

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, THE CHURCH LIFE, THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE,
AND THE COMING OF THE LORD, Week 3**

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

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

- Luke 9:23 And He said to them all, If anyone wants to **come after Me**, let him **deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me**.
- Luke 9:24 **For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake, this one shall save it.**
- Luke 9:25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world but **loses or forfeits himself?**
- Luke 14:26 If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and moreover, even his own soul-life, he cannot be My disciple.
- Luke 14:27 Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.
- Luke 14:28 For which of you, wanting to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?
- Luke 14:29 Lest perhaps, once he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all those looking on will begin to mock him,
- Luke 14:30 Saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish.
- Luke 14:31 Or what king, going to engage another king in war, will not first sit down and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet the one coming against him with twenty thousand?
- Luke 14:32 Otherwise, while he is yet at a distance, he sends an envoy and asks for the terms of peace..
- Luke 14:33 In the same way therefore everyone of you who does not forsake all his own possessions cannot be My disciple.
- Luke 14:34 Therefore salt is good; but if even the **salt becomes tasteless**, with what will its saltiness be restored?
- Luke 14:35 It is fit neither for the land nor for the manure pile; they will throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.
- Luke 17:26 And even as it happened in the days of Noah, so will it be also in the days of the Son of Man:
- Luke 17:27 They were **eating**, they were **drinking**, they were **marrying**, they were being **given in marriage**, until the day in which Noah entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all.
- Luke 17:28 Likewise, even as it happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;
- Luke 17:29 But on the day in which Lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.
- Luke 17:30 It will be in the same way on the day in which the Son of Man is revealed.
- Luke 17:31 In that day, he who will be on the housetop and his goods in the house, let him not come down to take them away; and he who is in the field, likewise, let him not turn back to the things behind.
- Luke 17:32 Remember Lot's wife.
- Luke 17:33 **Whoever seeks to preserve his soul-life will lose it, and whoever loses it will preserve it alive.**
- Luke 17:34 I tell you, In that night there will be two on one bed; the **one will be taken** and the **other will be left**.
- Luke 17:35 There will be two women grinding together; the **one will be taken** but the **other will be left**.
- Luke 17:36 Two men will be in the field; **one will be taken** and the **other will be left**.
- Luke 21:34 But take **heed to yourselves** lest perhaps your hearts be weighed down with debauchery and drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day come upon you suddenly as a snare.
- Luke 21:35 For it will come in upon all those dwelling on the face of all the earth.
- Luke 21:36 But be **watchful** at every time, **beseeking** that you would prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man.
- Hebrews 10:39 But we are not of those who shrink back to ruin but of them who have faith to the gaining of the soul.
- 1 Peter 1:7 So that the **proving of your faith**, much more precious than of gold which perishes though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
- 1 Peter 1:8 Whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory,
- 1 Peter 1:9 **Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**
- 1 Peter 1:13 Therefore girding up the loins of your mind and being sober, set your hope perfectly on the grace being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Soul and the Self

Luke 9:25 says, “For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself?” This verse does not speak of the soul of the soul-life but of the self. When this verse is compared with Matthew 16:26, we see that the **soul is the self and that the self is the soul**. However, there is still difference between the soul and the self. According to the context Matthew 16, the self in verse 24 is the **embodiment and expression of the soul** in verse 25. Moreover, the expression of the self is mainly **through the mind**. For this reason, verse 23 speaks of setting the mind on the things of men, not on the things of God. Therefore, in verse 23, 24, and 25 respectively, we have the mind, the self, and the soul. The soul is embodied in the self, and the self is expressed through the mind.

In verse 25, the word *soul* indicates enjoyment. If you consider the context of verse 25 through 27, you will see that the Lord was speaking about the enjoyment of the soul. To save the soul is to allow the soul to have its enjoyment. Thus, the self is the expression of the soul, and the soul itself is the enjoyment. **To lose the soul means to lose the enjoyment of the soul**, and to **gain the soul means to have the enjoyment of the soul**. (*Excerpt from The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church, chapter 5, section 1*)

Day 1

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

- A. In Luke 9:23-25 the Lord Jesus taught the disciples to take up their cross and follow Him by **denying their soul-life**:
1. To **save** the soul-life is to **allow** the soul to have its enjoyment and to **escape suffering**; to **lose** the soul-life is to cause the soul to **lose its enjoyment** and thereby to **suffer**—Matt. 16:25.
 2. To **lose** the soul-life is to **lose the enjoyment of the soul**, and to **save** the soul-life means to **preserve the soul in its enjoyment**—Mark 8:35.
 3. To **deny** the self is to **reject the soul’s desire, preference, and choice**—Luke 9:23.
 4. We must **deny** our soul, our soulish life, with all its pleasures in this age, so that we may **gain it in the enjoyment of the Lord in the coming age**—1 Pet. 1:9.
 5. If we allow our soul to suffer the loss of its enjoyment in this age for the Lord’s sake, we will **cause our soul to have its enjoyment in the kingdom age**; we will share the Lord’s joy in ruling over the earth—Matt. 25:21, 23.

Day 2

- B. In Luke 14:26-35 the Lord taught us to be **absolute in following Him** and to hate everything, even our own soul-life, that distracts, hinders, and frustrates us from following Him faithfully:
1. As the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13), the believers’ taste depends on their renouncing of the earthly things—Luke 14:33-34.
 2. Believers may **lose their taste**—their function in the kingdom of God—**by not being willing** to renounce all the things of the present life—v. 34.
 3. If the believers lose their taste, their function, they will be fit neither for the land, signifying the church as God’s farm (1 Cor. 3:9), which issues in the coming kingdom (Rev. 11:15), nor for the manure pile, signifying hell, the filthy place in the universe (21:8); having been saved from eternal perdition but being unfit for the coming kingdom, they will be thrown out from the glory of the kingdom in the millennium and be put aside for discipline— Luke 14:35.

Soulish Enjoyment

As tripartite men, we have three kinds of enjoyment: physical enjoyment, spiritual enjoyment, and psychological enjoyment. **Physical** includes the enjoyment of fine food and of a pleasant place to rest. **Spiritual enjoyment** includes the enjoyment of God’s presence, God’s blessing, God’s speaking, and God’s grace. Between the physical enjoyment and the spiritual enjoyment there is the **psychological enjoyment**, which includes things such as the enjoyment of sweet music, the satisfaction of being praised by others, and the pleasure of being with our intimate friends.

Which of these three types of enjoyment do you think is the highest? According to the New Testament, both the **physical enjoyment and the spiritual enjoyment are for the soulish enjoyment**. The reason for this is that God did not create man as a body or as a spirit but as a soul. In Matthew 11:29 the Lord Jesus said that if we would take His yoke upon us and learn from Him, we would find rest for our souls. This kind of rest, however, **needs to be supported by the rest of the spirit**. If our spirit does not rest in the Lord, our soul cannot be at rest. **Soulish rest needs to be supported by spiritual rest**. Those who attend nightclubs may be satisfied in a fleshly, soulish way, but they do not have the support of spiritual satisfaction. Because they lack this support, their fleshly and sinful satisfaction is vain. However, the rest we enjoy in our soul is lasting because it has the support of the rest in the spirit, the support of spiritual satisfaction.

The highest enjoyment is neither the physical nor the spiritual but the **soulish**. The physical enjoyment is for the soulish enjoyment, and the spiritual enjoyment supports the soulish enjoyment. As human beings, we all seek enjoyment. There is no one on earth who does not seek it. Even children desire enjoyment. The children’s enjoyment is mainly in their soul. Soulish enjoyment dominated their actions and behaviour. The behaviour of children is genuine because with them there is no performing. But as we grow up, our behaviour ceases to be genuine because we learn to perform. **Genuine enjoyment is soulish enjoyment**. Therefore, what the Lord was talking about in Matthew 16 was the soulish enjoyment. (*Excerpt from The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church, chapter 5, section 1*)

Day 3

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

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

The Rapture in Relation to Our Practical Living

In Luke 17:34 and 35 the Lord said, *"I tell you, In that night there will be two on one bed; the one will be taken but the other will be left. There will be two women grinding together; the one will be taken but the other will be left."* In these verses the rapture of the overcoming believers is revealed. It will occur secretly and unexpectedly, at night to some believers who are sleeping and in the daytime to some sisters grinding at home and to some brothers working in the field. **They are chosen because they have overcome the stupefying effect of this age.**

In 14:25-35 the Savior charged us to pay the price insofar as we are able that we may follow Him. In 16:1-13 He charged us to **overcome mammon** so that we may serve Him prudently as faithful steward. Here in 17:22-37 He charged us to **overcome the stupefying effect of self-indulgent living in this age** so that we may be raptured into the enjoyment of His Parousia (presence, coming). These charges are all related to overcoming in the believers' practical living.

In both 17:34 and 35 the Lord said that "the one will be taken." The Greek word for *taken* literally means "taken with." This word denotes the **rapture of the overcomers**, who do not preserve their soul-life by loving the worldly things of this age. Those who are taken in this way will be raptured before the great tribulation, which will be a severe trial upon the whole inhabited earth. To be thus **raptured to is to be kept out of the hour of trial** which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth.

The words *grinding* in Luke 17:35 and *in the field* in Matthew 24:40 signify working for a living. Although the believers should not be stupefied by the necessities of this life, they need to work for a living. Any thought of giving up proper work for a living is another extreme of Satan's tactics. (*Excerpt from the Life-Study of Luke, Chapter 39, section 3*)

Day 4

- D. In Luke 21:34-36 the Lord Jesus warns us to **take heed** to ourselves and to be **watchful** at every time, beseeching that we would “prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man”:
1. **Prevail** here means to have **strength** and **ability**; the strength and ability to escape the great tribulation come from **watching** and **beseeching**—v. 36.
 2. **Escape** refers to being **raptured** before the great tribulation—Matt. 24:21.
 3. All these things which are about to happen are all the things of the great tribulation.
 4. Stand before the Son of Man corresponds with standing in Revelation 14:1, indicating that the raptured overcomers will stand before the Savior on Mount Zion in the heavens before the great tribulation.

Day 5

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

- A. As we live under the government of God, we will be made **sorrowful** by various trials and experience the **proving of our faith**—vv. 6-7:
1. The trials in verse 6 are **sufferings that test the quality of our life as believers**.
 2. These trials are used by God to prove and try our faith to see whether we will **follow** Christ in suffering—2:19-23; 3:14-18.
 3. The emphasis in 1 Peter 1:7 is not on faith but on the **proving of faith by trials that come through sufferings**.
- B. The salvation of the soul in 1 Peter 1:9 means that our soul will be **saved from sufferings into the full enjoyment of the Lord at His revelation, His coming back**—v. 7; 3:17; 4:1, 12-16, 19:
1. At the Lord’s revelation, some believers will **enter into the joy of the Lord**, and some will **suffer in weeping and gnashing of teeth**—Matt. 25:21, 23, 30; 24:45-46, 51.
 2. To enter into the Lord’s joy is the **salvation of our souls**—25:21, 23.
 3. At the revelation of the Lord Jesus, His coming, our soul will be saved, and we will be **qualified to participate in the Lord’s enjoyment in the coming age**—1 Pet. 1:9, 13.

Day 6

- C. If we would receive as the end of our faith the salvation of our souls, we must not be “of those who shrink back to ruin but of those who have faith to the gaining of the soul”—Heb. 10:39:
1. The gaining, or saving, of our soul depends on **how we deal with our soul** in following the Lord after we are saved and regenerated.
 2. If we **lose** our soul now for the Lord’s sake, **we will save it**, and it will be **saved**, or **gained**, at the Lord’s coming back—Luke 9:24; 1 Pet. 1:9.
 3. The **gaining of the soul** will be the **reward** of the kingdom to the overcoming followers of the Lord—Heb. 10:35; Matt. 16:22-28.

Beseeching to be Kept Out of the Hour of Trial

In Luke 21:36 the Man-Savior charged us to be **watchful**. Instead of being stupefied or drugged, we need to be **vigilant**. Furthermore, at every time we need to **beseech**. This is not to pray in a general way; it is to pray in a particular way that we may prevail to escape the things that are about to take place. As we have pointed out, to prevail in this way is to have the strength and ability to escape the great tribulation. We should not be caught in the trend of today’s world. Instead, we need to escape this trend. **The strength and ability to escape come from being watchful and from beseeching**. If we pray in a particular way, we shall prevail to escape all the things that are about to take place.

We have seen that to escape the things that are about to take place is to be raptured before the great tribulation. This is also to be kept out of the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole inhabited earth to try those who dwell on the earth. Hence, the Lord’s word in 21:36 is the fulfillment of the promise He gives to the church in Philadelphia: *“Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth”* (Rev. 3:10). *Trial* here undoubtedly denotes the **great tribulation**, as indicated by the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets with the seven bowls. This trial may also include the supernatural calamities of the sixth seal and the first four trumpets.

In Revelation 3:10 the Lord promises the recovered church, the church in Philadelphia, that He will keep her out of the hour of trial. He will keep her not only out of the trial but also out of the *hour* of trial, **because she has kept the word of the Lord’s endurance**. This promise of the Lord, like that in Luke 21:36, indicates that **the saint who have kept the word of the Lord’s endurance will be raptured before the great trial**. This implies that those who have not kept the word of His endurance will be left in the trial. (*Excerpt from the Life-Study of Luke, chapter 48, section 2*)