

A LETTER ON THE JUDGMENT SEAT

Dear brother X,

This will be a lengthy response to your concerns about my understanding of the Judgment Seat of Christ. I am sorry if the reply seems so long, but this matter opens a wide door on many passages of Scripture that have not received adequate exposition in the past by many teachers, in my opinion. Actually, some of the topics I will touch upon will probably be absolutely new to you, and my treatment of them will probably be too brief.

I can only ask you to be prayerfully open about this response and the new ideas before you come to a conclusion. As an attempt to organize this response, I will use headings throughout the letter. Before beginning the details of the response, I want to tell you that I appreciate your care for the preservation of the perfect redemptive work of Christ, as well as your desire to honor His Word in every way. I can tell you that I share that concern as one who also has been feeding upon His holy Word for many years. Even if we end up having divergent views on this topic, I hope that we will have a mutual respect for one another's sincerity in the exercise of interpretation, and grant one another the liberty for each to "be fully convinced in his own mind." (Rom. 14:5)

HONEST EXEGESIS

When considering the interpretation of a passage, I feel we should be bound by accepted rules of exegesis. We should honor what the Word actually says, according to the meaning of the words, the grammar, the context, and the historical background. We should also base our teachings on what the witness of the whole Bible is, not just what one passage says. In this way we will be balanced in our understanding of any given doctrine.

If a passage plainly says something based upon these principles, then we best not ignore the plain meaning by trying to make it say something else according to our preconceived theology. Rather, I feel it is wisest to *wait* on the Lord to show us how the plain meaning fits with other passages (which teachings and meanings we fully accept though they may seem contradictory to us), or where our own theories need adjustment.

AGREEMENT

I am in agreement with your concern about Christ's perfect redemption. Our eternal justification before God is a gift, given by His grace, obtained solely by faith. This justification will guarantee our salvation in eternity, and is preserved by the actions of the Father and Christ Himself (Jn. 3:16; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Rom. 3:24; 8:29-34; Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 7:22-25; 1 Jn. 2:1).

I state unequivocally that eternal salvation is granted to the believer by grace through faith, altogether apart from works (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 11:6). By this I mean that no deed, or accumulation of deeds, whether they be good deeds or bad deeds, whether they be performed by a Christian before the new birth, at the moment of the new birth, or in the lifetime of the believer following the new birth, can ever affect that believer's eternal destiny or eternal security. It is faith alone in Christ alone that guarantees our place with God in eternity.

JUDGMENT BY GOD UPON A BELIEVER'S SINS

This is the crux of the issue at hand. Some of the writings you passed on to me express the thought that there cannot be any judgment upon a believer due to his sins because of two reasons. Firstly, because such judgment would constitute a denial of the efficacy of Christ's work. [Quoting from one tract where you highlighted: "There is no condemnation, because there is no judgment; there is no judgment, because there are no sins; and there are no sins, because Christ has once suffered for them, and by His death put them away for ever. Were the believer to be judged for his sins, it would be the denial of the value of that work by which they have been atoned for once for all."]

Secondly, because if there was such a judgment upon a believer for his sins, the result would *certainly be* that we would be eternally condemned and lost. [Again quoting from a tract: "If any are judged for their sins, as the unsaved will surely be, there can be **but one result** - 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' But we who have believed in Jesus are justified from our sins; God Himself has justified us, as Romans 3:26 says. Now it is certain that if we are justified from our sins we shall not be judged for them; 'justified from' and judged for' are two distinctly opposite things."] Therefore, according to this view, any judgment upon a believer's sins, or bad deeds, will certainly result in a loss of justification, including a loss of salvation.

In other words, any judgment upon believers for their sins will (1) depreciate Christ's work of redemption, and (2) will necessarily result in the believer being eternally condemned. I would agree, in arguing *against* the Arminian view, that a "loss of salvation" due to the believer's post conversion works would depreciate Christ's perfect work of redemption. Moreover, I believe in Christ's redemptive work to effect eternal salvation from the penalty of eternal death (Jn. 3:13-18; Rom. 5:18; 6:23).

But, just because Christ's work accomplished a redemption from the penalty of eternal death, does this mean that God CANNOT and DOES NOT judge a believer in ANY WAY (lesser than eternal death) for his sins? This is the question, I believe, at issue.

DOES THE BIBLE REVEAL ANY DIVINE, GOVERNMENTAL JUDGMENT UPON A BELIEVER'S SINS?

In fact, there are many Bible passages which I feel clearly show that the believer is in danger of judgment by God for unrepentant, unconfessed sin. Some of these “warning passages” pertain to judgment in this life, while others point to judgment in the next age, following the Judgment Seat (the 1,000 year Kingdom age precedes eternity; all judgment for the believer is consummated when eternity arrives, according to my present understanding of the Scriptures). Below is a display of verses using the terms judge, judgment, condemnation, etc.

Judgment in this life:

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? **thou has not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came upon all that heard it.** And the young men arose and wrapped him round, and they carried him out and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said, Yea, for so much. But Peter *said* unto her, **How is it that ye have agreed together to try the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them that have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out.** And she fell down immediately at his feet, and gave up the ghost: and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband. **And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things.** (Acts 5:1-11 ASV)

For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh **judgment** unto himself, if he discern not the body. For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep. But if we discerned ourselves, we should not **be judged.** **But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord,** that we may not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait one for another. If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; **that your coming together be not unto judgment.** And the rest will I set in order whensoever I come. (1 Corinthians 11:29-34 ASV)

“not a novice, lest being puffed up he fall into the **condemnation** of the devil.” (1 Timothy 3:6 ASV) [Judged as was the devil for his pride.]

“*Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers **God will judge.***” (Hebrews 13:4 ASV) [This verse may refer to the future Judgment after this life.]

“But above all things, **my brethren**, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; **that ye fall not under judgment.**” (James 5:12 ASV)

“If any man see his **brother** sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and *God* will give him life **for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request.**” (1 John 5:16 ASV)

Three cases above explicitly show that God can **judge** a believer with death for sin, and such judgment could not be termed “correctional”, a “training” by which a son’s path is corrected, as there would be no more opportunity to bring forth a righteous life after being killed.

It is clear, then, that the notion that “there is *no judgment*, because there are *no sins*” is true as respects **eternity**, but it is manifestly not true as respects these cases in time. God did not overlook these sins because of Christ’s redemption. He was not prevented by Christ’s perfect redemption from dealing out **divine, governmental judgment** upon these believers. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, he shall also reap.” (Gal. 6:7 ASV)

Future Judgment:

Wherefore thou art without excuse, **O man, whosoever** thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judges another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest dost practise the same things. And we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that practise such things. **And reckonest thou this, O man, who judgest them that practise such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?** (Romans 2:1-3 ASV)

“**in the day when God shall judge** the secrets of **men**, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ.” (Romans 2:16 ASV)

Here, moreover, it is **required in stewards**, that a man **be found faithful**. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing

against myself; yet am **I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.** Wherefore **judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come**, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God. (1 Corinthians 4:2-5 ASV) [Although Paul was justified for eternal life (Rom. 3:24; 5:18), he was not yet justified for positive reward, which is based upon works, and is decided at the coming Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Tim. 4:8; Jas. 2:21-25). Contrast the possibility of Paul being disapproved for positive reward at the end of his race (1 Cor. 9:27).]

“Some **men's sins** are evident, **going before unto judgment**; and some men also they follow after.” (1 Timothy 5:24 ASV) [Context is sinning elders and the rest of the assembly that is warned - vs. 19-22.]

“And inasmuch as it is appointed **unto men** once to die, and **after this cometh judgment**; . . .” (Hebrews 9:27 ASV)

For **if we sin wilfully** after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but **a certain fearful expectation of judgment**, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses law dieth without compassion on *the word of two or three witnesses*: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, **shall he be judged worthy**, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted **the blood** of the covenant **wherewith he WAS sanctified** an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, **The Lord shall judge his people.** (Hebrews 10:26-30 ASV) [More will be said about this passage later. The “we”, according to the context, includes the writer and the “brethren” (vs. 19) who had come into God’s N. T. economy in Christ, but were now in danger of slipping back into Judaism.]

“So speak **ye**, and so do, as men **that are to be judged** by a law of liberty. For **judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy**: mercy glorieth against judgment.” (James 2:12-13 ASV)

“Be not many *of you* teachers, **my brethren**, knowing that we **shall receive heavier judgment.**” (James 3:1 ASV)

“Murmur not, **brethren**, one against another, **that ye be not judged: behold, the judge standeth before the doors.**” (James 5:9 ASV)

“And if **ye** call on **him as Father**, who **without respect of persons judgeth according to each man’s work**, pass the time of your sojourning **in fear**: . . . “ (1 Peter 1:17 ASV)

“For the time *is come* for **judgment to begin at the house of God**: and if *it begin first at us*, what *shall be* the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17 ASV)

The case of John 5:24:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, **hath eternal life**, and **cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.**” (John 5:24 ASV)

I saved this verse until last, as it is the verse one of your tracts used to prove there is “no [future] judgment [upon believers], because there are no sins.” According to the context, the word “judgment” here would not mean a “process of judgment”, a future tribunal. Other verses above clearly show that there will be a future judgment of believers; we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, give an account of ourselves, and receive a recompense commensurate with our doings (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10).

The sense of the word here [*krisis*, Gk.; Strong’s # 2920] is a judgment given, a sentence pronounced. In other words, a “condemnation”. The same Greek word is used in such a way in Matt. 23:33; John 3:19; Jas. 5:12; Rev. 16:7. Showing a contrast to a final condemnation of eternal death, the verse declares “BUT hath passed out of death into life.”

There is a condemnation of death upon all men due to sin (Rom. 5:16-18) Those who do not believe are already living under that judgment (Jn. 3:18). But, as John 3:18 also declares, “He that believeth is NOT judged.” That is, he is released from eternal death (“they shall not perish” - Jn. 3:16), and gains eternal life - “but have eternal life.” (Jn. 3:16).

The Amplified Version gives a good sense of the usage of the word: “I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, the person whose ears are open to My words - who listens to My message - and believes and trusts in and clings to and relies on Him Who sent Me has (possesses now) eternal life. And he does not come into judgment - does not incur sentence of judgment, will not come under condemnation - but has already passed over out of death into life.” (Jn. 5:24, AMP)

The judgment, the condemnation, we as believers will *not* come into is a condemnation of eternal death. We have passed out of *that* condemnation. Christ’s death has released us from that condemnation (Jn. 3:14-16). But, as we have seen and shall see, believers CAN incur other, temporal penalties for disobedience to a righteous God. I

have enclosed the comments of G. H. Lang, well respected teacher among the Plymouth Brethren, on this very point.

REWARD ACCORDING TO WORKS

As confirmed above, eternal salvation is by grace through faith. The Bible reveals another principle, however, that applies to believers as well as unbelievers. This principle is “**reward according to works.**” This “reward” could never involve eternal salvation, because it is *according to works*. The following verses show that this principle applies to every person, believer and unbeliever alike.

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then **shall he render** unto **every man** according to **his deeds.**” (Matthew 16:27 ASV)

“Behold, I come quickly; and **my reward** is with me, to render to **each man** according **as his work is.**” (Revelation 22:12 ASV)

It is also clear from these verses that this reward takes place when the Lord Jesus returns.

We should also notice that this “reward” is *according to* a man’s works. That is, the reward can be either positive or negative, in accordance with the nature of the person’s work. As respects unbelievers, the reward will only be negative, since no unbeliever is capable of doing good in God’s eyes (Rom. 3:12).

But, what about believers? Can they do only good (1 Cor. 15:34; 11:17; 2 Cor. 12:20-21)? Is it possible for believers to backslide or fail miserably at perseverance (1 Tim. 1:19; 2 Tim. 4:10; Rev. 2:4-5; 3:2-3; 3:15-19)? Can believers be carnal and thus do fleshly works (unacceptable) in God’s eyes (1 Cor. 3:1-3)? Anyone who is honest with the record of the Bible and experience must admit that believers can do evil works, and can persist in being carnal. I do believe, however, that any record of a bad deed done by a believer can be erased before God through confession (1 Jn. 1:9), but more will be said about that later.

The terms used for “reward” in the reward passages are neutral. That is, these Greek words signify that a reward can be positive or negative. The Greek word for reward in 1 Cor. 3:8 means “wages” and it is used positively in Matt. 5:12, but negatively in Acts 1:18 (“the price of his wickedness”).

Similarly, one word for “recompense” (*antapodoma*, Strong’s #468) is also neutral (Lk. 14:12; Rom. 11:9). The word for “reward” in Col. 3:24 (*antapodosis*, Strong’s #469) is derived from # 468. The verb *apodidomi* (Strong’s #591) appears in two crucial passages speaking of the reward which Jesus will render to every man (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12). This verb means “to give up or back” and is used in the New Testament in

both a positive and negative sense of giving back. The thought of the “reward” going either way is highlighted in the Judgment Seat passage of 2 Corinthians Five:

Wherefore also we make it **our aim**, whether at home or absent, **to be well-pleasing unto him**. **For** we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may **receive the things *done*** in the body, **according to what he hath done, *whether it be good or bad***. **Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord**, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. (2 Corinthians 5:9-11 ASV)

The language is very plain. Contextually, it certainly appears that Paul is making it his aim to be pleasing to the Lord *because* there is a coming recompense that can be positive or negative. Further, based upon that possibility, Paul, as one who *knows* what it is to *fear* the Lord, desires to persuade men to be serious about the coming Judgment.

We only resist the idea of negative “reward” for believers due to a concept that we should not have to suffer for our sin since Christ did, and due to the erroneous concept that bliss automatically awaits every believer when Christ returns. We can never atone for our sins by suffering God’s judgment upon us, but we can certainly fall under His governmental hand and suffer a penalty for our unrepentant disobedience before eternity arrives.

It has already been made clear that God can judge us severely now, so it is not inconsistent that judgment can continue into the next age, prior to eternity, especially when one considers that the *recompense* according to works will take place *after* Christ returns (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12). I will soon share many verses that make this clear. But to further underscore this prospect of positive *or* negative recompense for the believer, please note the two sister passages below:

Servants, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, **with fear and trembling**, in singleness of your heart, **as unto Christ**; not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men: **knowing that whatsoever good thing each one doeth, the same shall he receive again from the Lord**, whether *he be* bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening: **knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him**. (Ephesians 6:5-9 ASV)

Servants, obey in all things them that are your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart,

fearing the Lord: whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; **knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense** of the inheritance: ye serve the Lord Christ. **For he that doeth wrong shall receive again for the wrong that he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.** (Colossians 3:22-25 ASV)

Some warning verses for believers in the New Testament

Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for **their lord**, when he shall return from the marriage feast; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto him. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find *them* so, blessed are those *servants*. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not have left his house to be broken through. Be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh. And Peter said, **Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us**, or even unto all? And the Lord said, **Who then is the faithful and wise steward**, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath. But if **that servant** shall say **in his heart, My lord delayeth** his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; **the lord of that servant shall come** in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and **shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful.** **And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready**, nor did according to his will, **shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not**, and did things worthy of stripes, **shall be beaten with few stripes.** And **to whomsoever much is given**, of him shall much be required: and **to whom they commit much**, of him will they ask the more. (Luke 12:35-48 ASV)

I will make a few comments on this portion in Luke. The servants are **members of the master's household**. They should be **looking for the master's return**. They have been committed with **stewardship**. The issue is faithfulness in carrying out stewardship - this is **a matter of duty, of works**.

Further, the faithful one is blessed, but the story portrays the possibility of unfaithfulness by **the same servant**, not another servant who is false ("But if **that servant**"). The overall meaning of the story should be clear. It is designed to warn the

Lord's servants, His believers who should serve Him, that they must be diligent in carrying out their responsibilities while eagerly anticipating His return.

The whole tenor of the Lord's word here is **to provoke diligence in works**. It is not designed to show that the servant in danger of stripes is one who should repent and believe in the Lord. Therefore, the parable has to do with **reward according to works in application to the believer**. Salvation is not involved.

Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth **the prize**? Even so **run; that ye may attain**. And every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they *do it to receive* a corruptible **crown; but we an incorruptible**. I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air: but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, **I myself should be rejected**. For I would not, **brethren**, have you ignorant, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: **for they drank of a spiritual rock** that followed them: and **the rock was Christ**. Howbeit **with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness**. Now **these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things**, as they also lusted. **Neither be ye idolaters**, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. **Neither let us commit fornication**, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. **Neither let us make trial of the Lord**, as some of them made trial, and perished by the serpents. **Neither murmur ye**, as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer. Now these things happened unto them **by way of example**; and **they were written for our admonition**, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it. **Wherefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.** (1 Corinthians 9:24-11:14 ASV)

The passage above shows that we believers are in a race to win a prize. As an example for us, the Israelites had left Egypt with the promised land before them as a goal. However, due to their sins, most of them were punished by God in the wilderness and died. Thus, they did not enter into the promised land.

Paul stated that he himself could yet be rejected if he did not bring his body under control. The prize is a crown, ruling responsibility in the coming Kingdom (the millennium). This can be lost due to not being approved by God (2 Tim. 2:12). While

we are on this earth and in this life we are still in the race, with this prize to be awarded or lost at the future Judgment Seat (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

I say *this* to move you to shame. What, cannot there be *found* among you one wise man who shall be able to decide between **his brethren**, but **brother** goeth to law with **brother**, and that **before** unbelievers? Nay, already it is altogether **a defect in you**, that ye have lawsuits one with another. Why not rather take wrong? why not rather be defrauded? Nay, but **ye yourselves do wrong**, and defraud, and that *your* brethren. **Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither** fornicators, **nor** idolaters, **nor** adulterers, **nor** effeminate, **nor** abusers of themselves with men, **nor** thieves, **nor** covetous, **nor** drunkards, **nor** revilers, **nor** extortioners, **shall inherit the kingdom of God**. And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 6:5-11 ASV)

The first letter to the Corinthians shows that even though the assembly there was genuine, having real believers who were positionally sanctified through their faith in Christ (1 Cor. 1:2), there were many problems there. The letter catalogs divisiveness, lawsuits, incest, etc.

When Paul reaches chapter six, he gives them a serious warning. Based upon the fact that brothers there were wronging one another in lawsuits, he asked them, "Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit [possess] the kingdom of God?" He was saying essentially, "Don't you know that unrighteous practices of wronging and defrauding your brethren is going to cost you a share in the coming Kingdom of God?"

Then he warns them again, more explicitly, by cataloging unrighteous lifestyles that will be a basis for disinheritance. It is important to note that he begins this more explicit warning by saying to them: "Be not deceived. . ." He is saying, don't be misled about this fact - anyone practicing an unrighteous lifestyle will not inherit the kingdom of God. The last verse shows that some, before justification and positional sanctification, were indeed engaged in such lifestyles. But, he is stressing in this verse that those who had lived these types of lives have now been accepted by God and justified by Him. Therefore, by implication he is declaring that such a lifestyle should be over; it should not be continued now that one belongs to the Lord Jesus.

He is not saying that a believer cannot live such a life. It is amply clear that the Corinthians themselves were evidence that real believers can be fleshly and sinful. Further, he would not warn them *not to be deceived* about unrighteous *unbelievers* being disinherited. This would be self-evident.

To confirm this warning of Kingdom disinheritance, there are two parallel passages in Galatians and Ephesians (see below). Honest exegesis will declare that the warnings

are to Christians. The Arminian school recognizes this, but wrongfully concludes that this means a potential loss of eternal salvation. The loss is not eternal salvation, but God's blessing in the millennial kingdom age (there is much more exegetical detail on this kingdom disinheritance in other writings that I can recommend to you).

Many Calvinists will not admit that these verses apply to believers, simply because they too fear that it would mean a loss of eternal salvation. What both the Arminian and Calvinist schools miss is that the warning has nothing whatsoever to do with salvation. Rather, it has to do with reward. Cooperation with God in one's living after the new birth is a matter of works, the basis of reward.

For ye, **brethren**, were called for freedom; **only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh**, but through love be servants one to another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would. But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. **Now the works of the flesh are manifest**, which are *these*: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; **of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.** (Galatians 5:13-21 ASV)

Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; **and walk in love**, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell. **But** fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, **let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints**; nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting: but rather giving of thanks. **For this ye know of a surety**, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, **hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.** **Let no man deceive you** with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience. **Be not ye therefore partakers with them**; For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: **walk as children of light** (Ephesians 5:1-8 ASV)

The last verse in the Ephesian passage is similar to the final one in the First Corinthian passage I discussed. Once the believers were darkness (compare "And such were some of you"), but now they are light in the Lord (compare "ye were washed", etc); therefore, the believers should now WALK (have their conduct) as children of light.

And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, **to present you holy and without blemish and unproveable before him: if so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast**, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister. (Colossians 1:21-23 ASV)

“Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him: **if we endure**, we shall **also reign with him**: if we shall deny him, he also will deny us: if we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself.” (2 Timothy 2:11-13 ASV)

“At my first defence no one took my part, but all **forsook me: may it not be laid to their account.**” (2 Timothy 4:16 ASV) [Here Paul is expressing his wish that God not count something against unfaithful believers.]

Hebrews:

The background of the epistle to the Hebrews is pretty universally agreed upon. The purpose of the letter was to urge those Jews who had believed in Christ to continue in their faith. They were in danger of slipping backwards into Judaism. The writer helped them by arguing for the superiority of Christ and the things of the New Covenant. He demonstrated how many Old Testament rituals and promises found their fulfillment in Christ.

That the recipients of the letter were born again believers is proven by the following: (1) they were addressed as “holy brethren” who had Jesus as the High Priest of their confession (Heb. 3:1); (2) they had accepted the basic teachings of the faith and were partakers of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:1-5); (3) they had already demonstrated works that accompany initial salvation (Heb. 6:9-11); (4) they were already assembling together in Christian fellowship (Heb. 10:25); (5) they had already been persecuted for their faith in Jesus (Heb. 10:32-34); (6) they were already in the Christian race, surrounded by a cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1); (7) they were considered by the writer as sons of God who had been born in spirit (Heb. 12:7-9).

Therefore, if we are to be honest in our exegesis, we must consider the admonitions of this book as being addressed to born again believers. With this fact in mind, we need to look at the five major warnings to the recipients of the letter. The Arminian camp has already agreed that the warnings are real and solemn warnings to believers. However, they again err in thinking that these warnings portray the possible loss of eternal salvation. Rather, these warnings point to negative reward in the coming age, decided by the righteous, impartial Judge at His Judgment Seat.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that **shall inherit salvation**? Therefore **we** ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away *from them*. **For if** the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, **and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?** which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will. For not unto angels did he subject **the world to come, whereof we speak**. (Hebrews 1:14-2:5 ASV)

The word “salvation” is a Greek word simply meaning deliverance from a negative situation into a positive one (see a good concordance for the usage of the verb *sozo*). The *context* of the word must determine what salvation is at issue; every usage is *not* eternal salvation.

The salvation, or deliverance, at issue here is future, one to be possessed **in the world to come**, which world belongs to the millennial age. If you read the verses following this quote, these verses further describe that world as one where the rulership of Christ is exercised - the 1,000 year kingdom age. To neglect future salvation, which should be ours, which involves ruling with Christ in the millennium, is to invite a negative recompense from God at the coming Judgment.

Wherefore, **holy brethren**, partakers of a heavenly calling, **consider** the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, *even Jesus*; **who was faithful** to him that appointed him, as also was Moses in all his house. For he hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as he that built the house hath more honor than the house. For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken; but Christ as a son, over his house; whose house are we, **if** we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end. **Wherefore**, even as the Holy Spirit saith, To-day **if ye shall hear his voice, Harden not your hearts**, as in the provocation, Like as in the day of the trial in the wilderness, **Where your fathers tried me** by proving *me*, And saw my works forty years. Wherefore **I was displeased with this generation**, And said, They do always err in their heart: But they did not know my ways; **As I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren**, lest haply there **shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God**: but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; **lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin**: for we are become partakers of

Christ, **if** we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end: while it is said, To-day if ye shall hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For who, when they heard, did provoke? nay, did not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses? **And with whom was he displeased forty years? was it not with them that sinned**, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? **And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were disobedient?** And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief. **Let us fear therefore**, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, **any one of you should seem to have come short of it.** For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard. For we who have believed do enter into that rest; even as he hath said, As I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he hath said somewhere of the seventh *day* on this wise, And God rested on the seventh day from all his works; and in this *place* again, They shall not enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter thereinto, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached failed to enter in because of disobedience, he again defineth a certain day, To-day, saying in David so long a time afterward (even as hath been said before), To-day if ye shall hear his voice, Harden not your hearts. For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day. **There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God.** For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his. **Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience.** (Hebrews 3:1-4:11 ASV)

Jesus is our sabbath rest. However, the Bible also speaks here of a future sabbath rest that is **entered by diligence** [obedience according to the entire context] - **a matter of works.** This is the promise of the sharing of the blessings of the Kingdom (millennial Kingdom) by the faithful believer. There are many other passages that could be brought to bear on this promise (and I can share them with you if you wish).

For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of **the word of righteousness**; for he is a babe. But solid food is for fullgrown men, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil. Wherefore **leaving the doctrine of the first principles** of Christ, **let us press on** unto perfection; **not laying again a foundation of repentance** from dead works, **and of faith toward God**, of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of

resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, **and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance**; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. **For** the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and **bringeth forth herbs** meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, **receiveth blessing from God: but if it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse**; whose end is to be burned. **But, beloved**, we are persuaded **better things of you**, and things **that accompany salvation**, though we thus speak: **for God is not unrighteous to forget your work** and the love which ye showed toward his name, **in that ye ministered** unto the saints, **and still do minister**. And **we desire that each one of you may show the same diligence** unto the fulness of hope **even to the end**: that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Hebrews 5:12-6:12 ASV)

Above, the writer of Hebrews is encouraging the believers to move on toward maturity. They had laid a basic foundation of repentance and faith, but needed to mature. If such fall away from the path, contextually probably meaning an apostasy from Christ with a reversion to Judaism, it may become nigh “impossible” to be renewed unto repentance. This may mean that while such ones are in such an apostate state, a return to their initial repentance may be near impossible.

Then the thought of blessing or judgment by God comes in for those who should be maturing. If they bring forth the proper fruit *after* they have drunk the rain (received the Spirit), then there will be blessing. But if “thorns and thistles” are produced, such ground is *near* a curse (not acutally cursed) and its end is burning (signifying severe judgment). The fruit are things that “accompany” salvation (not salvation itself), and the writer indicates that at this point he is persuaded that the **works** of these believers is classed as “better things” that God will not forget.

The indication is that they are *continuing* in good works, and are thus “okay” in God’s sight. However, they need to be diligent in these works until the end in order to be assured of inheriting the promises.

¹⁸ Now where remission of these is, there is **no more offering for sin.** ¹⁹ Having therefore, **brethren**, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; ²¹ and *having* a great priest over the house of God; ²² let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water, ²³ **let us hold fast the**

confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised:
²⁴ and **let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works;** ²⁵ **not forsaking our own assembling together**, as the custom of some is, but exhorting *one another*; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh. ²⁶ **For if we sin wilfully** after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth **no more a sacrifice for sins,** ²⁷ **but a certain fearful expectation of judgment**, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. ²⁸ A man that hath set at nought Moses law dieth without compassion on *the word of two or three witnesses*: ²⁹ of how much sorer **punishment**, think ye, **shall he be judged worthy**, who hath trodden **under foot the Son of God**, and hath **counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing**, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, **I will recompense**. And again, **The Lord shall judge his people.** ³¹ **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.** (Hebrews 10:18-31 ASV)

Who is the “we” of verse 26 above? It must refer to the “brethren” of verse 19, along with the writer of the letter. These brothers are those who already hold fast a confession of hope, and are being encouraged by the writer to provoke one another to love and good works. These would be those Jews who have trusted in Jesus as their Messiah and were assembling together as New Testament believers. But, the temptation to drift back into Judaism with its practices was there, and some had already forsaken the assembling as believers.

With this background we can interpret the key “scary” verse, number 26. The wilful sin in context here is the abandonment of the New Testament way by these converted Jews. Verse 26 is linked to 25, which speaks of forsaking the assembling they had begun as believers. This forsaking is tied to the same thought of abandoning the New Testament economy in Christ that is indicated in verse 29, where one is trodding underfoot the Son of God and regarding the blood of Christ as common - the blood by which **he was already sanctified**.

Indeed, if a converted Jew turns back to the Judaistic way, following its rituals, the word spoken here indicates that a sin sacrifice that might be offered in accordance with the Old Testament Law is now totally meaningless, because “**there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins.**” (v. 26) This interpretation is supported by the earlier declaration in verse 18 : “there is no more offering for sin.” Verses 26 and 27 should be interpreted in this way then: “For if we [converted Jewish believers] sin wilfully [abandon God’s New Testament economy in Christ and revert to Judaism]. . . there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins [the Jewish sacrifices are of no effect for us], but [on the other hand] a certain fearful expectation of judgment [awaits those who have so abandoned Christ].”

To return to the blood sacrifices of the Temple is to put aside the blood [Christ’s blood] of the New Testament (v. 29). Such a forsaking of the way of faith by a genuine

believer is cause for severe *punishment* by God, and verse 30 indicates that the punishment will be a “recompense” carried out by God, seemingly when He judges His people (upon Christ’s return). Such a prospect should be a fearful thing (v. 30). If believers had such a fear of God’s judgment, they would be much more likely to live for God. “And by the fear of Jehovah men depart from evil.” (Pr. 16:6b ASV)

Cast not away therefore your boldness, which hath great **recompense of reward**. For ye have **need of patience**, that, **having done the will of God**, ye may **receive the promise**. For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry. But my righteous one shall live by faith: And **if he shrink back**, my soul hath **no pleasure in him**. But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul. (Hebrews 10:35-39 ASV)

The passage above must be studied carefully. The **reward** is tied to the promise, which is dependent upon patience (better translated endurance) in completing a course in **doing the will of God**. Once again, we see works is in view, linked with reward. And, again, we see that if one falls short, God will be displeased.

Then, how shall we interpret the phrase, “but we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition, but of them that have faith . . .?” Does this mean that all Christians will automatically persevere with no faltering or shrinking back? I do not believe so, because the book of Hebrews itself, the rest of the New Testament, and even this chapter portray the possibility of backsliding. I believe the meaning of “we are not of them” is that who we are, in our new nature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), our “stock”, if you will, is not of a “shrinking back” character. The new creation that we are in Christ (in our regenerated spirit; 1 Cor. 6:17) is fully able to persevere, not shrinking back. This phrase was written as a word of encouragement to the believers that they “have the right stuff” to make it, if they live in the spirit in contact with the overcoming Christ within them.

But what about “perdition” and “the saving of the soul?” Isn’t this talking about “salvation”, not “reward”? The word here for perdition is *apoleia* (Strong’s #684), which like any word can carry various meanings dependent upon the context. Basically, the word means a destruction, a loss, a ruin or a waste. It does not necessarily carry a “theological” meaning of eternal loss of salvation. It is used of the *waste* of the ointment in Mark 14:4, for example. In this verse in Hebrews it does stand in opposition to the “saving” of the soul. The word translated here for “saving” is *peripoiesis* (Strong’s #4047), which carries a meaning of obtaining or acquiring. By implication here it means a preservation of the soul, as opposed to some type of ruin to the soul.

But the question remains: “What is the possible loss to the soul here?” This opens up a new realm in the Scripture, of which you have probably never heard. As there is a difference between the soul and spirit of man (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12), so God deals with these parts of man differently in His plan.

It is man's spirit where God's work begins. It is man's spirit that is born of the Spirit (Jn. 3:6; Heb. 12:9). It is here, in the deepest part of man, that God has given His life. Through God's justification in redemption, our spirit is made alive (Rom. 5:18; 8:10). This justification insures the preservation from loss of our spirit, where our new nature in Christ lives. Paul declared that the spirit of the sinful believer in Corinth would be preserved in the next age, and Paul declared this even before there was evidence of repentance on this sinning brother's part (1 Cor. 5:5).

However, as we shall prove by further exposition later in this letter, the salvation (preservation from loss or ruin) of a believer's soul is an altogether different matter, and is linked to works. Any loss to the soul of the believer, however, is limited to the 1,000 year Kingdom period only, not eternity. I am sure this sounds most unusual to you (simply because you have never heard of it), but please bear with me. This matter will be expounded shortly.

Suffice it to say for now that what is at issue here in Hebrews 10:35-39 is *reward*, which is based upon endurance in *obedience* (works) by the believer. This reward involves the preservation of the soul. Conversely, a lack of endurance will cause the Lord to be displeased with the believer when He returns, resulting in a loss to the soul of the believer. And think about this: **if** the salvation of the soul in Hebrews 10:39 is interpreted to mean **eternal salvation** of the believer, **then such salvation is based upon a continuance in obedience in order to receive it**; it is not a matter of grace received by faith in a moment of time. The whole context of verses 35-39 (which follows the *doings* of the believers in earlier days) is a continued doing of the will of God unto the end.

Follow after peace with all men, **and the sanctification** without which no man shall see the Lord: **looking carefully lest** *there be* any man that falleth short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby the many be defiled; **lest there be any** fornication, **or profane person, as Esau, who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright.** For ye know that even when he **afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected**; for he found no place for a change of mind *in his father*, though he sought it diligently with tears. (Hebrews 12:14-17 ASV)

The twelfth chapter of Hebrews contains the fifth series of warnings to the Hebrew believers. That the ones warned are believers is evident if you read Hebrews 12:7-10, where the writer is telling the believers that they are sons of God and, as such, are under His chastening in order to produce practical holiness. The thought of practical sanctification is continued in the verses quoted above.

The warning advises that Esau is an example for us. Although he is a son of Isaac, and as the firstborn is eligible for a special blessing, he lost this blessing due to his

desire for a fleshly enjoyment. So here is a warning about a loss of privilege and blessing, a loss that will no doubt be regretted by tears as Esau later regretted his loss. The lost blessing is not explicitly defined here, but it has to do with the blessings available to the believer in the Kingdom age, as is portrayed elsewhere in the book. There is some good exegesis available on this passage by G. H. Lang, if you wish to study it further (see Lang's *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, and his book entitled *Firstborn Sons: Their Rights & Risks*).

The salvation of the soul:

²⁴ Then said Jesus **unto his disciples**, If any man would come after me, **let him deny himself**, and **take up his cross**, and **follow me**. ²⁵ For whosoever **would save** his life **shall lose it**: and **whosoever shall lose his life** for my sake **shall find it**. ²⁶ **For** what shall a man be profited, **if he shall gain the whole world**, and **forfeit his life**? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life? ²⁷ **For the Son of man shall come** in the glory of his Father with his angels; and **then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds**. ²⁸ Verily I say unto you, there are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. (Matthew 16:24-28 ASV)

The word translated as "life" in verses 25 and 26 is soul (*psuche*, Strong's # 5590) in Greek, and is so translated in other versions. Further, the term "himself" in verse 24, although not the word *psuche*, refers to the soul also. This is proven by the parallel passage in Luke, where Luke 9:25 speaks of forfeiting "himself" but Matthew 16:26 speaks of forfeiting his "life" (soul).

So, the terms "himself" and "life" both refer to the soul here in Matthew 16. Remember that the soul is that part of man that contains the mind, the emotion and the will of man. Thus the soul is really the natural life (the inner, non-physical life,) of man, but it is that natural life apart from the spirit in man. That is not to say that the spirit within man should not and does not *affect* the soul (Pr. 20:27).

Further, this passage speaks of one denying himself and taking up his cross (v. 24). Then, since verse 25 starts with an explanatory "for", we naturally must consider such self-denial as equivalent to "losing one's soul." The contrast to losing one's soul is to save it. Remember that the word for "to save," *sozo*, basically means to preserve from some type of loss or ruin.

Now, let's put these thoughts together and begin to understand this passage. Jesus is teaching concerning saving one's soul, that is, keeping it from loss or destruction, versus losing one's soul, that is, allowing it to suffer loss.

Look at the verses that just precede this section (read Matt. 16:21-23). Here Jesus was telling His disciples that "He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer" (v. 21 ASV). Peter,

inspired by Satan, immediately tried to stop this! He did not want Jesus to suffer! Jesus rebuked him, declaring that Peter's mind-set was completely wrong: "Get thee behind Me, Satan! Thou art a stumbling-block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men" (v. 23, ASV).

Fallen man wishes only to please his soul, doing what keeps it whole and happy, preserving it from any suffering or loss. Jesus immediately gave the needed teaching after Peter expressed this natural thought of man. Jesus taught His disciples that if anyone wished to come after Him (to really follow Him), that person must be willing to *deny* himself and take up his cross. That person must be willing to *lose his soul*, to let his soul suffer loss. This could mean to the point of physical death, martyrdom, if need be, although that is not the explicit point here. Jesus is not teaching that every disciple must so prove himself by being a martyr. Only God's sovereign will decides who will be martyred; it is not our decision. But God wants us to be *willing* to deny ourselves so completely.

In our experience, what does it really mean to "deny ourselves", "take up the cross", and "lose our soul"? To "deny ourselves" means to be *willing* to *give up* one's own thoughts, emotions and desires concerning any matter - to set our thoughts and intentions aside in order to find and accept the mind of God. To "take up the cross" means to accept God's will in a matter, that is to obey Him even if it means suffering to us. This attitude was demonstrated for us by Jesus in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:38-39). The overall result of this activity is to experientially "lose our soul" (or "life").

If we so lose our soul, or soul-life now, then we "shall [future tense] find it" (Matt. 16:25 ASV). If we are not willing to lose our soul-life now, then we "shall [future tense] lose it" (Matt. 16:25 ASV).

The point in the future when this loss or gain of the disciple's soul happens is explained in the passage: "**For** the Son of Man **shall come** in the glory of His Father with His angels; and **then** shall He **render** unto every man **according to his deeds.**" (Matt. 16:27 ASV)

To follow Christ in self-denying obedience is obviously a cooperative work on the part of a disciple. This is not simple "belief" in the Savior. Also, it does not occur in a moment of time, as does initial justification and eternal salvation (Lk. 18:13-14; Rom. 3:22-24; Eph. 2:8-9). The salvation of the soul in this passage is altogether based upon works and faithfulness over a lifetime (even note the parallel passage in Luke 9:23-27, where the cross bearing is shown to be a daily matter). Therefore, this passage *cannot* be speaking of the eternal salvation of the believer, unless one holds to an eternal salvation by works.

On the other hand, the passage is speaking of a certain gain or loss to the soul of the believer in the future when Christ returns. This gain or loss is dependent upon our faithfulness now as disciples. The gain to the soul would be for it to be preserved from

any loss and to be fulfilled in satisfaction. Conversely, the loss will involve a loss to the soul of its satisfaction.

What is at stake is so great that the Lord Jesus stated here that if the whole world could now be gained and enjoyed by someone's soul, it would not be a profit when offset with the future loss to one's soul (Matt. 16:26). This is a sober statement, worthy of deep contemplation by any believer who would choose to satisfy himself with this world and its enjoyment. Again, I want to emphasize that this gain or loss of the soul takes place during the millennium (in time), and does not involve eternity.

There is much more that can be said about the salvation of the soul, and there are a number of other passages that refer to it. However, for the sake of brevity we will leave this subject now, with what we have shared constituting just an introduction. If you wish to study it further, the best exposition I have found is Watchman Nee's work entitled *The Salvation of the Soul* (published by Christian Fellowship Publishers).

The parable of the talents

My comments on this passage is what gave you concern about my teaching on the Judgment Seat, and I have saved it to last. Your feeling is that the "unprofitable servant" is an unbeliever, and that "outer darkness" pictures hell. I will now expound this passage, and it is hoped that in light of all of the foregoing commentary you can more readily see the meaning that I feel matches the parable.

¹⁴ For *it is as when* a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. ¹⁵ And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶ Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. ¹⁷ In like manner he also that *received* the two gained other two. ¹⁸ But he that received the one went away and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them. ²⁰ And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. ²¹ His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. ²² And he also that *received* the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents. ²³ His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. ²⁴ And he also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter; ²⁵ and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in

the earth: lo, thou hast thine own. ²⁶ But his lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter; ²⁷ thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. ²⁸ Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents. ²⁹ For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. ³⁰ And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 25:14-30 ASV)

The parable opens with the picture of a *master* giving *his* servants certain goods, over which they should exercise responsibility while the master was to be away on a long journey. Are unbelievers granted spiritual gifts and responsibilities while Jesus is away? Does the New Testament recognize unbelievers as Christ's servants, or as His enemies?

"Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them." (v. 19). This surely portrays the Lord's return and his reckoning at the Judgment Seat, according to works. The servants who received two and five talents (measures of money) had gained some spiritual profit for their lord through the exercise of their God given abilities (v. 15). To these profitable servants their lord stated "Well done, good and faithful servant." (vs. 21, 23) Further, their lord promised them increased responsibility in the lord's sphere at that time (the millennium). This would picture rulership in the coming Kingdom based upon current faithfulness (2 Tim. 2:12; Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; Rev. 2:10; 2:26; 3:11; 3:21).

Also, their lord told them to "enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (vs. 21, 23). This joy would picture the salvation of the soul, the utmost satisfaction to the rewarded believer, and the "entry" would signify entry into the blessed Kingdom realm of the Lord Jesus.

The "reckoning" (v.19) of the lord with his servants speaks of the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the parable indicates all three servants are dealt with at this "reckoning." Do unbelievers appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ?

The unprofitable servant knew that his lord had an expectation of profit from him, yet hid his "talent", the entrusted goods and responsibilities, "in the earth" (does this perhaps picture letting our responsibility as believers be buried by the things of this world?) His lord called him "wicked and slothful", and indicated that the servant could at least have had some minimal return on the investment if he had tried.

The responsibility was taken from him, indicating loss of rulership and responsibility in the coming age due to lack of responsibility demonstrated in this age, and then the unprofitable servant was cast into "outer darkness", where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

I submit that “outer darkness” signifies a position outside of the Lord’s coming glorious Kingdom of 1,000 years, and the “weeping and gnashing of teeth” signifies the loss of satisfaction to the soul [it may also indicate severe regret and self-blame]. The position outside of the Kingdom would be in contrast to the entry “into the joy of thy lord” (vs. 21, 23) awarded the faithful servants, and the “weeping and gnashing of teeth” would be in contrast to the “joy”, the blessing experienced in the Kingdom.

The theme of the entire parable is faithfulness in responsibility. If the unprofitable servant stands for an unbeliever, then this teaching by Jesus indicates one becomes “lost” by not carrying out responsibilities for God, and one becomes “saved” by carrying out such responsibilities. Such an interpretation of the failed servant, then, introduces the significant problem of salvation by works. The teaching was given by Jesus to provoke His disciples to be diligent in serving their Lord, with the promise that proper service will be positively rewarded at the Judgment Seat, but slothful service will result in a loss graphically depicted by verse 30.

There are other verses that constitute warnings to believers, but I believe we have covered this topic sufficiently to prove the point. If you do not feel these warnings are for genuine believers, then our discussion of this matter cannot possibly proceed further. I sincerely feel that honest exegesis leads me to conclude these verses must apply to believers, with the negative possibilities to be interpreted as losses or penalties that a genuine believer may suffer, short of loss of eternal salvation.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS

A discussion of this topic is probably needed in order to fully confirm the issues explained above. The forgiveness of our sins by God is included in the New Covenant (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 10:17), and it is only natural for one to wonder how forgiveness by God fits into the picture of temporal penalties.

Firstly, let us understand the term “forgiveness.” Several Greek words are used in the New Testament for forgiveness. The basic meaning of these words is “release.” Being released from a debt is sometimes used as an equivalent of forgiveness (Matt. 6:12; 18:27, 32, 35). Our problem with God is our sins, and when forgiveness of sins is granted then we are graciously released by God from the offense of our sin against Him and His holiness.

Eternal forgiveness

One basic approach to understanding forgiveness is to see that the Bible speaks of forgiveness in two primary aspects or categories. The first category can be called “**eternal forgiveness.**” This forgiveness from God involves a judicial forgiveness, a release from the eternal penalty for sin. God’s penalty for sin is death, spiritual death,

meaning eternal separation from God (Rom. 6:23). **Eternal forgiveness** is granted by God to the believer upon his belief in Christ, since Christ's death on the cross paid the penalty for all of our sins in God's eyes (1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18). When a person trusts in Christ, that payment made for our sins is credited to that person, and the person is declared righteous in God's sight (Rom. 4:5-8). The Bible assures us that those who have believed in Christ will not suffer the judgment of eternal death, but through belief in Christ have passed out of death into life (Jn. 5:24; 3:16)

Eternal forgiveness, therefore, deals with the eternal consequences of sin and is forgiveness that is related to our position "in Christ." Every believer, according to Scripture, is "in Christ," meaning he is brought into a union with Christ and partakes of all of the benefits of this union. One of the great benefits we have as believers who are "in Christ" is **eternal forgiveness** through the grace of God: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). The Bible assures us that judicially all of our sins were forgiven when we were raised in union with Christ (Col. 2:13-14). **Eternal forgiveness** is one of the benefits we share under the New Covenant with God (Matt. 26:28; Lk. 22:20; Heb. 8:12). We are never in danger of losing our **eternal forgiveness** as it is given to us by God's grace based upon Christ's work for us, not anything we do (Eph. 1:7; 2:8, 9). Even if we sin after we believe this forgiveness is kept effective for us through the intercession of Christ as our Advocate (1 Jn. 2:1, 2). As our Advocate, Christ acts as our representative before God the Father. He takes care of our legal case before God, interceding for us based upon the effective work of Himself as our propitiation, a sacrifice that takes away wrath against sin (1 Jn. 2:1, 2; Heb. 7:25). Note that in 1 John 2:1 Christ's advocacy for us with the Father is not based upon our confession of sins. Rather, Christ intercedes for us as our Advocate every time we sin, whether or not there is confession, in order to maintain our eternally righteous position with God. Our confession of sins is related to the other major category of forgiveness – **fellowship forgiveness**.

Fellowship forgiveness

Another category of forgiveness may be termed "**fellowship forgiveness**." This category deals with our fellowship, our communion in spirit with God, not our eternal relationship with Him as His sons and daughters. God is our Father, and we can never lose that life relationship with Him. But, as with an earthly father, there can be a disruption in fellowship between a father and a disobedient child. The parent/child relationship of the father to the child never changes, but the harmony between the two persons can change.

When we look at the well known verse (1 Jn. 1:9) calling for us to confess our sins in order to experience forgiveness, we will note that the entire context has to do with our fellowship with God. Our fellowship, including our sense of God's nearness and presence, is interrupted by sin, which displeases God our Father. To restore our fellowship with God we need to obey the instruction of 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our

sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The Greek word translated “confess” literally means to “speak the same thing.” When God convicts us of sin, He points out something specific in our life, telling us that it is sin. We then must confess, that is agree with Him, that the thing pointed out is indeed sin. We thus condemn it as sin. Surely such an agreement includes the idea of repentance from the sin. Any “confession” that does not carry with it our intention to turn away from our sin is not a true confession. “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy” (Prov. 28:13). When God forgives us under **fellowship forgiveness**, He releases us from the alienation between Himself and us caused by our sin.

So we see that the one condition required on our part for **eternal forgiveness** is our initial belief in Christ for salvation (Acts 10:43; 13:38-39), whereas the condition required for **fellowship forgiveness** in 1 Jn. 1:9 is our ongoing confession of specific sins we commit after we become a believer. **We do not confess our sins to “stay saved”, but to restore harmony in our relationship with God.**

There is yet another Biblical condition for receiving **fellowship forgiveness** from God. This condition has to do with our willingness to forgive the offenses of others towards us. A key passage comes from the Lord’s teaching on prayer: “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. . . . For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:12, 14, 15). Our forgiveness of the offenses of others takes place in two ways. Firstly, we must deal with the offense in prayer to God alone: “And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your trespasses” (Mk. 11:25). Note that the verse does not say “forgive him”, but just “forgive” (meaning “release”). What are we to “release”? The verse uses the phrase “if you have anything against anyone.” This tells us we are holding onto something, some supposed “right” or desire to “get even”, to inflict some penalty upon the offender. In our prayer to God we are to release that desire to punish or get even with the one who wronged us. We must let go of this desire, giving the prerogative of justice to God, who alone possesses that right. After all, the Scripture tells us: “Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom. 12:19). Note that in Mark 11:25 there is no condition required to be fulfilled by the offender before our “release” to God is granted. In Mark 11:25 the release is solely between the one offended and God.

The second way we are to forgive the offenses of others concerns our willingness to release them from our alienation towards them, caused by the offense, when they come to us in repentance, seeking our forgiveness: “Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.” (Lk. 17:3). Here we note a condition related to our forgiveness towards the offender. The offender must repent before we can release him from our feeling of alienation towards him. It is difficult to have harmonious fellowship with someone who has seriously offended us if they do not

repent of their offense and ask our forgiveness. We must deal with the offenses of others in these two ways of forgiveness, or else our fellowship with God will be hindered. If we hold onto offenses, being unwilling to release them in these ways, we may continue to carry out a religious routine, but the fresh presence of the Lord and our deep, intimate knowledge of His Spirit will no doubt be diminished. Our fellowship with God will be damaged, and our prayers may well not be answered since we are disobedient to God in this matter (Ps. 66:18; 1 Pet. 3:12). The Holy Spirit of God is grieved when we do not let Him put away from us our bitterness, anger and malice towards others, being unwilling to forgive others as God has forgiven us (Eph. 4:30-32).

Temporal penalties for sins

Besides restoration of intimate fellowship with God, there is another incentive for us to seek **fellowship forgiveness** from God. Any believer who continues in unrepentant sin invites God's chastisement or His judgment upon him (1 Cor. 11:30-32; Heb. 12:3-12; 1 Jn. 5:16-17). During our lifetime God is training us to be proper sons, bringing forth righteousness in our lives. That training can include penalties of a temporary nature, not eternal. We must always distinguish between two different categories of God's dealing with believers. The gifted Bible teacher of the 1800s, C. H. Mackintosh, had this to say about these two categories of God's dealings:

These, and numberless other Scriptures in the Old Testament, as well as many similar passages in the New Testament, unfold to us the deeply important subject of God's moral government. Now, to be merely a subject of God's government is one thing; to be a subject of His unchangeable grace is another. We should never confound them. To elaborate this point, and to refer to the various passages which illustrate and enforce it, would demand a volume: we would here only add our full persuasion that no one can understand the Word of God who does not accurately distinguish between man under government and man under grace. In the one case he is looked at as walking down here, in the place of responsibility and danger; in the other, he is looked at as associated with Christ above, in the place of inalienable privilege and eternal security.¹

According to the believer's eternal position in Christ, all guilt of sin is resolved by the payment of Christ's death on the cross and the believer is absolutely secure in Christ through God's grace. In this eternal position, he is in no danger whatsoever. But, God also deals with His children in another realm, the realm of experience and time. In this realm His children are under His moral government in time, which includes His training for maturity. In this latter realm of God's moral government in time, the believer is

¹ C. H. Mackintosh, *The Mackintosh Treasury – Miscellaneous Writings by C. H. Mackintosh* (Neptune, N. J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1976), p. 650.

accountable for his actions and there can be consequences for his sins. There can be natural consequences of sin, such as a thief being put in jail, or God can also bring in consequences for our sins, sometimes even after confession (note the penalties upon David – 2 Sam. 12:10-15). Confession can restore fellowship with God, but may not remove all temporal penalties. God has the prerogative to chasten a wayward child for his sin, or even to inflict the penalty of death for his sin (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 11:18-32; Heb. 12:3-13; 1 Jn. 5:16-17). Therefore, the believer should live soberly, with a proper fear of offending God by his sin. Any sin should be repented of and confessed immediately, so that **fellowship forgiveness** may be granted and possible penalties due to lack of repentance might be avoided.

In Matt. 18:23-35 Jesus tells a story to illustrate our need to forgive others of their offenses towards us. In that story the slave forgiven a great debt by his master did not have similar mercy upon a fellow slave who owed him money. As a result of the slave's unforgiveness towards his fellow slave, the master ordered that the slave should undergo some punishment (verse 34). Then Jesus tells us the lesson of the story: "So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." (Matt. 18:35). Here Jesus warns us, His believers, that if we do not forgive our brothers (in the two ways noted above) who offend us then we may receive some temporary penalty from God our Father. Such a penalty may occur in our lifetime, or it may be that this particular story points to a possible penalty in the next age, the 1,000 year kingdom age, which follows the Judgment Seat of Christ. Details about penalties in the kingdom age are explained next.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

A full accounting of the lives we have lived as believers will take place when we stand before the Lord Jesus at His Judgment Seat (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10). This is a judgment only for believers, and only for the lives that they have lived since their conversion to Christ. Our eternal salvation is not determined at this judgment since that has already been settled when we believed. At the moment we believed we passed from death to life, and the judgment concerning eternal death is forever over for us – Hallelujah! (Jn. 5:24). The judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ will determine our rewards (recompense), not our eternal salvation.

At His Judgment Seat Christ will evaluate many things concerning the lives of His believers, including our words (Matt. 12:36, 37), our motives (1 Cor. 4:5), and all of our doings (2 Cor. 5:10). Of course, our faithfulness as servants of Christ in doing His work will be a matter of this judgment (Lk. 19:1-26; Matt. 25:14-30). Some may feel that our sins, however, will not be brought up at this judgment since Christ died for our sins. However, any sins not repented of will be brought up and figured into that judgment because we believers are still under the realm of the moral government of God covering time and our experience. Thus, the Scripture states (in a passage about believers): "Some men's sins are evident, going before unto judgment; and some men also they follow after [being exposed at the future judgment]" (1 Tim. 5:24). The

Scripture also tells us that in those cases where believers have lived in certain unrepentant sins there will be a severe judgment consisting of not inheriting the kingdom (1 Cor. 6:8-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5). The “kingdom” referred to in these verses is not God’s eternal kingdom, but the kingdom of the next age, lasting 1,000 years (just prior to eternity), where Christ openly rules on the earth (Matt. 19:27-29; Rev. 20:4, 6). The reward of being approved for this kingdom consists of a special portion of rich enjoyment of God’s life (eternal life) and ruling with Christ during that age (Matt. 19:27-29; 25:21; Lk. 18:28-30; 19:17; 2 Tim. 2:12). There are other penalties in God’s word besides kingdom exclusion but these are not the subject of this letter (see Lk. 12:42-48 as an example). Any penalties for the believer will be over after the kingdom age. In eternity, there will be no sorrow or tears (Rev. 21:4).

How should we deal with our sins now in order to receive God’s **fellowship forgiveness** and avoid some penalties at the Judgment Seat of Christ? Most importantly, we should seek God and seek His enlightenment upon any sins in our lives (Jn. 3:19-21; Eph. 5:13-14; Ps. 119:105). Then we should repent from and confess any known sins. If we discern sin in our lives and judge it by turning from it and confessing our wrongs to God, then we will not be judged for that sin at the coming Judgment Seat of Christ. “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Cor. 11:31). Learning how to live a victorious Christian life, where sin becomes less evident in our lives, is definitely possible, yet requires good Bible instruction as well as time and experience. To live a life totally without sin, however, cannot be realistically expected in this life. So, while we await the coming of the Lord, we should be those who are always ready to seek His **fellowship forgiveness**.

I hope the discussion above shows how forgiveness of a believer’s sins fits into the matter of temporal, governmental judgment by God, particularly as respects the coming Judgment Seat. Finally, please note that none of the severe judgments we have discussed here should be confused with the erroneous Roman Catholic doctrine of “Purgatory.”

The reward passages clearly teach that the believer’s bad works can be subject to recompense by the righteous Judge. However, through confession to God, the disciple can be cleansed by Jesus’ blood and any specific negative recompense avoided. The Catholic doctrine severely perverts this truth by claiming that the Christian himself must “atone” for his sins in order to effect his cleansing. Further, the doctrine of Purgatory claims that good deeds can be done, or money given, to the Roman Catholic church by the still living “faithful” in order to lessen the intensity or duration of punishment upon souls suffering in Purgatory. This proposition is patently unscriptural.

REASONS FOR REWARD FOR THE BELIEVER

Besides demonstrating the faithfulness of God in His righteous governance, one may ask the question of why both positive and negative rewards are held out as incentives

to the believer. Firstly, the prospect of future reward should act as a strong motivation to holiness and service for the believer.

A clear view of the reality of both positive and negative rewards to be realized in the future can surely act as such a stimulus. It has done so in my life and the lives of others I have known. Without a clear view, however, believers are not so motivated to live in holiness and service, although some may do so solely because of love for their Lord.

Further, when the positive rewards only are seen, the negative recompense possibility loses its power to generate a true “fear of the Lord”, which is a genuine deterrent to sin (Pr. 16:6b). Thus, the lack of proper teaching on these truths is certainly a prime cause for the carnality and immaturity of today’s believers as a whole. On this point, I would like to quote D. M. Panton, a godly English minister who taught these truths in the first half of the twentieth century:

The denial of these solemn truths paralyses and destroys some of the most powerful stimulants God has supplied to His Church in its deadening struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil; it empties of all horror the dread warnings to the backslider, and leaves him, if it does not put him, in a drugged sleep; and it drives privilege over the precipice of responsibility - a disaster of which the Church has had direct warning; - “continue thou in His goodness, *otherwise thou also shalt be cut off*” (Rom. xi. 22).²

Secondly, while we are in our earthly journey we are being tested by God to see which believers are suited for future responsibility, as illustrated by the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) , the parable of the minas (Lk. 19:11-27) and other Scriptures (Lk. 16:1-12, for example). I again quote Panton in this regard:

Officers are required for the administration of a kingdom: so God has deliberately interposed a prolonged period between the two advents, that our Lord might be enabled to so test His servants, in His absence, as to discover which are fitted for positions of responsibility and trust at His return. The Nobleman, before He departed, laid plans for the selection of officers to aid Him in the administration of the Kingdom; He devised a plan for bringing to light who those officers are on His return; this plan is in operation at the present moment, purposely so contrived as to reveal individual capacity for office, and personal fitness for trust; and - most impressive of all - the Long Journey is now nearly over, and at any moment the investigation may begin.³

² D. M. Panton, *The Judgment Seat of Christ* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co. Inc., 1984), p.77.

³ *ibid.*, p. 35.

May the Lord bless you as you consider these things and as you seek Him and His truth.

Yours in Christ,

Tom Finley

[This letter is reproduced essentially as originally written, except for changes in the section on forgiveness of sins.]

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Enclosure

EXCERPT FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS BY G. H. LANG :

ETERNAL SECURITY

The strength of the case for the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer is not always realized, and some of its grounds are not understood by all.

1. *Justification.* This security is involved in the nature of the justifying act of God. To justify is the act of a judge when he declares that, having examined the charge brought against the accused, he finds him not guilty before the law. The ground upon which God declares righteous the sinner who puts faith in Christ is that Christ as his Surety satisfied the demands of the law against the sinner. The atoning death of Christ which satisfied the demands of the law is imputed to, or put to the credit of, the sinner who puts his reliance upon the Surety as having suffered on his behalf the highest penalty imposed by the law. The actual offender is reckoned in Divine law to have expiated his offences by having died for them, because his Substitute died for them. "I through the law died unto [out of reach of] the law . . . I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal.2:19). See *Note* at end.

The question, therefore, as it concerns the sinner, is for *how many* of his sins did Christ by His death accept responsibility and render satisfaction for? If it was for those sins only which he had committed up to the time when he first placed his faith on Christ and was justified by that faith, then, as to his future from the hour, one of two features must characterize

it, namely, either he must never sin again, or, if he sin even once, then he must suffer eternal death, since, in the case supposed, Christ did not bear these post-conversion sins and no atonement can ever avail in respect thereof, for Christ will not die again (Rom. 6:9, 10; Heb. 7:16).

In other words: in the case now postulated, sin after conversion must inevitably cancel salvation for most believers.¹ For all these Christ might as well not have died for their pre-conversion sins because they will be eternally lost for their post-conversion sins.

As regards men who died before Christ died, and who had looked forward by faith to the coming Redeemer, *all* their sins of their whole life were past when He died for them. As regards men who were alive when Christ died, some of their sins were past and some were future. As regards those born since He died, and who have believed on Him, *all* their sins of their whole life were future when he died. By what process or to what purpose could a division have been made by Divine counsel and the Surety have been made responsible for a part only of their sins? In all of these cases if He did not accept and discharge the full legal penalty of *all* their sins then he did not provide salvation for any one: the whole stupendous transaction would be void and valueless. But inasmuch as He did in fact satisfy the law of God in respect of the sins of the whole life of the one who relies on Him, therefore the acquittal by the Judge of all the earth, that is to say, His declaration that the accused is not guilty before the law, sets him free from the eternal penalty due to the sins of his whole life.

Further, it is deeply important that (according, e.g. to the law of England) when a person has been tried for a crime and acquitted he cannot be again tried for the same offence or offences. Fifty years ago there was a barrister famed for his success in defending criminals. He relates that on one occasion he secured the acquittal of a man charged with murder, and afterwards did not cease to be sorry, for the culprit boasted, that, though his lawyer got him off, his was the hand that did the crime. Yet the man was secure from the law as regards that offence because he had been tried and (wrongly) declared not guilty.

In like manner Christ declared that the one who believes God's message of salvation "cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). For him the door of the condemned cell has been opened and he has stepped out into life and liberty. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Who shall impeach again God's chosen ones, seeing that God Himself has declared them to be righteous in law? (Rom.8:33). So long as the work of the cross

¹ An exception may be supposed possible in a case where death occurs immediately after conversion.

retains its virtue before God, so long will the righteousness imputed to the believer stand, that is, both are eternal.

2. *Temporal Penalties for the Justified.* Here enters the vast importance of the truth before urged, that the work of the cross delivers the believer from the *eternal* penalty of sin but not from any *temporal* punishments which may attach under the disciplinary government of the universe by God. And these may prove severe and prolonged, though not eternal in the case of the justified. Various scriptures present this serious and balancing aspect. For example:

(1) There is the private realm of the *father* and his *family*, wherein the children are chastised by the father. This will be considered when we reach ch. xii of our Epistle. It is a manifestly different case from that of a criminal before a Court on trial for his life.

(2) There is the case of a *king* and *his own household*. It is set forth in our Lord's parables in Luke 19:11-27 and Matt.25:14-30. The unfaithful servant was deprived of further service and prospects and was cast out of the house into the darkness of the night during the temporary festivities connected with the king's return. He might even be severely scourged (Luke 12:41-48). But these penalties were not the capital punishment inflicted upon the king's *enemies*. That is stated in immediate contrast: "Howbeit these mine *enemies*, who would not hat I should reign over them, bring hither, and *slay them* before me" (Luke 19:27).

(3) There is the parallel instance in Matt. 18:21-35 of the servant who refused mercy to his fellow-servant though himself had received mercy from their lord. In this case the master revoked his mercy and the remission of the debt, and commanded that the latter be exacted. If this be applied to the unregenerate and eternity it will mean that the sinner can ultimately "pay all that is due" by his own sufferings; a way of salvation repugnant to Scripture and which would render needless the sufferings of the Redeemer. But it is evident that this measure taken by the lord operated within the same restricted sphere of his personal household. The teaching was an answer to the inquiry as to how often a *brother* ought to forgive a *brother* (ver. 21), and the application which Christ made of the instruction carries the same limit of the father and family: "So shall also My heavenly *Father* do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his *brother* from you hearts" (ver. 35).

None of such cases raises the matter of the legal status of the children or the family servants before the *criminal courts*. This status remained unaffected by the disciplinary dealings of the father or the retributive measures of the master. Christ gave no challenge to His own statement

that the believer passes out of death into life and will not come into judgment as to *that* question (John 5:24). None of these servants lost his life by his carnality.²

² G. H. Lang, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Miami Springs: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985), pp. 196-198.