

## **CHAPTER TWENTY**

### **HOW GOD DEALS WITH THE BELIEVERS' SINS— DISCIPLINE AND REWARD**

We have to differentiate two things in the Bible: God's discipline of believers in this age and their salvation in eternity. In the previous message, we saw the first difference. In this message, we are going to see the second. Hebrews records the matter of the discipline of the believers. Now we have to see what are the kinds of people that God disciplines and what is the purpose of this discipline.

#### **THE MOTIVE AND GOAL OF DISCIPLINE**

Hebrews 12:5-6 says, "And you have completely forgotten the exhortation which reasons with you as with sons, 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when reproved by Him; for whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.'" Here, we see clearly that the motive of discipline is the love of God. Those who receive God's discipline are the sons of God. If someone is not a son of God, God will not discipline him. You can never find in the Bible that God disciplines an unbeliever. God does not waste His time and energy to discipline all the people on this earth. It is the same with us. We do not discipline our neighbors' children. If the neighbors' children do not dress well or do things properly, we do not discipline them. Only when it is a case of our own children do we discipline them. Therefore, the realm of discipline is confined only to Christians, and the motive of discipline is love. It is not because God hates man that He disciplines him. He disciplines man because He loves him. Revelation 3:19 also says that God disciplines because of love.

Hebrews 12:7-8 says, "It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom the father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all sons have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons." Therefore, the extent of discipline is limited to the children only. Verse 9 says, "Furthermore we have had the fathers of our flesh as discipliners and we respected them; shall we not much more be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?" If we accept the discipline of our parents in the flesh, how much more should we accept the discipline from our Father, the Father of spirits.

Verse 10 says, "For they disciplined for a few days as it seemed good to them; but He, for what is profitable that we might partake of His holiness." This tells us the purpose of discipline. It is not because God likes to discipline us that He does it. Neither is it because He wants us to suffer. He disciplines us so that we can partake of His holiness. If a Christian lives in a very loose way on earth, without manifesting God's nature and holiness, God's hand will fall heavily on such a one. God does not like to chastise us. His purpose is to have His holiness manifested in us. He will only stop disciplining us when His holiness is manifested in us. Therefore, we see that discipline does not prove that we are not the Lord's. Rather, it proves that we belong to the Lord. There is no need of discipline for someone who does not belong to the Lord. Only those who belong to the Lord are qualified to be disciplined.

There is a big difference between punishment and discipline. God's disciplining of His children is not His punishment upon them. Even when God chastises them, this chastisement is not a punishment, but a discipline. Discipline is with a definite goal, which is that we may partake of His holiness, that we may not live foolishly day by day. After a Christian believes into the Lord Jesus, although he will never lose his salvation, he may receive severe chastisement from God. We should never say that a Christian can do whatever he wants after he is saved. The Bible clearly tells us that after a Christian is saved, even if he is defeated and fallen, he will not perish eternally and will not lose eternal life. However, he will receive God's chastising on earth today.

We should not make the mistake of thinking that because we are eternally saved, we can live loosely on this earth. No one can refute the fact that once a person is saved, he is eternally saved. This is a fact. If a Christian unbridles his lusts, commits sins, falls into defilements, and does not have God's holiness, God will extend His hand and will discipline such a one through his environment, his family, his personal health, and his future plans. He may encounter difficulties in his family. He may experience much illness and misfortune in his environment. The purpose of God in allowing these things to fall upon him is not a matter of punishing him; they are not there to give him a hard time, but to make him partake of God's holiness and to become worthy of the grace of His calling. This is the proper understanding of salvation.

One should not say that if a Christian does not do good, God will deny that he is a child of God and kick him out like a dog. If one would say such a thing, either he is blind to the work of the cross of Christ, or he thinks that the work of Christ is a very light matter.

The Bible shows us that salvation is eternal. At the same time, the Bible also shows us that there are quite serious punishments among the believers. If we fail, there will be much punishment for us. God wants us to partake of His holiness. On this earth He wants us to live like sons of God. He does not want to intimidate us with hell so that we will pursue holiness. To be saved is totally of grace, but God has His way to lead us into His holiness. He causes us to encounter many things in our families, in our bodies, in our career, and in our environment so that we will turn back to Him. This is the purpose of discipline.

Ananias and Sapphira were believers; they were saved. They committed the sin of lying to the Spirit, and they received a very severe discipline (Acts 5:1-10). At one time, I thought that perhaps Ananias and Sapphira were not saved. By reading the Bible carefully, one has to acknowledge that they were saved because they were with the disciples at the time of Pentecost. In addition, they also made an offering. They were only after some vain glory. Their sins were not as severe as one would think. They did not get drunk or commit fornication. The fact that they were taken from the world quickly proves that they were believers. If they were worldly people, they probably would have lived much longer. The fact that they were removed quickly from the world proves that they were our brother and sister.

The Corinthian believers did not respect the Lord's table meeting. They did not respect the Body of the Lord, and they treated the Lord's supper loosely. What were the results of these things? Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:29-30, "He who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not discern the body. Because of this many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep." The disciplining hand of God makes people

sick and weak and even causes them to die. God treated them this way because they treated the Body of the Lord lightly. They did not see the Lord's death nor the work of Christ, and they did not see the Body of Christ. They did not see the respect they should render to the Lord Jesus, and they did not see their proper standing in the Body of Christ. This resulted in weakness, in sickness, and even in death. After they had sinned, God disciplined them.

Verse 32 says, "But being judged by the Lord, we are disciplined that we may not be condemned with the world." There is a purpose in God's discipline. It is to save us from condemnation in the future. God disciplines us so that we will not fall into the condemnation that the world will receive. In other words, discipline proves that we are saved. Discipline preserves our salvation. God's way and our way of doing things are totally different. We think that if we tell people that they are saved, they will be loose and unrestrained. God is not like this. He proclaims clearly, absolutely, and without limitation to all those who believe in Him that all who believe have eternal life and will not perish. But He has His way of saving us from sinning and keeping us from being wanton and loose Christians. His discipline is a substitute for our being condemned. Man may think that condemnation is the best method to keep us from sinning, but God does not use the way of condemnation. Rather, He uses the way of discipline. It is very clear that God separates the believers from the worldly people by discipline. The matters of discipline and salvation must be clearly differentiated. Discipline is exercised only for the present and has nothing to do with our eternal salvation.

There is a good example in 1 Corinthians to show that discipline for a Christian proves that he is saved. Even if a Christian has committed a very gross sin, he is still saved. First Corinthians 5 talks about a Christian who committed adultery. Such an act of adultery with one's stepmother was not even found among the unbelievers. Those who are clear about the law of Moses would say that this person will surely perish and is guaranteed to go to hell. But surprisingly, 1 Corinthians shows us clearly that here is one who had committed a very grave and despicable sin; it is a sin that is not committed by ordinary people. Paul says that with the power of the Lord Jesus, he delivered such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that is to allow Satan to exhibit his power on the body of this one to cause him to be weak, to be ill, and even to die. The purpose of Paul in doing this was that this one may be saved in the day of the Lord. Discipline is something for this life. It is absolutely not related to salvation in eternity. If it were up to us, we would say, "It is finished. Although such a one has been saved, surely he will perish again because of committing such a gross sin." However, Paul says that this one will not perish even though he has committed such a sin. A saved one can temporarily receive discipline, but he cannot be penalized with eternal perdition. This is the teaching of Paul. A Christian can have temporary discipline in this age, but he cannot perish eternally. We may need discipline, but we will still be saved in eternity. Paul made a clear distinction between these two things many times in the New Testament. The destruction mentioned here and the sleep mentioned before relate to the body only; they do not refer to the spirit. The matters of the spirit and of eternal salvation were decided already when we believed in the Lord.

Some people have a problem with 1 John 5:16, where it says that we should not make request for anyone who has committed a sin unto death. They have this problem because they do not understand the Word of God. They think that to sin unto death as spoken of here means perdition. Actually there is no such thing. First John 5:16 tells us of some people who sinned to the extent that God would have them die and their flesh removed from the world. The death mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11, the destruction in 1 Corinthians 5, and the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira are all deaths of the flesh and have nothing to do with the death of the spirit. Discipline is totally a matter with the body. Therefore, in the Bible, many places which seem to say that believers may perish are actually speaking about discipline.

## **REWARD AND GIFT**

Now we want to see the third difference—the difference between reward and gift, in other words, the difference between the kingdom and eternal life. There are many Christians in the church today who cannot differentiate between the kingdom of the heavens and eternal life. They think that the kingdom of the heavens is eternal life and that eternal life is simply the kingdom of the heavens. They have mixed up the Word of God, taking the condition for the receiving of the kingdom as the condition for the preservation of eternal life. They take the losing of the kingdom as the losing of eternal life. However, the distinction between these two is very clear in the Bible. One may lose the kingdom of the heavens, but he will not lose eternal life. One can lose the reward, but he will not lose the gift.

What then is the reward, and what is the gift? We were saved because of the gift. God gave the gift to us freely by His grace; therefore, we were saved. The reward pertains to the relationship between us and the Holy Spirit after we were saved. When we were saved, we were related to Christ. This relationship allows us to obtain the gift that we are absolutely unworthy of receiving. Similarly, after we have been saved, we have a relationship with the Holy Spirit. This relationship allows us to obtain the reward which we could not otherwise obtain by ourselves. If one believes in the Lord Jesus as Savior, accepting the Lord Jesus as life, this one is saved before God. After he is saved, God immediately puts this one on a pathway, so that he will run in the race and will obtain the reward placed before him. A Christian is saved because of the Lord Jesus. After he is saved, he has to manifest the victory of Christ by the Holy Spirit day by day. If one will do this, then at the end of the race, he will obtain the heavenly glory and the heavenly reward from God.

Hence, salvation is the first step of this path, and the reward is the last step. Only the saved ones are qualified to gain the reward. The unsaved ones are not qualified for this. God has given us two things rather than one thing. God places the gift before the worldly people and places the reward before the Christians. When one believes in Christ, he receives the gift. When one follows Christ, he receives the reward. Gift is obtained through faith, and it is for the worldly people. Reward is obtained by being faithful and having good deeds, and it is for the Christians.

There is a big mistake in the churches today. Man thinks that salvation is the only thing and that there is nothing else besides being saved. He takes the kingdom of the heavens and eternal life as the same thing. He considers that since one is saved when he believes, he no longer has to be concerned with works. The Bible makes a distinction between God's part and man's part. One

part is the salvation given by God, and the other part is the glory of the millennial kingdom. To be saved has absolutely nothing to do with one's works. Once anyone believes in the Lord Jesus, he is saved. But after his salvation, God immediately places the second thing before him, telling him that besides salvation, there is a reward, a coming glory, a crown, and a throne for him. God puts His throne, crown, glory, and reward before the believers. If one is faithful, he will obtain these. If he is unfaithful, he will lose them.

Therefore, we do not say that good works are useless. However, we do say that good works are useless as far as salvation is concerned. Man cannot be saved by his good works. Neither can he be prevented from salvation by his evil works. Good works are applicable to the matter of the reward, the matter of the crown, the matter of the glory, and the matter of the throne. Good works are useless regarding the matter of salvation. God cannot allow man to be saved by his work; neither will He allow man to be rewarded by his faith. God cannot allow man to perish because of his evil works. God can determine only man's salvation or perdition by whether or not he believes in His Son. Similarly, God cannot determine a man's receiving of His glory by whether or not one believes in His Son. Whether or not you have His Son in you determines the matter of eternal life or perdition. Whether or not you have good works before God determines the matter of receiving the reward and the glory. In other words, God will never save a person because he has merits, and He will never reward one who has no merit. If someone has merits, God will not therefore save such a one. On the other hand, God will never reward anyone who has no merit. Man has to come before God totally helpless and meritless in order for God to save him. But after salvation, we have to be faithful, and we have to endeavor to produce good works through His Son Jesus Christ in order to obtain the reward.

Please do not think that good works are useless. We are saying that good works are useless towards salvation. Good works have nothing to do with salvation at all. Salvation depends on whether or not you would repent of your former position. It depends on whether you would have regret over your past to believe in His work on the cross and in His resurrection as the proof of your justification. This is the crux of all problems. The matter of work is related to reward. Work is useful, but only in the matter of reward.

Today's problem is that people will not differentiate between salvation and the kingdom. In the Bible, there is a clear distinction between salvation and the kingdom and between the gift and the reward. Because people would not differentiate these matters, the question of salvation is mishandled, and the question of reward is also mishandled. God has never placed the matter of reward before the unsaved ones. God only wants the unsaved ones to obtain salvation. However, after salvation, God places the reward before them so that they will endeavor, pursue, and run after the reward. Salvation is not the last step of the Christian experience. Rather, salvation is its first step. After we have been saved, we have to run and pursue after the reward before us. The problem is that we think that our salvation is our reward. The sinners think that to be saved is to obtain the reward, and therefore they rely on their works. The Christians think that the glory is simply grace, and therefore they become foolish in their living. Please apply work only to reward and grace to salvation.

Through salvation God separates the saved ones from the unsaved ones; He separates the ones having eternal life from those being condemned. Similarly, God also separates His children into

two groups by His reward. Just as salvation separates the worldly people, in the same way, reward also separates God's children. God separates His children into the obedient and disobedient ones. With the worldly people, it is a matter of having faith and not having faith. With the Christians, it is a matter of being faithful or not being faithful. With the worldly people, it is a question of being saved or not being saved. With the Christians, it is a matter of having or not having the reward. Today's problem with God's children is that they magnify salvation too much; all that they see is simply salvation. They think that only when their work is taken care of can they be saved. As a result, they have no more time to pursue after the reward. If one has not passed through the first gate, he cannot pass through the second. May God be merciful to us that we would realize that the matter of salvation is solved already. It cannot be shaken, for it has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus already. It is fully done. Today what we have to strive for is the reward before us. There will be a big differentiation in the kingdom. Some will have glory, and some will not have glory.

Now we need to see on what basis reward is given. God's Word says that the reward is given because of work. Just as the Bible says clearly that salvation is by faith, in the same way the Bible says clearly that reward is by work. The Bible reveals to us that salvation is by the faith of the sinners, and the reward is by the work of the Christians. Faith is related to salvation; this is more than clear. Work is related to reward; this is also more than clear. One should not mix up these two.

Romans 4:4 says, "Now to the one who works, his wages are not accounted according to grace, but according to what is due." To give a reward to one who works is not grace, but a debt. In other words, how can one obtain a reward? Reward comes by works and not by grace.

Revelation 2:23 says, "And her children I will kill with death; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the inward parts and the hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your works." This verse says that the Lord will make all the churches know that He is the One who searches the inward parts and the hearts, and will give to each one according to his works. In other words, He will reward each one according to his works. How does He reward or recompense? It is according to our work. Of course, this work is not our own work. We only wash our clothes to be white in the blood. When the Holy Spirit lives out Christ in us, we have the works of a Christian. Some will live out Christ, and some will not live out Christ. All the capital comes from Christ. All the power also originates from Christ. But some let the Lord work within them and some do not. Therefore, this verse clearly shows us the matter of recompense. The matter of reward depends on whether or not a Christian is worthy. Today God will not save a person who is worthy, and in the future God will not reward a Christian who is not worthy.

First Corinthians 3:14 says, "If anyone's work which he has built upon the foundation remains, he will receive a reward." Here it says that if his work remains, he will be rewarded. It does not say that if his faith remains he will be rewarded. The matter of reward depends on one's work. The Bible distinguishes clearly between salvation and reward. It never mixes up salvation and reward, and it never mixes up faith and work. Without faith, man cannot be saved. Without good works, man cannot be rewarded. One's works must withstand before the judgment seat and survive under the scrutiny of the burning eyes before there is the possibility of receiving a reward.

Luke 6:35 says, "But love your enemies, and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great." Reward is entirely due to one's work. To lend money to another without hoping to be repaid is your work, and to love your enemy is your work. You have to do these to obtain the reward. Nowhere does the Bible mention that one has to love his enemies and do good before he can receive eternal life. Neither is there any verse that says one has to lend to others before he can be saved, or that he has to lend to others before he can avoid perdition. But there is such a verse that says if you lend to others and do good to others, your reward in heaven will be great. Reward is of work and not of faith. Faith can save you, but faith cannot help you obtain the reward.

Second Timothy 4:14 says, "Alexander the coppersmith did many evil things to me; the Lord will recompense him according to his works." Here an example is cited. A Christian was trying to hurt Paul; he had sinned against Paul. The person mentioned here was a Christian. He was not a worldly person. In the future, Christians will be rewarded before God according to their works.

## **THE REWARD BEING THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS**

Let us go on. Many people know that there is a difference between salvation and reward. But there are many people who do not see what the reward is. In the Bible, whether with the Lord Jesus, or with the apostles, the words they spoke concerning the reward and the kingdom were not spoken lightly, in the same way the gift and eternal life were not spoken of lightly. When the Lord Jesus says in the Gospel of John that He gives eternal life to His sheep, He is speaking reality and not some empty words (John 10:28). Romans 6 says that the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (v. 23). It is so clear that the gift of God is eternal life. What then is the reward? The Bible clearly shows us that the reward is the crown, the throne, and the kingdom of the heavens. The kingdom of the heavens is the reward. In the Bible, there are three aspects to the kingdom of the heavens. In the first aspect, the kingdom of the heavens is the outward manifestation of God's authority today; it is the outward manifestation of God's sovereignty. The Bible calls this the kingdom of the heavens. The second aspect is the authority of the heavens controlling and limiting man. This is also called the kingdom of the heavens. However, there is a third aspect of the kingdom of the heavens; it refers to the reward.

The Lord's sermon on the mount in Matthew 5—7 speaks of the kingdom of the heavens. These teachings of the Lord tell us how man can enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Matthew 5—7 repeatedly speaks of the matter of reward. We see very clearly that the words "the kingdom of the heavens" and the word "reward" are found together many times. Many are familiar with the Beatitudes. The Chinese call them the Eight Blessings. Actually, there are nine blessings in the Beatitudes. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Also, blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. The kingdom of the heavens is mentioned twice in these few blessings. At the end, the Lord says, "Blessed are you when they reproach and persecute you, and while speaking lies, say every evil thing against you because of Me. Rejoice and exult, for your reward is great in the heavens" (Matt. 5:11-12). Here we must admit that the reward is the kingdom of the heavens. The Lord begins by saying that this kind and that kind of people are blessed because the kingdom of the heavens is theirs. At the

end He says that these people are blessed because their reward is great in the heavens. These parallel sentences show us that the kingdom of the heavens is God's reward. There is no difference between the two.

In the sermon on the mount, the Lord mentioned the matter of the reward many times because this portion concerns the kingdom. Matthew 5:46 says, "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?" Matthew 6:1-2 says, "But take care not to do your righteousness before men in order to be gazed at by them; otherwise, you have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens. Therefore when you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward in full." Verse 5 says, "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites....They have their reward in full." Verse 16 says, "And when you fast, do not be like the sullen-faced hypocrites....They have their reward in full." Verse 4 says, "So that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you." Verse 6 says, "But you, when you pray, enter into your private room, and shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you." The last part of verse 18 says, "And your Father who sees in secret will repay you." Every reader of the Bible agrees that the main subject of the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5—7 is the kingdom of the heavens. But here, the matter of reward is also repeatedly mentioned because the kingdom of the heavens is the reward.

Matthew 16:27-28 says, "For the Son of Man is to come in the glory of His Father and with His angels, and then He will repay each man according to his doings." God will reward or punish a saved person according to his doings. "Truly I say to you, There are some of those standing here who shall by no means taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." There are three facts here. First, man will be rewarded according to his works. The matter of reward is entirely based on works. Second, at what time will the reward be given out? It will be given out when Christ comes in the glory of His Father with His angels. When Christ comes in the glory of His Father with His angels, that will be the time for Him to establish His kingdom on the earth. Hence, it is only when the kingdom begins that the reward will begin. Third, here is a type which speaks of a fact. The transfiguration of the Lord on the mountain typifies His manifestation in glory in the coming kingdom. By that time some believers will be rewarded.

The verses in Matthew 6 which we just read regarding the reward for giving, the reward for prayer, and the reward for fasting all involve reward. Some think that the reward for prayer is God's answering of our prayer. But this is not all that is meant. The Lord Jesus said that we have to pray to our Father who is in secret, and our Father who sees in secret will repay us. It may be possible to interpret this as the Father answering our prayer. However, both in the first part when the Lord mentions alms-giving, and in the second part when He mentions fasting, He said, "And your Father who sees in secret will repay you." This repaying must refer to something in the future. Furthermore, the Lord said that we have to pray to the Father who sees in secret. It does not say that the Father



hears in secret, but that He sees in secret. When God gives out the reward in the future, He gives according to what He sees. God sees with His eyes. Hence, the reward is in the future.

Revelation 11:15 says, "And the seventh angel trumpeted; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever." Verse 18 says, "And the nations became angry, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give the reward to Your slaves the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Your name, to the small and to the great." This verse clearly shows us that when the Lord becomes King and the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, that is the time for giving the reward to the saints, to the small and to the great. In other words, the time of the kingdom is the time of reward. Whenever the kingdom comes, the reward will come also.

There is a further point. The reward is the obtaining of the crown and the obtaining of the throne. Once a Western missionary told me, "If I cannot have the crown, at least I can have the kingdom." You can ask King Edward of England, if he loses his crown, will he still have the kingdom? What is a crown? It is not merely a hat beaten with gold and studded with diamonds. That kind of crown can be gained with a little money. What is a crown? A crown represents position in the kingdom. It also represents glory in the kingdom. If a crown is only a physical thing, it does not mean much. If one has money, he can make a golden one. If he does not have money, he can make a brass one or an iron one. Even if one is very poor, he can still make a crown out of cloth. In the future, it will not be a matter of one crown being bigger than the other in size, or one crown having more diamonds than the other. A crown stands for something. When one loses the crown, he loses the thing that the crown represents. We have to see that the crown is the symbol of the kingdom.

What is the throne? The Bible shows us that the twelve apostles will sit on twelve thrones. The crown is a reward for the overcomers, and the throne is also a reward for the overcomers. Hence, the throne is also a symbol of the kingdom. It represents position in the kingdom, authority in the kingdom, and glory in the kingdom. There is no such thing as losing the crown but still having the kingdom. Similarly, one cannot lose the throne but still have the kingdom. If one loses the throne, he will lose the kingdom. Similarly, if one loses the crown, he will lose the kingdom. The throne and the crown are not significant in themselves; they are there simply to represent the kingdom. In other words, the reward is the kingdom. The Bible clearly shows us that the reward is simply the kingdom.

## **JUDGMENT AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**

How will God give us the reward? The time for us to be rewarded is when Christ comes again to execute judgment. Peter tells us that judgment begins from the house of God. In the future, God will judge the Christians first, before He judges the worldly people. Concerning what will God judge us? He will not judge us for eternal salvation or perdition. That judgment has been taken care of on the cross. All our sins have been

judged on the cross, and the problem of eternal perdition has been resolved. But we Christians will be judged in the future. That judgment will determine whether or not we will participate in the kingdom. For some, not only will there not be participation in the kingdom, but there will be punishment as well. At that time, Christ will set up the judgment seat, and He will judge His believers at that judgment seat.

We will read two verses which are even clearer concerning this matter. Second Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or bad." Every one of us who has believed in the Lord will be manifested before the judgment seat. The word "judgment seat" is bema in the original Greek. It means a raised platform. Bema is the place where matters are settled in the family. This verse says that we must all be manifested before the judgment seat that each may be recompensed according to what he has practiced. Eternal salvation or death is a matter of believing. But the judgment of a Christian is according to what he practices, whether good or evil. This is the judgment before the judgment seat.

Regarding the kingdom, there are a few things which we must know. Whether or not one can enter into the kingdom is one thing. Even if one can enter into the kingdom, there will still be a difference of position in the kingdom. If one cannot enter into the kingdom, he will go into outer darkness or will be chastised. Therefore, after we have believed in the Lord, though our good work cannot save us, it will determine our status in the kingdom. Thank God that the question of our eternal life or death is settled, but we will still be judged before the judgment seat of Christ. That judgment is not for determining our eternal life or death. It is for determining our position in the kingdom.

There are many other verses in the Bible that show us that believers will be judged by the Lord Jesus before the judgment seat of Christ. Among these verses, 1 Corinthians 3 shows us most clearly how we will be judged by the Lord before the judgment seat. First Corinthians 3:8 says, "Now he who plants and he who waters are one, but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor." The subject here is how each one will be rewarded according to his own labor. Verse 10 says, "According to the grace of God given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid a foundation, and another builds upon it. But let each man take heed how he builds upon it." The foundation is Jesus Christ. Each one's own labor is the way each one builds. The way we build is determined by the material we use. Verses 12-15 say, "But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble, the work of each will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it is revealed by fire, and the fire itself will prove each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built upon the foundation remains, he will receive a reward; if anyone's work is consumed, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." This passage shows us that everyone who is building on this foundation is saved. The work which some build upon it will remain, and those ones will be rewarded. The work of some will not remain, and it will be consumed by fire. They will suffer loss, even though they will still be saved. Let us remember that there is still a judgment before us. That judgment will not determine whether or not we will perish, but it will determine whether we will receive a reward.

