

## **CHAPTER FIFTEEN**

### **SALVATION BEING ETERNAL— POSITIVE REASONS**

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In the last few messages, we saw that there is a distinction between sin and sins in man. We saw how God loves us and gives His grace to us, how His grace is manifested in His righteousness, how the Lord Jesus has accomplished all the work for us, and what His death and resurrection have done. Furthermore, we saw how man can receive God's salvation. Man does not receive God's salvation through the law, good works, confession, prayer, and many other things. In the last message, we saw how to believe and what faith is. In this message, we will continue with our study.

The Bible shows us that the duration of God's salvation is eternal; it is not temporal. In other words, God's salvation is given to man eternally, rather than temporarily. Once a Christian is saved, there is no possibility for him to perish. I am not saying that there is no chastisement for a Christian once he is saved. Neither am I saying that there will not be judgment and loss of reward if a Christian is not faithful in the Lord's work after his salvation. A Christian can be disciplined in this age, and also be punished in the millennium. I am not saying that a sinner will be disciplined. I am saying that a believer whose work is not approved by the Lord will lose his reward at the time of the judgment seat of Christ. If a believer has sins that have not been repented of in this age, he will receive definite punishment in the coming kingdom. All of these are truths in the Bible.

The Bible also shows us that there is no possibility of a Christian being lost again, once he is saved. In other words, once we have been saved before God, we are eternally saved. Man always has the thought that even though he is saved, he does not know whether he will become unsaved after a while. God says that we have passed out of death into life (John 5:24). But we wonder whether or not we can pass out of life into death. God says that we will not perish but will have eternal life (3:16). But we wonder if we will not have eternal life but will perish. We do not know if our salvation before God can be shaken. However, after we read the Word of God carefully, we find that once a person is saved, he is eternally saved. We want to consider this question from two sides. First, we want to consider it from the positive side. Later, we will consider it from the negative side.

In this message, we want to see from the Bible how God's salvation is eternal. If God's salvation could be lost, what would happen to man? Later, we will consider this matter from the negative side. We will consider verse by verse all the Scripture that seemingly speaks of salvation not being eternal and being able to be lost. We will see whether or not the salvation granted to us by God can be lost. In this message we will consider what is mentioned on the positive side. We must see clearly whether or not the Bible says that we can lose the salvation that we have received.

## **GOD'S GRACE AND LOVE**

We have previously mentioned what grace is. All of the readers of the New Testament know that we are saved by grace. No one would be so incorrect as to say that salvation is by the law and not by grace. If a man says that a person is saved by the law and not by grace, he has never read the New Testament. This light is too great in the New Testament. Some things we can let go of easily. But we cannot let this matter go by in a light way. If salvation is by grace, then we can never be a debtor before God. If I show grace to others, I cannot expect any repayment. If I had any thought of repayment, and if I had any hope of being repaid, this would be a loan and not grace. If I give something to you with the hope that one day you will return it, this is not grace. If God gives us grace today with the hope that we will render good works to Him later, it is not grace either. There is absolutely no return regarding grace.

What does the Bible say about the way to receive eternal life? The gift of God is eternal life in Christ (Rom. 6:23). Therefore, the eternal life that we have received cannot be lost. What is a gift? A gift is a present from God. It is something that God gives to us. If others give something to us, can they ask for it back? We are not kindergarten children, giving others some candy one day and asking for it in return the next day. A gift is something given freely. If our salvation could be lost, Romans 6:23 would have to say, "The loan of God is eternal life in Christ." A loan can be reclaimed, but something that is given cannot be reclaimed. Once it is given, it is given forever. If eternal life is given to us in Christ, then it can never be reclaimed. The word gift in the original language clearly indicates that it is something given freely; it cannot be reclaimed. If it cannot be reclaimed, then there is no possibility of us losing the gift.

The Bible shows us clearly that God's gift is without repentance. Eternal life is an important item of God's gift. Salvation is also an important item of God's gift. There are many other items besides these. God's gift is given without repentance. If there is no repentance, how can God reclaim it? In order to reclaim it, there must first be regret. Without any regret, there can never be any reclaiming. At the same time, if there is any reclaiming, it is no longer a gift. With giving, there is no such thing as reclaiming. Can I say that I am giving something and then claim it back again tomorrow? I cannot do that. If it is given, it cannot be reclaimed.

God is not like us, wavering and changing frequently. He is not one way today and another way the next. Once God has given us something, He will never claim it back. As far as God's character is concerned, salvation is given to us as a gift rather than as a loan. Hence, we have to admit that it is eternal. Thank and praise the Lord that God never borrows and never lends. He never expects repayment; He only gives. God is too great. Not only does He never borrow or lend, He never sells either. God saves us by grace. God is so great that He cannot sell, borrow, or lend anything. He is so great that He can only give away. Hence, we see that the gift of God is eternal life.

Why does God have to give us eternal life? Why does He have to give us the gift in His Son? Most have probably read John 3:16 which says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish,

but would have eternal life." Why did God give His Son to the world? It is because He loves us. Why did God give to us eternal life? It is also because He loves us. If while we were yet sinners, God loved us to such an extent that He gave us the life of His Son, is it possible that after we become Christians and are weak and short of God's glory that He would reject us? If God's Son can die for us on the cross while we were yet sinners, can He refuse to love us after we have believed in Him merely because we are a little weak? If God's love cannot change, then there is no possibility for His grace to change either. He was so willing to give up His only begotten Son to die for our sins, and He had such a great love for us. Since the time He showed such love to us, has He completely changed? Does it mean that now that we have become Christians, He has decided to cast us into hell and not love us anymore? Humanly speaking, if He previously loved us so much that He would die on the cross for us, how could He have such a change today? How could we be unsaved again? This is impossible.

Not only is this impossible according to human reason, but God's Word also says the same thing. John 13:1 says, "Jesus...having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost." Hence, there is no change in the love with which God loves men. Inasmuch as His heart was full of love for us when He went to the cross, God is still loving us today. His love has not changed. His grace has not changed either. If we think that there is the possibility for salvation and eternal life to be lost, then we have to conclude that there is the possibility for God's love to change. But this is impossible! If the source cannot change, then the outflow will never change. If the life does not change, then the fruit produced cannot change. We must know God's heart. We must realize that God cannot claim His Son back. Romans 8:32 indicates that since God is willing to give us His Son, He cannot claim Him back.

Which do you think is greater: the Son of God or our salvation? Is the Son of God more precious? Or is the life that we have received more precious? Because we are fleshly, we think that the Savior is not that important, and that life is more important than the Savior. As long as we have life, everything is all right. We are not that concerned about the Savior. But in God's eyes, the Savior is more precious. He is more precious than our life. The Son of God is more precious than the life that we received. Hence, Romans 8:32 tells us that if God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? If God is willing to give up His Son for our sins, and if He is willing to give us this very Son freely, would He consider taking eternal life back from us after some consideration? Suppose a brother owes me ten thousand dollars and cannot repay this amount. If I am a rich man, I may say to him, "You are not able to pay your debt. But I am gracious. Here is ten thousand dollars. Take it so that you can pay your debt." Later, we may ride a tramway to the pier. The tram fare costs eight cents per person, but he may only have seven cents. He may say to me, "Can you give me one penny, for I am short one cent." I not only have many more pennies, but bank notes and other cash as well. But what if I asked him for the money back and told him that he had to pay back the penny. Would you not feel strange if I did this? Yesterday I gave him ten thousand dollars. Today I do not let him go for one penny. What is this? You would probably say that I have a high fever and that I am sick. Why would I not care about ten thousand dollars yet be concerned for one penny? If God has given us His only begotten Son through His great love, would He argue with us about

the salvation that we have received? We must remember that the difference between one penny and ten thousand dollars is far less than the difference between life and the Savior, between life and the Lord of life, and between the salvation we received and the only begotten Son of God. Since God has given us His only begotten Son, how can He ask for salvation back? For man to have such a thought shows not only ignorance and a lack of understanding concerning God's grace and love, but sheer unsoundness of mind. Only those who are unclear and unsound in their mind would say such a thing.

Thank God that He has given us His Son; He will not claim Him back. Besides His Son, He has also given us many other things such as eternal life and salvation. God has given us His Son and has also given us eternal life. If He cannot reclaim His Son, then neither can He reclaim the eternal life that we have received. Hence, according to God's grace, it is impossible to lose the salvation and the life that we have received. This is God's clear word to us.

### **GOD SAVING US WITH A PLAN**

Second, is our salvation an accident or a purposeful act of God? Is God's salvation like giving two pennies to a beggar that one happens to come across in the street? Or is God purposefully seeking to find a man to whom He can give money? Is God's salvation an accident, or is it according to a definite plan? Those who do not understand salvation may think that God's salvation is an accident. But all those who understand the Bible and who know God realize that His salvation is not an accident. Instead, it was planned long ago according to a definite plan. Romans 8:29 says, "Those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son." Verse 30, a parenthetical word, says, "And those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified." The salvation that we are talking about involves all the things covered in verses 29 and 30. The history of our salvation began with justification in verse 30. We were saved at the time that we were justified. We only know that we have believed in Jesus and that we have been saved and justified. We think that justification is our first encounter with God. We think that the first time we touched God in our life was when we were justified. But the Bible says that God touched us long ago. He knew us long ago. Our justification came afterwards. God's knowledge of us came first.

Some have said that Romans 8:29-30 is the only chain in the entire Bible. It is a chain of different rings linked together. This is a most precious and complete chain. The first ring of this chain is God's foreknowledge of man. The second ring is our predestination to be conformed to the image of His Son. The third ring is the calling of those who have been predestinated. The fourth ring is the justification of those who have been called. The fifth ring is the glorification of those who have been justified. It is a series of rings linked to one another. We think that we first knew God when we were saved and justified. But the Bible says that before we were saved and justified, God knew us already. Those whom God knew long ago, He marked out. To be marked out means to have a check mark put by our name, indicating that He has claimed us for Himself. For what purpose were we marked out? It is so that we would be like His unique Son, Jesus Christ. He not only wants one Son, Jesus Christ; He came to mark us out so that we would be identical to His Son. Those who were marked out are called. The ones who are called are known

by Him. He called the ones whom He knew and marked out. After He called them, He justified them.

If justification is the first step in a Christian's relationship with God, it does not matter much for us not to be justified again in the future. If I pick up two pennies today and throw them into the fire tomorrow, it does not matter much to me. Not to be justified is, of course, a loss on man's part. But God suffers no loss. However, we have to know that the history of our relationship with God does not start from justification and salvation. Rather, it starts from God's foreknowledge. God's foreknowledge is the beginning of everything. To be marked out is the second step. To be called is the third step. Only after the third step do we have justification. If we were to lose our justification and become sinners again, we would put a question mark on God's omniscience. Since God foreknew us and marked us out, how can we still perish after we are saved? A person predestinated by God can never be thrown into hell and burned like a piece of wood.

It is a simple thing for us to make a decision because we change so easily. One minute we can be in heaven, and the next minute we can be in hell. We may change once a day for the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year. But since God is God, His foreknowledge and predestination cannot be shaken. The God whom we know and whom we worship cannot change what He has decided. Because He has the foreknowledge, the predestination, and the calling, our justification is eternal. It is a small thing for us to lose our justification. But it is a great thing for God to lose His foreknowledge. For us to lose our justification does not mean much. But for God to make a mistake in foreknowing and calling us is a serious thing. God cannot annul justification without affecting His foreknowledge, predestination, and calling. If you take away one ring, the other three rings will not stand. Whenever our salvation is lost, God's foreknowledge, predestination, and calling are all negated.

In addition, there is another item. The Lord says, "Those whom He justified, these He also glorified" (v. 30). Unless God brings those whom He justified into glory, His work is not complete. If we cannot get into the new heaven and the new earth, and if we cannot enter into eternal glory, God's work is not complete. The last ring of God's work is glory. Until we are in glory, God's work is not complete. This is God's Word. What are we going to do with it? We cannot set it aside. God says that those whom He justified will enter into glory unconditionally. He does not say that those who are justified will enter into glory if they have good works. He does not say that only those whose works are approved can enter into glory. Neither does God say that those whom He justified must also be considered saved by man before they can enter into glory. There are no such conditions. All of the things that are mentioned here are related to God. It is God who foreknew. It is God who predestinated. It is God who destined us to be like His Son and to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. It is God who has called us and justified us. It is God who will bring us, the justified ones, into glory. It is also God who will bring us into the new heaven and the new earth to inherit the eternal glory.

Which of the rings is the greatest in the Bible? Some say that glory is the greatest. Others say that foreknowledge is the greatest. Actually, there is no difference between them; every one is the same. We cannot say one is greater than the others. As many as God foreknew, that many are marked out. As many as are marked out, that many are called. As many as are called, that many are justified. As many as are justified, that many will enter into glory. Hallelujah! Can God

foreknow that one hundred will be saved, but mark out only ninety, call only eighty, justify fifty, and merely bring ten into glory? God cannot change. It is impossible to mark out many and call a few. Please remember that the words "those whom" in these verses convey this meaning. "Those whom" He foreknew, these He also predestinated. "Those whom" He predestinated, these He also called. "Those whom" He called, these He also justified. "Those whom" He justified, these He also glorified. These "those whoms" join the five rings together. In the original language, the word "these" means "these people." So, those whom He foreknew, "these people" He also marked out. Those whom He marked out, "these people" He also called. Those whom He called, "these people" He also justified. Those whom He justified, "these people" He also glorified. We cannot be short of any one item. These are all works of God. If they were our works, we could get some saved by mistake because we do not know which ones should be saved. But if they are God's works, there can be no mistake. If we do not know God and His works, we may still think that there is the possibility of losing some people. But if we know God and His works, we will realize that no one can be subtracted or added.

The Bible says that God is eternal; He is not like us, having a beginning without an ending. God says that He is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega (Rev. 22:13). He says that He is the beginning and the ending. We sometimes have a beginning without an ending. At other times we have a good ending, but we do not know how to have a good beginning. But God is both the beginning and the end. God's work cannot stop halfway. If salvation is only the result of our work, then failing in regard to the matter of salvation only means that we have stopped halfway. But we know that salvation is God's work. It is God who has saved us. Hence, if we cannot be saved to the uttermost, this does not mean that we have stopped halfway; it means that God has stopped halfway. Certainly, we can never imagine that God can stop halfway.

Philippians 1:6 says that God has begun a good work in us. Since God has started it and has given us salvation Himself, He must complete this work until the day of Christ Jesus. We must remember that the work of God never stops halfway. He will complete this work until the day of Christ Jesus, that is, until God glorifies us. We can see how far-reaching is God's Word, how wide its scope, how long it lasts, and how deep its roots. Verse 6 says, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun in you a good work will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus." Either God will not start, or He will have to finish what He has started. If God was not willing to save us, that would be the end of the story. But if God's desire is to save us, there will be no way for us not to be saved. Therefore, we can say, "God, we thank and praise You, because our salvation is eternally secure." If it were up to us to follow up, we would fail. The work of following up is accomplished by Him; the work of preservation is also accomplished by Him. We can never follow up what He has started.

When I was in school, I had to practice Chinese calligraphy. Many times I was too lazy to do it, so I asked some classmates who were good at it to do it for me. Of course, later I made confession of this sin. Every week we had to submit five pages of calligraphy. All of them were done by my classmates. On one occasion after my classmate had finished one line of calligraphy, he was called away. He told me that he was busy and that I should finish what he had started. When I picked up the brush, I realized that I could never follow up on what he had started. His calligraphy was so fine that my characters simply

could not match his. In the same way, the work of salvation was started by God. He must be the One to conclude it. If we had to conclude it, we would never make it. If the work of salvation began with God and was followed up by us, none of us would be qualified to be saved. All those who want to follow up do not know God and do not know themselves. If we know Him, we will realize that there is no way for us to finish whatever He has begun. And if we really know ourselves, we will realize that we simply cannot follow up. The entire work of salvation is accomplished by Him. He has given us salvation. He will save us to the uttermost. We do nothing to preserve our salvation.

Hence, we see two things here. First, because the nature of God's salvation is grace, it is impossible for us to lose it. Second, since it is God who has started the work, who has foreknown and predestinated us, who has called and justified us, who has saved us, and who will bring us into glory, God's attribute would be put into question if we lost our salvation.

## **REGENERATION AND ETERNAL LIFE**

The third point that we need to consider is the salvation that God has given us. What has God done for us, and what has He given us? We all know that God has given us His life. He has regenerated us. All those who believe in Him and who receive Him are given the authority to become children of God (John 1:12). We are begotten of God, and we have the authority to become His children (vv. 12-13). John 3 says that we are to be born anew; it is the Holy Spirit who has regenerated us (v. 6). The first Epistle of John tells us how man can be regenerated. First John 5:1 says that everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God. How are we regenerated? We are regenerated through believing in Jesus as the Christ whom God appointed. After reading the above three verses, we can realize who we, as Christians, are. We are the children of God. When a sinner believes in the Lord Jesus and is saved, God gives him a new life. This is regeneration. The Bible shows us in at least three or four places that being regenerated is to receive eternal life. The Bible repeatedly shows us that those who receive eternal life are the ones who have believed, and those who believe have eternal life. This is shown to us repeatedly by the Gospel of John.

Here we have a problem. God has given to us eternal life, but what should we do? We must realize that this is both the beginning and the end. If I do not desire to have a relationship with someone, I have to approach it in one of two ways. Since human relationships are bilateral, they always have two sides. Therefore, not having a relationship also involves two sides. First, there must not be a beginning. If there is not a beginning, there will not even be a relationship. Second, the relationship can terminate and die, in which case there will no longer be a relationship. For example, suppose I am a very bad son, a prodigal. There are two ways for my father not to have a relationship with me. First, he should not have begotten me. If there had not been a beginning, he would not have to be related to me. But if there has been a beginning, he cannot use the first way anymore. In this case, he can only wait day by day for me to die. When I die, my relationship with him will be over. If I am not born of him, I will have nothing to do with him. If I have died, I will also have nothing to do with him anymore.

What happened between God and us? God has begotten us. At the time that we believed in Jesus, God begot us with His Spirit and with His own life. We have become the children of God. Can



this relationship be severed? If you have a son today who is bad, undisciplined, and lawless, you can disown him in court. But the fact that you have begotten him still remains. He is still your son in reality. Today God has begotten us. Can He say that He has not begotten us? Even if we become worse than we are, we are still begotten of Him. Even if our father denies us, we are still begotten of him. No one can deny the fact of begetting. A good son is begotten of his father. A bad son is also begotten of his father. No one can nullify this relationship. Hence, when God justified us, He did not do it in the way that a person sends people away on the street with two pennies. He said that He has begotten us. God is in Spirit, and we are also in spirit. God and we have a father-son relationship. This is what God Himself has said. He has given us authority to become children of God. He has given to us eternal life. We are children of God by authority. That is the beginning.

What then can God do now? He can only hope for us to die. But the strange thing is that our relationship with Him begins with regeneration and ends with eternal life. Not only has God begotten us, He has also given us eternal life. If God had started the work but had been unable to complete it, we would be finished. In that case, we could not be saved. As far as the eternal life that we received from God is concerned, it is impossible for God not to save us. Thank the Lord that He has regenerated us and has given us eternal life, which is the life of His Son. If there is a man today who thinks that a Christian can perish again if he becomes weak and that only a good son will have eternal life, while a bad son will perish, this man does not know God's salvation. He may think that the Lord is a debt collector, coming to collect eternal life and redemption. If we do well, we can keep them. If we do not do well, He will take them back. This is not the salvation of God. The beginning has to be of Him. The continuation also has to be of Him. Since God has given us salvation, how can we lose our salvation? Since God has started this relationship, and the life we received is an eternal life which can never cease to exist, we can never perish again.

God gave us another type in the Bible to show us that we can never lose our salvation once we have received it from God. Genesis 3 is a familiar passage to us. It tells us how Adam sinned. After Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God drove him from the garden of Eden and guarded the way to the tree of life with the cherubim and the flaming sword that turned every way (v. 24). Why did God have to surround the entrance to the tree of life with the flaming sword and the cherubim? Why did He not allow Adam to eat of the fruit of the tree of life? Genesis 3:22 says, "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever." Here we see a picture. We all know that the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil signifies independence from God. The fruit of the tree of life, on the other hand, signifies life—the life given to us by the Son of God. After Adam sinned, God was afraid that Adam would eat of the fruit of the tree of life and that if he ate of it, he would not die. If Adam could still die after eating the fruit of the tree of life, then why did God have to do so much work? Why did He have to guard the way to the tree of life with the cherubim and the flaming sword? God did this because He was afraid that Adam would live forever if he ate of it.

We are those who have been redeemed. What we have eaten is not the fruit of the tree of life, which is a type only. We have eaten Life Himself. Can we still die? If Adam could not die after having eaten a symbolic fruit, how can we die after having been washed by the blood of the Lord



Jesus, having eaten of the tree of life itself, and having received eternal life? Adam knew the tree of life as a type, whereas we have received what the tree of life typifies. How can we possibly die? Only those who do not know what regeneration is and what eternal life is can say that salvation can be lost. Thank the Lord that eternal life is a fact that can never be annulled. It is a history that can never be blotted out. This is why we can live before God. What grace God has bestowed upon us! The relationship between God and us is such that we can strongly say that no power on earth can separate us from Him. Even if God were to be unhappy about it, He cannot annul this relationship.

## **WE BEING THE MEMBERS OF CHRIST**

Let us look at a fourth point. When we were saved, not only did God regenerate us and give us eternal life; He made us one spirit with the Lord. First Corinthians tells us that we have not only become one spirit with Christ, but we have become members of His Body (12:27). In 1 Corinthians 6:15 we have the same word. It says that our bodies are the members of Christ. Hence, when an unbeliever is saved, not only has he received regeneration and eternal life from God, but he at the same time is joined to the Body of Christ to become a member of the Body of Christ. The Bible says that we are the Body of Christ.

If God saves us one by one in Christ, and if Christ died for us, washed away our sins, gave us eternal life, and caused us to have a life relationship with Him to become His members, what is our end? Salvation includes being a member of the Body of Christ. If we were to perish, what would the end be? The end would be that the Body of Christ would be maimed. This Body would either be short of an ear or short of half a nose. It would either be one finger short or one toe short. The Body of Christ is a definite truth in the Bible. It is a concrete thing. If we have become one Body with Christ after being saved, the perishing of any one person will mean the missing of a part of the Body of Christ, and the Body of Christ will be maimed.

Once a black slave woman was working in the home of a white family. The lady of the house was a nominal Christian, but the black woman was a genuine believer. All day long the slave woman sang joyously. The lady was so bothered by the joyous singing that she could not refrain from asking why she was so happy. The woman told her, "Don't you know that God has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to wash away all of our sins? Don't you know that we will be with God in the future? Why should I not be joyous?" The lady asked, "How do you know that you will be with God in the future? What happens if you are lost?" The slave said, "The Lord Jesus told us that the Father is greater than all. I am in my Father's hands. These hands are upholding me and preserving me. How can I be lost?" The lady thought about it for a while and then said, "But you are a fool! If God is greater than all, His hands would be large! If things can slip through your fingers, then things can slip through His fingers also. Since His hands are large, the space between His fingers must also be wide. If you slip through His fingers, He would not even notice it. You claim that His hands will protect you. But God is so great, and you are so small. There is no comparison between you and God. If you slip out of His hand, He will not know it." The woman answered, "Madam, you do not understand. I am not only in His hand, I am a little finger in His hand. If I were only in His hand, He may not notice when I slip out. But if I am a little

finger in God's hand, how can I slip away?" If a man has believed and has become a Christian, he is a member of the Body of Christ and is a little finger in God's hand. If I am a member of the Body of Christ, God will never allow me, as a member, to slip away. I thank the Lord today that I can never slip away.

First Corinthians 12 says that if one member in the body suffers, all the members suffer (v. 26). We cannot have one finger hurting while the other members remain unaffected. If every believer is a member in the Body of Christ, then if one day one of us were to suffer in hell, everyone else would feel the hurt in heaven. If one person perishes, then every Christian will have to perish as well. This is the oneness of the Body of Christ.

Not only does 1 Corinthians tell us that we are the members of the Body of Christ, but other books tell us the same. The book of Ephesians talks about the process that the Body of Christ goes through. It also says that we are the members of Christ, but in a different way. First Corinthians talks about the relationship and sphere of the members. Ephesians talks about the future of the members. Ephesians 5:29-30 says clearly, "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church, because we are members of His Body." We are the members of the Body of Christ. Let us read the preceding verses. Verses 25 through 27 say, "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her that He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word, that He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish." If we read the entire portion from verse 25 to verse 30, we will discover one thing—the church is the Body of Christ. Christ is washing the church by the water in the word. He will continually wash her until she becomes holy. The end is to present her to Himself a glorious church. If there are any lost ones in the church, we will have a maimed Body, and there will not be the presenting of a glorious church. The persons will not even remain, much less the glorious church. This church has no spot or wrinkle or any such things. What does this mean? Ephesians 5 explains, "But that she would be holy and without blemish." To be without blemish is to be without any spot. If it is possible for the members of Christ to perish, then not only will there be blemishes, but maimed parts as well. But the Bible says that this Body is not only without maimed members; it is without any blemish.

Hence, we cannot lose our salvation. Since Christ will have a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, one that will be presented to Him holy and without blemish, none of us can perish.

## **WE BEING THE SPIRITUAL HOUSE GOD IS BUILDING**

Fifth, the church is not only a Body. When the individual Christians come together before God, they become a temple. Every Christian is like a stone, and the church is the spiritual house that God is building. The Lord Jesus is the foundation of this spiritual temple. He is a great stone. Every Christian is a small stone built upon the Lord Jesus to become the temple of God and the habitation of God. This is what is spoken of in 1 Peter 2:5. If there were a possibility for Christians to perish, the temple of God would become more unsightly than our run-down meeting hall; one minute the stones would be taken out, and another minute they would be put back in again, and the walls would be full of holes. If that were the case, why would God not make up His mind before He saved men? God intends that we be built up into a spiritual house.

If it is a spiritual house, then not one stone can be lost. If any stone can be lost, the spiritual house would be in trouble and would not be up to standard.

The Old Testament record in 1 Kings 6:7 tells us how the temple of Solomon was built. Chapter five is an account of Solomon sending men to the mountains to cut the stones. The stones were cut in the mountains. By chapter six, they were moved to mount Moriah for the building. Hence, when the temple was being built, there was no sound from iron tools. There was no need for further cutting. The skilled workmen had calculated accurately and prepared everything on the mountain before the materials were moved to the building. There was no more need of improvement; everything was done properly. If while building the earthly temple, Solomon's skilled men could cut the stones so well that they were exact in every way and had no need for improvement, could God change us, the living stones, once every two or three days when He builds the spiritual temple? Could God have such oversight? Would God not know how to calculate? Is God worse than man? In the Old Testament, God used men to build. In the New Testament, He builds by Himself. Is God's own work inferior to man's? If the believers are stones for the building of the spiritual house, can they be lost? Therefore, if we are in God's temple, we can never be lost.

## **HAVING THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE SEAL AND THE PLEDGE**

Sixth, there is another very important and wonderful thing. At the time that every unbeliever is saved, not only does he receive eternal life and become a member of the Body of Christ and a living stone in the temple, but he receives the Holy Spirit as a seal. God places the Holy Spirit in him as a seal. Ephesians 1:13 says, "In whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise." Is that not our history? We have heard the gospel of our salvation and have believed in Christ. What happened after we believed? We were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit as the seal. It is very obvious that the Holy Spirit does not belong just to some special Christians and that only specially sanctified Christians have life. Verse 13 says that all who have heard the gospel of salvation and who have believed, have received the Holy Spirit as the seal. This proves that the seal of the Holy Spirit is something that all Christians have in common. As soon as one believes, he is saved and has the Holy Spirit as the seal.

What does it mean for a Christian to have the Holy Spirit as the seal? What is a seal? There are over three million people in Shanghai. How does God know who belongs to Him and who does not? If you bring me a Bible today, how do I know that it is yours? There are countless Bibles like yours. The Bible Society recently published a report saying that it sold over eleven million Bibles last year. Among all those Bibles, how do you know which one is yours? When you go home and put a seal on your Bible you know that it is yours. Even if you were to mix this Bible with all the Bibles in the world, you could still identify it as yours. Today, because there are so many people in the world, how do you know who belongs to God and who does not? God has put a seal on you, proving that you belong to Him. God did not seal you on your forehead with a

large wooden chop. He is not like the coming Antichrist, who will place a mark on man's forehead. God put the Holy Spirit in you as a seal. All those who have the Holy Spirit belong to God. All those who do not have the Holy Spirit do not belong to God. At the time a person is saved, God does a sealing work on him and puts the Holy Spirit within him to prove that he is of God.

If the seal of the Holy Spirit in us can be erased, then it is possible for us to perish; we may be considered as not belonging to Him. We may be considered as typical people in the world or even as God's enemy. But if this seal is within us, then we belong to God. How long will the seal of God be in us? The last part of Ephesians 4:30 says, "In whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption." "Whom" refers to the Holy Spirit. The previous clause says, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." This seal will last unto the day of redemption. How long does the Bible say that we will have the seal of the Holy Spirit? We will not have it for merely three or five years, or for three or five hundred years, but until the day of redemption. What is the day of redemption? Romans 8 says that the day of redemption is the day when the Lord Jesus will come back. The day of redemption is the day when our bodies will be redeemed (v. 23). Hence, this denotes the day when the Lord Jesus comes back. The seal of the Holy Spirit remains in us until the coming again of the Lord Jesus.

When the Lord Jesus comes again (not the time of the first rapture at the beginning of the tribulation, but at the time that the whole Body will be raptured), all the believers will be taken up into the air. The Lord Jesus will send the angels to come and gather these believers. The angels are limited. They are not omniscient; they do not know everything. The angels are the servants sent out to invite the guests. When these angels see all those with the seal of the Holy Spirit, they will gather them. Hence, the Holy Spirit is not in us for three or five days, or for three or five hundred days, but in us until the day of rapture. Today if a man says that he can lose his salvation and perish, then I will ask him what he will do with the seal of the Holy Spirit. Since God has said that we have been sealed by Him, there is nothing we can do to remove this seal. God has said that this seal will remain until the day of Jesus Christ and the day of rapture.

In John 14 the Lord Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will be with us forever (v. 16). Once the Holy Spirit of the New Testament comes into us, He will never leave us. Never believe in the diagram that some Christians display, which depicts a man with a heart full of snakes, pigs, dogs, and many other animals. Next to the heart is a dove representing the Holy Spirit. When a person's heart is clean, the Holy Spirit supposedly will come into him and stay there, and all the other animals will depart. But if his heart is not clean, the dove will fly away, and all the other things will come in. This is absolutely wrong! The Holy Spirit can never fly away.

The Bible says that we should not grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). Grief is the expression of love; anger is the expression of hate. Wherever there is hate, there is anger. Wherever there is love, there is grief. Please remember that both anger and grief come from mistakes. In both cases they are caused by mistakes. If there is love, mistakes will result in grief. If there is hate, mistakes will result in anger. If you love a person, you will grieve for his mistakes. If you hate a person, you will be angry about his mistakes. Both are caused by the same thing—mistakes. But the results are different. Here, it is not anger, but grief. The Word does not say not to anger the Holy Spirit. Rather, it says not

to grieve the Holy Spirit. He is not upon us, but in us. When He sees our failure, He grieves within us; He will not go away. Why will He not go away? It is because He is a seal. As a seal, He will be in us until the day of redemption. If we read the Word of God, we will not be able to deny this fact.

In the Old Testament, Psalm 51 records a very precious prayer. There David prayed that the Lord would not take His Spirit of holiness from him (v. 11). But in the New Testament, no believer can pray this prayer. Those who do not know the Bible may pray that God would not take the Holy Spirit from them. But those who know the Word of God know that the Holy Spirit can only be grieved within us; He will not go away. I am not saying that it is all right for Christians to sin. I am saying that at the time that we were saved, the Holy Spirit entered into us to be our seal. This fact has nothing to do with our weakness or our sin. The two are entirely different matters.

If we perish, who really suffers? If I lose a hymn book, of course, the hymn book suffers. But the first one to suffer is me. I have spent the effort to obtain the hymn book. I have paid the price and the money to obtain it. Hence, I am the one who suffers the most. How did God gain us? We were dead in sin and fallen. God caused His Son to die for us and shed His blood to redeem us with a great price. Do not think that if we lose our salvation only we have lost it and only we have suffered. Remember that we have been purchased by God. If we lose our salvation, God will also lose something. We have been purchased by His blood. Why does God preserve us? God preserves us for His own sake. If we are lost, the One who suffers is not us, but God.

The biggest problem today is that we do not believe how important we are in God's hands. Man finds it difficult to believe that God loves him. He finds it difficult to believe that God wants him. He always thinks that he is dispensable to God. God has given up His Son for our sake and has sent His Son into the world to pass through all the sufferings for our sake. He was crucified on the cross for the purpose of gaining us. If He does not care, then who would care? If I do not safeguard my hymn book, would my hymn book keep track of itself? Ephesians 1:13 says that the Holy Spirit is in us as a seal. Following this, verse 14 tells us that the Holy Spirit comes to be the seal because we are God's acquired possession. Therefore, we can tell the entire world that we are God's possession. It is not a question of our losing or not losing. It is a question of God's losing or not losing. It is not we who are keeping watch. We do not have to exhaust our mind over this matter. The whole work is His. If it were not, why would He send His only begotten Son to the cross? If He has exerted great effort and paid a great price to send His Son to the cross, He must exert greater effort and pay a greater price to keep us from being lost.

Suppose we have a most precious and expensive diamond ring, a very precious pearl, or an expensive gem. However much we spent to acquire it, we will spend the same amount to preserve it. If we bought it for ten thousand dollars, we would not lose it easily; we would surely guard it closely. We have to realize that we have been purchased by God with the greatest price. We were saved by the Son of God. The Son of God is greater than the entire world and the entire universe. Do not think that God does not care for us. God treats us in the same way that we treat our own treasure. It was the good shepherd that

sought out the sheep (Luke 15). It was not the sheep that sought out the good shepherd. The Lord Jesus said that one day He would die for even one of His lost ones. It is not the sheep's business. It is the good shepherd who died for the sheep. Before God, we are those who have been purchased by Him. If we are lost, God is the One who will suffer. Therefore, we must remember that since we have the Holy Spirit as a seal, there is no possibility for us to be lost.

Can the grace which God gives to man be preserved by man? If it were preserved by man, we would have lost it long ago. Not only would we have lost it, even Peter and Paul would have lost it. We have to realize that God has already set us aside completely. Everything is of God. God alone has saved us. God alone is preserving us. May God show us clearly how long our salvation lasts, so that we can remove all fleshly thoughts and accept His thoughts.