

# What am I worth? (5)

## God's sovereignty and true worth



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We are considering True Worth, and the subject "What am I worth?" the fifth message.

We have sought to appreciate from the example of two disciples of the Lord Jesus, as recorded in **Mark 10: 35-45**, the way they responded in the situation, and how the response of the Lord Jesus and the associated issues can help us in our own lives.

Today, we go on to ponder over further questions arising from this passage.

### **Mark 10: 39**

And they said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized."

So in **Mark 10: 39**, we see the response of the Lord Jesus to the answer given by James and John. They said: "We are able." This arose because the Lord Jesus asked them the question: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" The disciples said: "We are able."

Why then did the Lord Jesus say: “The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized”?

## **God sees our heart**

The Lord Jesus knew that the disciples were not able to drink the cup or to be baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized. The Lord Jesus had already said: “You do not know what you are asking for.” The Lord Jesus saw their deficiencies. The Lord Jesus knew that they were not able, and yet they said “We are able.”

Many people may respond to such a situation with the remark: “You are too confident. You are professing what is not real.” Many would rebuke the disciples for their arrogance and audacity to proclaim that they were able to drink the cup and go through the baptism when in fact they were not.

But we see the Lord Jesus did not respond that way. Instead, He said, “The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.”

Why is it the Lord Jesus responded this way?

We see that the Lord Jesus knew what was in their heart. He knew that in the midst of their deficiencies, they had a genuine longing for true worth in their being. They longed for something meaningful in eternity. Yes, there were aspects that were not right. There was self-confidence. There was manifestation of the flesh. But underlying that, the Lord Jesus saw that they had a genuine longing for true worth in their being.

## God sovereignly undertakes

The Lord Jesus also knew that they were not yet able, but God would sovereignly undertake to teach them and train them so that they would develop true worth in the process of transformation.

The Lord Jesus said, "The cup that I drink you shall drink – in the future. You are not yet able, but there will come a time when you will taste of the cup. You will understand in a deeper way, and go through with Me the difficulties of life in the right way."

Although they denied the Lord Jesus... they fled... we see from the record of the Scriptures that subsequently they went through suffering for His Name's sake. They did develop, they did learn, and they did drink the cup and go through the baptism.

However, we should bear in mind that true worth can be developed at different levels of quality. The disciples drank the cup but they were different degrees of meaning and quality in the process of their development.

We see the Lord Jesus teaching them, helping them to understand what this would mean, and we see God leading them through situations that gave them the opportunity to develop and to drink the cup.

**Matthew 26, verses 36 and 37** tell us how the Lord Jesus brought His disciples to Gethsemane:

36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."

37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed.

This was part of the Lord Jesus' training of the disciples. We are told specifically He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee.

The Lord Jesus was teaching them some aspects of the meaning of drinking the cup and going through the baptism. He began to be grieved and distressed. The disciples witnessed the agony of the Lord Jesus in this process of His preparation for the event of the cross.

We know that at this point of time, the disciples failed. They could not keep watch with Him for one hour. They subsequently deserted Him; they fled.

But God was sovereignly undertaking to teach them. Subsequently, after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, after Pentecost and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the disciples grew and learnt more what it meant to be true disciples of the Lord.

**Acts 5: 12**

And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.

**Acts** of the apostles describes how the apostles sought to preach the gospel to serve the Lord. God worked in their midst, but there was opposition, and they had to face difficulties, pain, and suffering.

**Acts 5: 17-18**

- 17 But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy;
- 18 and they laid hands on the apostles, and put them in a public jail.

The apostles suffered persecution; they were arrested and put in a public jail.

**Acts 5: 40-42**

- 40 And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and *then* released them.
- 41 So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name.
- 42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.

Before they were released they were flogged, and they were specifically ordered to speak no more in the name of Jesus. The apostles went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name.

They were learning to drink the cup, learning to suffer for the Lord Jesus, for His name's sake. They were glad that they had been considered worthy... The word "worthy" can also be translated as "fit", or "qualified". They were considered worthy or fit to suffer shame for *His* name.

This tells us that there was development in their lives. They were growing in quality. True worth was being built up within them so that they could meaningfully suffer for the Lord Jesus. They were learning to drink the cup.

In the eyes of men, it was a shameful thing to be flogged, to be imprisoned. However, in reality, it was an honour for them to suffer for the Lord's name. It was something meaningful, something pleasing to God, something that will help them further in the development of their being. We see that this event took place in the context of their faithfulness to God.

**Acts 5: 27-29**

- 27 And when they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. And the high priest questioned them,  
28 saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."  
29 But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men."

They were brought before the Council – the religious authorities among the Jewish people. They were given strict orders not to continue teaching in the name of the Lord Jesus. But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men."

Earlier, they had fled when the Lord Jesus was arrested – they were fearful. Now, they took their stand with God and with the Lord Jesus: “We must obey God rather than men.” And they were willing to face the consequences of that: the suffering, the pain, the difficulties associated with being followers of the Lord Jesus and being faithful to God.

**Acts 12: 1-2**

- 1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, in order to mistreat them.
- 2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.

So we see the apostles were arrested, they were flogged, they suffered, and in the case of James the brother of John, he was killed at this stage. He was killed because he belonged to the church. He was killed because he was an apostle of the Lord Jesus. He died for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

So we see that James went through this process of drinking the cup and going through the baptism. His brother John lived on, and in the book of **Revelation**, we read his description of his own state at a later stage.

**Revelation 1: 9**

I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance *which are* in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

The apostle John says that he was a fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance *which are* in Jesus. He continued to go through difficult times. He continued to suffer as an apostle of the Lord Jesus... he learnt to drink the cup.

And he said that he was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. This likely refers to his being exiled to the island of Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. And yet it was in that context that he received revelation from God to communicate and to write down the last book of the Scriptures: **Revelation**.

## Appreciating God's sovereignty

So we see then: God in His sovereignty helps us to develop true worth.

If we want to grow in the quality of our being, it is important that we look beyond the situations around us, to see what God is seeking to do in our lives. God will sovereignly undertake to help us to develop that quality in our being if we truly want it.

If God sees in our heart the genuine desire to be what He wants us to be, to develop true quality in our lives, then He will undertake to help us. God in His sovereign choice will bring about situations to help us develop true worth in the context of our choice to love Him with all our hearts. If we genuinely love God and we want to be true to Him, God will help us – and He knows the best way to help us – if we are prepared to co-operate with Him... walk with Him... trust Him... respond well.

### **Romans 8: 28-30**

- 28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.
- 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;
- 30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

This passage is very meaningful in helping us understand how God is working in this world. The apostle Paul tells us very clearly: God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God...

Whether we love God or not is our choice.

God does not compel us to love Him. He does not force us to love Him. He does not make us love Him. He calls us to love Him. He shows us why we should love Him. He has done all things good for us so that we have good reason to love Him.



But, it is up to us whether we will love Him or not. If we do, if we genuinely love God, then God will sovereignly undertake such that all things will work together for good in our lives.

The apostle Paul then went on to explain the whole approach that God takes in helping us.

**Verse 29** says: For whom He foreknew... This is to explain the way in which God works. As He foreknew, He predestined.

God sees our heart. God recognizes what is within us. Do we truly love Him? Do we truly want to develop quality in our being?

The Lord Jesus saw that in the heart of James and John there was a genuine longing and desire for true quality in their being. So, although they had their weaknesses and failures, He said: "You shall drink the cup – God will undertake to teach you, help you, lead you through situations so that you can develop that quality that you long for."

God foreknows, He understands, He sees our heart, and as He sees what we truly long for, He will work: For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son...

God will sovereignly undertake... He will work in the direction of helping us to develop the character of the Lord Jesus. Drinking the cup, going through the baptism, is to be like the Lord Jesus, living a life of self-giving, of moral and spiritual beauty.

**Verse 30** tells us: whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. This is to tell us the process in which God works. As He sees, He chooses; as He chooses, He calls; as He calls, He justifies; as He justifies, He glorifies.

## **Our choice and God's sovereignty**

However, it is very important for us to recognize that this is the way that God is seeking to work, but whether the outcome will be glorification or not will depend on whether we choose to co-operate with Him, whether we respond well to Him.

Our choices are needed for the transformation to take place. We can reject what God desires to do in our lives. We must understand that this direction and outcome is effective only for those who truly love God. If we do not truly love God, the outcome will not be glorification.

The Scriptures show to us we are justified by faith, and it is not a faith that God imposes upon us. It is a faith that God leads us toward in His grace but requires exercise of our choice to repent and to trust Him. The Scriptures tell us we must repent – and repentance is our choice. We must trust Him – trusting Him is our choice.

God calls us, He works, He helps us, He provides for us, He sovereignly undertakes, but we must respond. We must choose to love Him, to follow Him, to obey Him.

We cannot be justified if we refuse to repent. God cannot make us repent if we do not want to repent.

So the process of glorification takes place in the context of God's sovereign working in the midst of our positive response to Him.

As we choose to walk in His ways, as we want to live a life that is meaningful before God, so He will help us.

## Rejoicing in difficult times

The situations that God may bring us through may include times of difficulty and pain that help us understand ourselves, and help us to develop deeper convictions, and commitment to God and what is truly good.

God causes all things to work together for good, and these things, these situations, may and often include times of difficulty and pain.

In such times, God is seeking to help us understand ourselves better, and in understanding ourselves, if we are genuinely determined to follow Him, we will repent, we will correct ourselves with His help.

As a result, we develop deeper convictions, and commitment to God and to what is truly good.

If we understand this, we can therefore rejoice always.

In every situation, we can be confident that God knows what we are going through... not only does He know, He is actively at work to help us to develop to a higher level of quality in our being.

It is for this reason that James writes:

### **James 1: 2-4**

- 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,
- 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.
- 4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

We are told that we should consider it all joy – we can rejoice, we can be glad, when we encounter various trials. Some trials can be very difficult, very painful, difficult to bear, but God is sovereignly undertaking to help us develop quality in our being.

If we understand this and we co-operate with Him... we respond well... then the outcome will be endurance leading to being perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

The testing of your faith produces endurance. To be faithful to God, we need to learn endurance, and if we endure in all kinds of situations, however difficult it may be, we grow to become perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

We do not become perfect in the absolute sense like God, but perfect and complete in the sense of growing maturity and quality in our being. We become more and more like God in His moral qualities.

However, it is obvious from the Scriptures that to become perfect and complete, lacking in nothing requires positive moral response.

Trials and difficulties do not always produce great quality in our being. Many people are crushed by trials and difficulties. They are not identified with God and what He is seeking to do. They react, they rebel, they complain. As a result, their character degenerates.

If we want to benefit from God's sovereign grace working in our lives, we must identify with Him and what He is seeking to do, and co-operate with Him.

If we respond well, the outcome in our being will be increasing quality in the direction of perfection... purity of heart, oneness with God.

Sometimes it can be very painful, and it seems overwhelming; it is as if we cannot go through it. But if we look to God, we tell Him we trust Him, we depend on Him, then God will see us through. God knows what we are going through, and He is sovereignly watching over us.

## God allows spiritual attacks

It is also helpful for us to understand that such situations can include attacks by the evil one.

If we respond well, even these attacks by the evil one will help to increase the quality in our being, and equip us for greater service to God.

The evil one is not sovereign. He is a subject in God's creation. He is subjected to God's laws. He cannot operate just as he wills. So, even the attacks of the evil one are under the authority of the sovereignty of God.

It is true God wants us to reject the evil one, to take our stand against him and all that he seeks to do. But ultimately, we should not be pre-occupied with the evil one, but we should be more concerned about what God is seeking to do in that situation.

In **Job 1: 12**, we see an example of the evil one seeking to work in the situation, and yet he requires God's permission.

### **Job 1: 12**

Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

Satan wanted to afflict Job so that his life would crumble.

God gave him permission. He says: "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." At that stage, Satan did not have permission from God to put forth his hand on Job personally, but he could work in his surroundings... his possessions... his relatives.

In this situation, we may think that Satan was effective in seeking what he wanted. But actually, when we look at the context, we see that it was God who took the initiative.

**Job 1: 8** tells us:

And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."

God watched over Job, and God spoke to Satan: "Have you considered My servant Job?" It was in that context that Satan responded: "Does Job fear God for nothing?" And so, Satan said to God, "If You were to put forth Your hand against him, he will curse You."

So God allowed Satan to do that. In fact, God was watching over Job to give him an opportunity to respond well, to learn, and to rise to a higher plane.

We see the same thing happening in **Job 2: 6** – the evil one seeking to work in the situation, and yet he requires God's permission. We read:

So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life."

Satan now could afflict Job's body but not kill him. And so Satan did so – according to God's permission. But again we see that it was God who took the initiative. We read in **Job 2: 3**

And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause."

So God was sovereignly at work, and God said: "Job is still responding well. He holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him..."

Satan incited God against Job. He wanted God to allow Job to suffer. God permitted it, but it was not against Job. It was for his well-being. It was to help him to grow... to develop.

And so in this context then, in **verse 5** we see how Satan again responded: If God were to put forth His hand and touch his bone and his flesh, then Job would curse God. Satan wanted to destroy Job. God allowed Satan to work within certain limits. But God's intention was to help Job to rise to a higher plane in his faith in God... in the development of his character.

So we see that as a result of the spiritual attacks, Job recognized his deficiencies more clearly, and he responded more deeply to God. His faith grew in quality and his character developed more substance.

This was possible because Job was humble and contrite when he was rebuked by God. In the midst of his failures, Job said things that he should not have. There were aspects not right within him. God rebuked him.

If Job had not repented, if he were not humble, he would not have benefited from this situation. He would have crumbled in his life. But Job responded well: he humbled himself; he acknowledged where he was wrong; he submitted to God. As a result, he grew in quality, and the book of **Job** becomes a very meaningful book for us to read and to learn from.

We can see the same principle at work in the life of the apostle Paul.

### **2 Corinthians 12: 7-10**

- 7 And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself!
- 8 Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me.
- 9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.
- 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

If we were to observe the situation, we may say that the thorn in the flesh was brought by Satan. He was the one who gave Paul the thorn in the flesh. We would not be wrong to say that – Satan brought the thorn in the flesh.

But when we read this passage, we do not see that the apostle Paul put it this way. Instead, the apostle Paul put it this way: that God was the one who gave him the thorn in the flesh. We read the context: And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh...

Who is the one who gave him the thorn in the flesh?

It was not Satan, because the purpose of the thorn was to keep him from exalting himself – that was not Satan's intention!

The apostle Paul repeated: "to keep me from exalting myself!"

So the one who gave Paul the thorn in the flesh was in fact God. God wanted to keep Paul from exalting himself because of the greatness of the revelations.

So God sovereignly undertook so that Paul went through that experience of the thorn in the flesh. It was a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Satan was eager to afflict Paul. God allowed it because God had a purpose in that situation.

So we notice that the apostle Paul recognized God's sovereignty, and so we see that the apostle Paul prayed to the Lord: I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

He was appealing to God because he saw that God was sovereign. He asked God to remove that thorn in the flesh because at first he thought that it would hinder his ministry.



But when the Lord explained to him, “My grace is sufficient for you for power is perfected in weakness”, the apostle Paul said, “Most gladly therefore I will rather boast about my weaknesses that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

He was glad to go through the difficulties... the pain... the suffering... because he saw that in the midst of all this, he would know, in a deeper measure, the power of God... it would help him to remain humble... he would grow in the quality of his being.

So the apostle Paul benefited from the thorn in the flesh. He responded well to God’s teaching. Towards the end of his life on earth, he could express gladness in having run the race well, and having developed quality in his being, so as to receive the crown of righteousness.

## **God sovereignly assigns**

Let us go on to the next question, arising from **Mark 10: 40**.

Why did the Lord Jesus say, “But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared”? Why did the Lord Jesus tell James and John: “to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared”?

We see the sequence of events. James and John wanted these positions of honour. The Lord Jesus asked them, “Are you able to drink the cup...?”: that is to tell them that to sit in such a position requires that kind of quality of being. They responded, “We are able.” The Lord Jesus had told them “You do not know what you are asking for.” It requires that kind of quality. They had not yet reached that stage, but they thought they had.

The Lord Jesus saw what was in their heart. He was compassionate, and He told them, “You shall drink the cup...” He would help them. God in His sovereignty would prepare them.

But, after having said all this, He said, “But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

So this helps us to appreciate another aspect of God’s sovereignty in relation to true worth.

Although God in His sovereign greatness and wisdom will help us to develop true worth, we must recognize that it is still God’s sovereign decision to assign us whatever place He sees fit in His kingdom.

It does not mean that if James and John developed quality in their being, they would sit on the right and on the left.

God in His sovereign decision will consider many aspects of what He is seeking to do, including His plans and purposes in working out His will. It goes beyond moral quality alone.

So God in His sovereignty places us in different roles... responsibilities... in different parts of the outworking of His kingdom in His will.

So we need to distinguish between what is not available to all, from that which is available to all. There are some aspects that are available to all of us, but there are some aspects that are not.

### **What is not available to all**

First, let us consider what is not available to all. This refers to specific positions and responsibilities. Specific positions and responsibilities are assigned by God in His sovereignty. God decides who should fulfil which responsibility... fulfil which position. They are not solely determined by the quality of our being.

We see from the Scriptures that God's call for Paul was different from God's call for Peter. God decided that Peter should be the apostle to the circumcised and Paul the apostle to the uncircumcised.

We read this in **Galatians 2: 6-9**

- 6 But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)-- well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.
- 7 But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter *had been* to the circumcised
- 8 (for He who effectually worked for Peter in *his* apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles),
- 9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *might go* to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

God chose Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles. The apostle Peter could not insist on being the apostle to the Gentiles. He was called to be the apostle to the circumcised – to the Jews. That is not dependent on moral quality alone.

God in His wisdom knows who is more suited for what kind of responsibility and position. Certainly, a high level of responsibility requires moral quality, but moral quality by itself does not determine in absolute terms what responsibility we will shoulder.

So when God sovereignly chose Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles, He then sovereignly undertook to teach him and equip him, but this required Paul's choice to be obedient to God's call.

So we read in **Acts 9: 10-16** the Lord calling Ananias to go to Saul to lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight. In that context, Ananias was hesitant, and the Lord said to him, in **verse 15**: "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; [**verse 16**] for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

“...he is a chosen instrument of Mine”: the Lord chose Paul to serve Him, to bear His name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel, and he would suffer much for the name of the Lord Jesus.

So **Acts 26: 9-20** describes what Paul went through as he shared his testimony. He mentioned how he was hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. He punished the Christians; he tried to force them to blaspheme. He pursued them even to foreign cities, but in the midst of his persecution of the church, the Lord Jesus appeared to him.

There was a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around him. And the Lord Jesus said to him, “...for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness...”

We see in **verse 19**, the apostle Paul said, “So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision...”

So although God in His sovereignty may call us, it still requires our obedience.

We have a choice. Will we obey or disobey? What God desires for us will not be fulfilled if we disobey. We must obey if we want to benefit.

### **Concentrate on our part**

So we must concentrate on what God in His sovereignty desires for our own lives, and fulfil that well.

It is very easy for us to be curious about God’s purposes for other people, and also to compare our context with that of others. Sometimes we think that their context is much easier, more helpful, there’s more honour...

When we do that, we will not be able to effectively fulfil God's purpose in our lives.

In **John 21: 17-22**, we see how the Lord Jesus spoke to Peter and told him what would happen to him in the days to come. **Verse 19** tells us:

Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

The Lord Jesus was telling Peter how he should follow Him, and what would take place later in his life. However, in **verse 20**, we see: Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following *them*, and in that context Peter asked the Lord Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?"

He was distracted. He was not concentrating on what the Lord was saying to him about his own life. He was curious about what God would do with regard to this other disciple.

In **verse 22**, Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me!"

We must concentrate on what God wants of our life. We should not compare with others. We should not be so curious about what will happen to them, but we should do our part faithfully.

So too we can see that God's call for Daniel is different from that of Paul, and is also different from that of Anna, or David, or Job. What is prepared for them will be correspondingly different.

The Lord Jesus referred to what is prepared for them. It is God who will prepare for us what is suitable for us in eternity, and He will prepare us now during our time on earth.

All who truly love God will have a meaningful place in God's kingdom. What place it is, it will be meaningful if we truly love Him. But the places may be different in various aspects.

## **What is available for all**

Let us now then consider what is available for all.

The Scriptures make clear that what is available for all is moral quality and God's approval and our closeness to Him according to true worth. This is available to all.

All of us can develop moral quality of the highest level. All of us can gain God's approval. All of us can be very close to God if we develop true worth in our being.

### **2 Timothy 4: 6-8**

- 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.
- 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;
- 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

The apostle Paul shows us that at the end of his life he was confident that he would receive the crown of righteousness because he had fought the good fight, he had finished the course, he had kept the faith.

He had developed quality in his being. There was true worth in him. So, he will be awarded the crown of righteousness.

But he added: not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. To all who truly love the Lord, they also will receive the crown of righteousness. So this is available to all.

All of us can receive the crown of righteousness – be approved by God.

Similarly, **James 1: 12**

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

“Blessed is a man”: any man, any woman, who perseveres under trial – if we count it all joy when we encounter various trials... we go through them well, we rejoice in God, we trust Him, depend on Him, remain faithful to Him... then we will be approved.

When that happens, we will receive the crown of life. God has promised the crown of life to all those who truly and deeply love Him. It is conditional upon our persevering; it is conditional upon our being approved, upon our truly loving Him.

So then, when the Lord Jesus said in **Matthew 5: 8**, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”, He was helping us to appreciate this fundamental reality.

This path is open to all of us. All of us can be pure in heart and all of us can see God in a deep and meaningful way: be deeply one with Him, be close to Him, have deep fellowship with Him.

We should not seek for that which is not intended for us, but this is intended for all: to be pure in heart, to see God, to know Him deeply.

So today, we have sought to appreciate God’s sovereignty in relation to true worth.

If we want to develop deep quality in our being, let us not be afraid just because we fail and falter... there are deficiencies in us.

God sees beyond all this.

If in our hearts we are prepared to persevere, to learn, to be humble, to be contrite, to get up and go on, then God in His sovereignty will watch over us, arrange situations for us to go through and to learn well. All of us can learn to drink the cup and go through the baptism.

But let us not seek for positions and responsibilities that are not intended for us. God in His sovereignty decides.

We learn to be pure in heart, and we shall see God ...we shall receive the crown of life... the crown of righteousness... and God will assign to us a meaningful place in His kingdom.

Let us come before Him in prayer, and ask Him to help us to appreciate His sovereignty, and ask Him to teach us how to respond well.