiveness of our sins,

Romans

8:23also groan inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

As is written in here, we need to be adopted and be placed in the status of his sons. Until we are, we cannot inherit the legacy of Jesus and become rulers of this world. When it happens, we will be crowned for the first time as a reward. However, to be crowned is not what marks the end of our life. What will happen at the end of our lives? True worship.

Revelation

4:10 the 24 elders bow down and worship in front of the one who sits on the throne, the one who lives forever and ever. They throw their victor's crowns in front of the throne and say,

4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory, honor, and power, because you created all things; they came into existence and were created because of your will.

End