



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Colossians 1: 21-23

Lesson 4 of 15

2018

"The Bloody Peace"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Mark, and good morning. We are, as Mark said, continuing our studies in the book of Colossians: A small book, but full of glorious passages; and we come to another one this morning. Colossians chapter 1, verses 21 through 23, is a short passage, but like so many of these, it is just filled with glorious truth.

We ended last week with verse 20, in which Paul speaks of ‘reconciliation’. He wrote, "... and through Him (*that is through Christ*) to reconcile all things to Himself, (*He's speaking there of the universe. I think I quoted FF Bruce who called that a ‘cosmic significance’*) having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or thing in heaven." (vs 20). So, it's a future, ‘cosmic’ reconciliation.

And now Paul continuing, applies this to the Colossians in verse 21 through 23:

²¹And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, ²²yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him, holy and blameless and beyond reproach— ²³if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

Colossians 1:21-23

We want to spend some time talking about that word 'if', and why does he put that there?

Well, may the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of studying it together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank you for this time together. It's an opportunity to fellowship; it's an opportunity to do this very thing—open Your Bible and Your revelation to us and read a passage of scripture—and then consider its meaning. And this is truly a great passage of scripture. Every portion of scripture is, and every portion fits within the context in which it was written. But some are certainly more glorious than others and confront us with truth that is so vitally important for us to understand—And this is one of those texts. We think of the great work that Your Son has done and what it cost Him; what it cost You; and how it has benefited us—and what grace was in it all!

And so, LORD, we thank you for the time we have here. We pray in this hour that You would bless us greatly; that You would open our minds to what we have read—or as Paul put it in his prayer for the Ephesians (1:18), that 'the eyes of their heart would be opened'. I pray that for us that we will be able to see things that Paul was writing to the Colossians and how they apply to us, because everything he said to them applies to the believer in Jesus Christ today. We have a great Savior, Who has reconciled us to You. And while we still struggle in this world, and we will, we have a glorious future, we have hope that is certain. So, I pray that You will really ground us in these things and encourage us with this great truth. So bless us spiritually, build us up in the faith.

And bless us materially, LORD. We have needs—We all have needs. Every one of us is dependent upon You for every moment of our existence; and Your Son instructed us to pray about that; to pray for our daily bread. Every moment is a gift from You: Our health, our employment, the food we eat that sustains us, the air we breathe; is ultimately a gift from You. And so we are to look to You for those things, in the good times and the bad times.

LORD bless us in whatever condition we find ourselves in this morning: May be pleasant; We may be enjoying health, employment, friends, all of the things that are good about life, friends. But some may be in difficulty and we pray that you would encourage them— encourage all of us. Give us gratitude for the pleasant times that we have for they are from You. And may those that are going through difficulty know that You are there with them working through that difficulty for their betterment and for their good. We have that great promise from You and that great confidence. Bless those that are traveling, (we know we have some that are away), keep them safe and bring them back safely.

And now bless our time together, bless this hour that You would be glorified, and we would be edified. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

One of the great hymn writers of Christianity is one of the great poets of England, William Cowper. He had a troubled youth. He was physically frail and emotionally fragile. He grieved over his mother's death. He despaired over his failures. He tried to hang himself and was committed to an asylum. But there he read the Bible. And when he came to Romans chapter 3, verse 25, that Jesus Christ was "...set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood...", he believed and was converted. He later expressed his gratitude for grace in the hymn, *There Is A Fountain*, that begins,

"There is a fountain filled with blood
drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
lose all their guilty stains."

It's a favorite hymn of Christians. But that's a startling image, isn't it—being submerged in a 'flood of blood'? It's disturbing to many and adds to Voltaire's criticism that Christianity is a bloody religion. Blood makes people faint. Blood sacrifice seems primitive and barbaric to modern man; for he wants a bloodless religion and

forgiveness without cost. But the Bible is clear: "...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." (Heb 9:22). So all through the Bible we see bloody sacrifices of bulls and goats and lambs being led to the altar. The temple was a slaughterhouse, where blood flowed every day, morning and evening. But not even that could take away man's sin. It only presaged and pictured the final sacrifice, the only effective sacrifice—that of the God-man, Jesus Christ, and the cross. And then after the cross we read statements in the Bible that sound a lot like Cowper's hymn: Statements like, "...they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev 7:14).

Paul connects all of the doctrines of salvation to the blood of Christ. That statement that was so influential in Cowper's conversion, Romans 3:25, is just one example that "...God displayed (*Christ*) publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith."

'Propitiation' is one of the great words of the Bible. It means simply *'to satisfy.'* God's justice was *'satisfied'* in the sacrifice of His Son. His wrath was exhausted and turned away in the cross. And that's the reason Paul could write in our previous passage, in Colossians 1:20, that "...through Him...", through His Son, God would "...reconcile all things to Himself...through the blood of His cross."

'Reconciliation' is another of the great words in the Bible and is at the very heart of the gospel of the Good News of salvation. It means *'to make peace.'* It's based on propitiation. Because God's justice is *'satisfied'*, He can make peace, He can *reconcile* man to Himself. The Greek word for this, for *'reconcile'* or *'reconciliation,'* is from the word for *'change.'* So it means to *'change'* from hostility to friendship; from war to peace; or for some who like alliteration, from enmity to amity.

In verse 20, Paul refers to a *'cosmic change'* in the future when the universe, when everything will be released from what Paul calls in Romans 8:20, its *'futility.'* The world is currently in a state of futility, as is the universe. —There is chaos all around and all above us. And that's going to end someday. It tells us enough about the situation that things are not right and that God is going to reconcile it all—And all will be brought into a state of liberty and glory. We think the universe and nature around

us is glorious, and it is. And Paul tells us it declares the glory of God. But it is as nothing compared to what it will be in that future date.

But that freedom and future for the universe is based on the reconciliation that God has already established with man. And that's what Paul describes in some detail in verses 21 and 22. The Colossian Christians were now presently reconciled with God; at peace with Him. But in the past, they were not: In the past they were at war. So Paul recalls their past to remind them of the need they had to be reconciled to God, and of the greatness of God's grace that reconciled them to Himself. "...you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds." (vs 21). That was what they were. In fact, that is what mankind is today. It is the consequence of the events that occurred in the garden of Eden that are recorded in Genesis 3, when man broke his covenant with God to obey, and instead disobeyed and 'fell'. We've all inherited Adam's guilt, because he was our representative. The best man, the perfect man—stood for us. We couldn't have had a better person to represent us.

Some people object to the idea that Adam represented us: 'I am in trouble because of what he did? That's not fair. I ought to be able to stand on my own.' And yet, when you think about it, there was no greater blessing than having him as our representative. We couldn't have had a better representative, as I said, 'a perfect man.' And from all we can tell, a brilliant man; perfect in every way. And not only that, but in a perfect environment. Before there was sin, it was a perfect environment, and he had only one prohibition, only one rule that he had to keep, as it were: 'Don't eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil', that tree in the middle of the garden. You've got the whole garden, with the vast number of trees and fruit, that is all yours. Just don't eat of that one tree.

So a perfect man, in a perfect environment, with only one prohibition, and still he failed...and fell—And so we all fell with him. As our representative goes, so we all go. And now mankind is in ruins—and the rebellion continues. Man; men and women; mankind; is alienated from God. Sin has separated us from Him. Paul said this of the Ephesians, that they were separated from God's promises and were 'without hope in

the world' (Eph 2:11-12). That's man's condition—apart from God's saving grace. As a result, men lead, what FF Bruce describes, as 'lonely lives in a universe which is felt to be unfriendly.'

Well, it is a 'lonely' and 'unfriendly' place because men have been separated from God, and in this separation many of them are in this empty universe that is hostile. They are separated from God, but not only that, they are separated from one another. They are at war with each other. They are, as Paul describes the history of the Colossians, "...formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds..." (vs 21). But that's true of everyone outside of Christ.

Now, I know this is not what people want to hear about themselves...but it's the testimony of scripture. And not only that, those who observe mankind and look at history have made the same kinds of statement. Edward Gibbon, in his book *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, wrote that "History is indeed little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind." —What a sad world. But that is what alienation and separation from God produces. Man's crimes are really only the outworking of his rebellion against God. Man is "...hostile in mind..." toward Him.

Now this is Paul's explanation in other places as well. See his explanation of the human condition in Romans 8:7; "The mind set on the flesh..." (that is the natural mind, the unbelieving man, the unbelieving mind) "...is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God; for it is not even able to do so." Paul's giving these explanations for why things are the way they are. And notice that man's natural mind is "...not even able..." —Think of that— Man cannot...cannot of himself submit to God...and so he will not submit. He's a rebel by nature. That is man's spiritual condition. He's guilty and helpless to change and determined not to change. Ah, but what man cannot do and what man does not want to do...God does. He brings about change.

Now these Colossians experienced that change. Every believer in Jesus Christ has experienced that. "...you were...alienated", Paul said, "...you were...hostile, "...yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death..." (vs 21). That's grace. That is Sovereign Grace. That is God's undeserved love and favor. God 'brought them

near who were far off' (Eph 2:13). He changed those who were enemies and made them friends. He ended the war and He established peace.

These Colossians understood that. They heard the good news that God's messengers gave: The offer of peace; the promise of forgiveness and eternal life. They felt the burden of guilt and the emptiness of life without hope, and they responded to the light of the gospel by believing it. They trusted in the Savior. There's no salvation apart from doing that. There is no salvation apart from faith. You must believe!
But...God took the initiative.

And Paul states that here and elsewhere. In Romans 5 he said, '...while we were still helpless...Christ died for the ungodly. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' (vs 6,8). We could not save ourselves when we were unable to respond; while we were guilty; while we were ungodly; while we were sinners; while we did not want to respond—Yet, Christ died for us. That's grace. He died to save us while we were in the very act of war against Him.

I think it was the Scottish theologian and preacher, PT Forsyth, who said that Christ "...took us with weapons in our hands." I like that statement: I think that's a graphic and correct description of what happens to the believer. He's taken 'with weapons in his hand,' in the very act of rebellion, and the very act of making war. We see that all through Paul's letters—and Paul knew that very well. He was on his way to Damascus to jail or kill Christians. He had letters in his hand giving him the authority to do that from the high priest when—Christ stopped him in his tracks. Christ arrested Paul—Saul of Tarsus—in the very act of hostility against Him and changed him completely from an enemy to a friend; from a persecutor to an apostle and to a great evangelist. Conversions may be more spectacular in some than in others, but all are really the same. They are a change from war to peace. All of us were captured 'with weapons in our hands.' God did it all.

But He did it at great cost to Himself. It was peace established "...through the blood of His cross..." (vs 20). Here Paul says He '*reconciled*' us "...in His fleshly body through death..." (vs 22), through the shedding of blood: But here the emphasis is on

the human nature of Christ. The sacrifice of a bull or a goat couldn't atone for our sin and satisfy God's justice. Animals can't represent humans. Fountains of that blood flowed for centuries without taking away sin. Only a man could die in the place of men. Only a man could represent mankind. Just as one man brought us down, one man raised us up. Because when Christ died, He stood in our place, (in judgment), and suffered for our sins—suffered personally for our personal sins. So this peace between us and God happened “...in His fleshly body...” — in the real body of a real man with a reasonable soul by His death—His violent death—His sacrificial death.

Now this is what gives the assurance that He established permanent peace with God. Our sins have been paid for, and they've been paid for in full—the debt has been wiped out. The slate that was charged with all of our crimes has been wiped clean by the Lord's sacrifice. They can never again be raised up against us.

But this 'sin' concept is the problem that the natural unbelieving man has. It's not just the bloody sacrifice, nor the perception that it's barbaric—It's the sin for which the blood was shed. It's the sin for which Christ had to die. That's the problem because man chafes at the suggestion that he's a sinner; that he's guilty; that he's unworthy; and that he's helpless—he denies and rejects all of that. As long ago as 1939, Reinhold Niebuhr, no conservative, wrote of “the complacent conscience” of modern man. That's really the problem. Man doesn't think he's sinful. He thinks he's 'okay'. He doesn't believe in the fall of man or original sin. He has a “complacent conscience” about guilt and judgment. The dying words of the German poet, Heinrich Heine, are often quoted as giving expression to the natural man's religion and his view of God. The poet was a man who lived a pretty rough life; a life of sin. But he said, on his deathbed, "God will forgive me; that is His business."

No. God cannot offer amnesty to rebels. He cannot simply forgive sin. God is Holy. God is Just. And He must deal with sin and deal with evil—rightly; He must deal with it justly. He must punish it. Sin must be paid for in order for it to be removed. His justice, His righteousness, His holiness cannot be compromised in any way. That's the reason Christ died. If there had been another way, God would have let the cup pass

from Him, pass from His only begotten Son. —He didn't. —And He didn't let the cup pass because there was no other way to satisfy His justice, to remove His wrath and establish peace between Him and man than "...through the blood of His cross..."

This was even indicated from the very beginning when God mercifully clothed Adam and Eve with animal skins before expelling them from the garden. To cover their shame, He had to slay animals. That must have been a startling thing to witness for those two people who had seen nothing but beauty and life—and suddenly there is before them these animals that are slain, blood is shed, so that their shame could be covered.

Men can attack Christianity as a "bloody religion" and excuse their unbelief in that way, but the Bible is clear: "...without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness." (Heb 9:22). Christ won the peace, but it was a "**Bloody Peace.**" That's not because God is cruel or barbaric, but because sin is so evil; sin is so damning that it took the blood of the Son of God, the unique God-man, in order to remove it.

The problem of modern man is the problem that an old English divine, a medieval theologian, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm, stated when he was in a discussion, a debate, with a man who didn't believe in the atonement—he didn't think it was necessary—And so Anselm explained the problem to him. He explained why you don't get it. He said, "**You have not yet considered how great the weight of sin is.**" That is so true. The sin of man is so great, the stain of sin is so deep, that only the blood of Christ can remove it. It is effective. It only is cleansing. —And it is abundant. Not for a few, but for a multitude. It's like a flood of grace and an ocean of salvation. So we, who have been washed in it gladly sing "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from a Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains." We are free from sin's penalty. And sin's penalty is great: Death; physical death, spiritual death, eternal death, damnation—it is a terrible thing.

But the believer is free from that, delivered from that. And not only that, free from sin's power as well. Yes, we still sin. But sin's power is broken, and we are presently being sanctified. And some day, we will be free from sin's very presence and

be fully glorified. That's the promise Paul gives in the rest of the verse. Christ has *reconciled* us to God "...in order to present you..." (to present us) "...before Him..." (before His Father) "...holy and blameless and beyond reproach..." That is our future.

In the present we are justified. Right now—the believer in Jesus Christ is declared righteous and fully accepted by God. We are legally right with Him. We have full forgiveness *now*: and the result is, we have peace with God *now*. And because we have peace with God now, we have full access to Him. We can come boldly before the Throne of Grace at any time to seek help in time of need. We are in fellowship with Him. We are in His family. We have a relationship with Him.

And then, in the future, we will be sinless! That is what Paul means in that first description, "*holy*." The basic meaning of *holy* is 'separation.'—It is the idea of being 'unmixed', and that was taught to Israel all through the law of Moses. You read the law and you read all about this diet they were on, and the kind of clothing they had to wear, and all these rules that dictated everything that they did; their day; the way their week was scheduled. Everything was in all this detail; and all of it was done to teach them to be *holy*. It was a great object lesson for them that they lived out. And in living it out, in their diet or in their clothing, they were being taught to be *holy*. And so they could eat lamb, but they couldn't eat pork. There were clean and unclean animals, clean and unclean food. They could wear clothing of wool, or they could wear clothing of cotton, but they couldn't mix the fabrics. They were to separate them.

And it was all designed to teach them to be pure; to be *holy*; to be *separated from* sin and devoted *to* God—That's the other aspect of holiness. On the one hand it means to be separated *from*—and on the other hand it means to be separated *to*. It means to be devoted to God. And in the future, that future day, we will be holy. We will be completely separated from sin and completely devoted to God. Christ will come; the graves will be opened; the bodies of the saints will be raised pure and glorified—physically and spiritually—And so, we will be "...blameless and beyond reproach..." (vs22).

But that's not so today. The justified Christian is a 'righteous sinner', as the reformers used to put. We are righteous in the eyes of God—but we still have sin. So we are inconsistent in our lives and people can point to us as being inconsistent, being far from blameless, and accuse us of hypocrisy—and oftentimes they're right. But it doesn't give us an excuse to fail. In fact, we have an "accuser." Satan is called the "accuser" of the "brethren" (Rev 12:10). And he accuses us before God "day and night" (ibid). Constantly accusing us. He is relentless. And he's also convincing, because it's true— We sin.

Jesus described Satan as a liar and a murderer from the beginning, (Jn 8:44). Going back to the garden—A liar; he is that. But he doesn't need to lie in his accusations against us because we do sin. That was Paul's frustration, expressed in Romans chapter seven; 'The good he wanted to do he didn't do.' In fact, 'he practiced the very evil that he didn't want to do.' But there's an antidote to that. There's an antidote to Satan's attacks on us—and that is: "The Blood of the Lamb" (Rev 12:11). It is by the Lord's sacrifice that we overcome the evil one: Because through His sacrifice all of our sins have been paid for and paid for in full. And every accusation that the Devil can make against us, the Lord can say, "I paid for that." And because of that, the day is coming when sin and failure of every kind will be a thing of the past and forever forgotten. We will stand before God "...holy and blameless and beyond reproach..." That will be a glorious and joyful day, a glorious and euphoric day.

Yet in the present Paul told the Corinthians (2Co 4:16), '...our outer man is decaying. We don't lose hope because, while it is decaying, our inner man is being renewed day by day.'—That is sanctification. This body is getting old, and it's getting worn out. But the inner man, as one feeds upon the Word of God and lives in obedience and fellowship with one another and with Him, is growing and developing. But still—while we don't despair over that (we shouldn't), it's difficult. It's difficult to go through the effects of aging that the Fall/Sin has brought upon us; even for the saint; even for the believer; it's not easy. It's debilitating, it's discouraging to see yourself get old and not be able to do the things you used to do; not be able to feel as healthy as

you used to feel. Youth and strength pass by once and can never be recovered. Now that's difficult for the saint.

But for the non-believer, for the man and woman of the world, that reality is especially dreary. Their strength and beauty goes quickly, and it's gone forever. Someone said, "Youth is wasted on the young."—They didn't know to appreciate it until they get to be middle age, and they begin feel the effects of it all. And then they realize what they had, and what they can never have again. That leads to despair.

But the saint will be restored and glorified forever. And what we will receive in that glorification is so far greater than any youth or beauty we may have had in this world. Our minds will be expanded and healed. Charles Spurgeon suffered from depression, just as Winston Churchill did. Churchill called it a "black dog." Spurgeon called it "fainting fits." All kinds of reasons were given for Spurgeon's condition and his struggles. His wife thought that the weather in England affected him, and maybe it did have an effect (He did spend a lot of time in his later years in the south of France where the weather was much easier, and he felt better). But Spurgeon had a different explanation for what he experienced. He called it a 'soul sickness'. So, 'fainting fits' were a 'soul sickness.' The brain, he thought, was as broken by the Fall as the body was. "The troubled man experiences a good deal," he said, "not because he is a Christian, but because he is a man, a sickly man, a man inclined toward melancholy."

We suffer all kinds of issues due to the Fall. They affect our mind as well as our body. But that will be changed some day. We will be made whole. We will be made pure. We will be made perfect, body, mind, and soul. That's what we're looking forward to. That's what we should look forward to. We, like the Ephesians and the Colossians, were 'without hope in the world.' We were born into this world in that condition, without hope in the world, separated from God. But now we have hope. It is permanent, because it is based upon the blood of Christ. It's permanent because it's based upon the work that he did for us on the cross.

Now Paul gives a caveat to that in verse 23. He warns, they have this hope "...if, indeed, you continue in the faith, firmly established and steadfast, and not moved

away from the hope of the gospel...". Why the "if"? Is it because Paul was afraid that they might lose their faith, or because he was afraid they might lose their salvation? No, it's not that. If he meant that then he would be contradicting the statements that he's made elsewhere and contradicting the whole of scripture. We've taught on this often, the 'security of the believer'; the 'assurance of the saints.' And we speak of the 'perseverance of the saints'—the saints will persevere to the end. It's probably better to speak of the "perseverance of the Savior", because He is the one that keeps us saved. He is the one that supplies us every moment with our faith. We are in Him. And being in Him, we are in His life that is constantly being supplied to us. He promises us "eternal life." It's 'eternal', not temporary. We can't talk about having eternal life and then losing it. It's not eternal if we can lose it. So "eternal life", in effect, defines the condition of the believer. The believer is saved once and for all. And the Lord Himself speaks of that. He says of His sheep, "...they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand." (John 10:28 & 29); some of the most defining verses on this whole issue.

Well, Paul would be contradicting the Lord if he was teaching that you can 'lose your salvation.' But it would be contradicting his own statements. For example, in Romans 8:38 & 39, he wrote that nothing "...will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Nothing: Height or depth...' whatever—You look at it any way you want, Paul says, 'nothing will separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

There are many scriptures that assure the believer that he or she is secure in Christ. We have been "sealed" in Christ with the Holy Spirit "...for the day of redemption..." (Ephesians chapter 4 verse 30). Paul's not suggesting anything contrary to that. In fact, this conditional sentence (vs23), actually indicates his confidence in them. It has the sense, 'If you continue in the faith, and I believe you will—I'm confident that you will...'. So, why the "if"? I think there are two reasons.

The first reason is due to the reality that there are people in churches, (mixed in with the saints) who **profess** faith but have never **possessed** faith. It's the 'Parable of

the Soils' in the Gospels. (Matt 13:21). There is seed that falls on rocky soil. The seed is a picture of the Gospel, and the soil is a picture of the heart of man. And that seed which falls on the rocky soil is received "with joy", Jesus said—but it doesn't last, (Luke 8:13). It doesn't have firm root because of some reason—affliction, for example, and he falls away. May be affliction, or it may be something else. It may be worldliness or false teaching that tests their **profession** of faith and, over time, proves it to be false.

John referred to this in I John chapter 2 in verse 19 when he wrote, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us..." Whatever was going on in that church to which John wrote that first epistle, that's the issue that was happening. That's what caused this letter to be written. A group of people left, and they caused a great disturbance because they had adopted a whole new idea of the gospel and salvation. They'd been part of the visible church, but they moved away from the foundation of the faith, from Christ alone—and they adopted a different message, a false one. And that happens. It's not uncommon.

That was Bunyan's character, Ignorance, in *Pilgrim's Progress*, who told Christian and Hopeful that he was going to the Celestial City. And he was confident that he would enter because, he said, "I have been a good liver." No, they warned him, a person can only enter 'The Way' to heaven by "the wicket gate," the small gate, which is the cross. And he said to them, "Well, he's going to follow the religion of his own country." And he continued on by himself—and very confidently. But the book concludes with Christian and Hopeful entering the "Celestial City" and Ignorance being bound and taken away. Bunyan ends, "Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven." We can get very close to the truth and still not be in...not be there.

Paul knew that, too, and he wrote this "if" because the Colossian's faith was being tested. That's why this book was written. They were being tested by a false gospel, a 'works' gospel. And he knew some of them were enamored of it...that some of them were flirting with it. So this was a reminder to them that **the saints are those**

who finally persevere. Continuance in the faith is the proof of its reality. A believer doesn't move away from the hope that is in Christ alone.

Now I can't know that a person's profession of faith is genuine or not. I can't know that a person is not saved who has claimed to be a Christian. I can't say to him or to her, 'You are not saved.' That's not for me to say—and it's not for me to say because I don't know the heart of a person. I don't know what they're going through; where they are in their stage of development. They may be in a state of backsliding and going through issues that I'm not aware of. I'm not in a position to make such a statement. But neither can I give the encouragement of salvation to a person who is in disagreement with the gospel and in disobedience to scripture.

What I can do is what Paul does here—I can give a warning. And a false believer who receives that warning may be turned away from his unbelief in that way. That may be what wakes him up. It's the only thing that will. Warning him and giving him the gospel, that's the first reason for this "if".

Warnings also are a means of perseverance. That's the second reason for the "if". Warnings stop those who are genuine believers but are drifting, and cause a person, cause the elect, cause those with 'ears to hear' to respond, to strive more in the faith.

Well then there are some people who need to be encouraged more than warned. People who struggle with assurance because of their nature, because of their temperament. Some people are just prone to that. Our great hymn writer, William Cowper, was like that. Like Churchill and Spurgeon, Cowper suffered from depression, what we would call today 'clinical depression'. He struggled with it all through his Christian life. He was helped greatly by his close friend, John Newton. They wrote hymns together, and they gloried in the grace of God. But then, Cowper would have one of these spells. Cowper would be overwhelmed with doubt and despair; and felt certain that he was a castaway. In fact, one of his poems was titled, *The Castaway*. That may be due to a variety of things. It may be due to the devil's fiery darts, (They put doubts in a believer's heart). It can be due to the fact that, as Spurgeon said, "He's a

man and has a sickly mind as much as a sickly body." His mind is broken, just like his body because of the Fall.

Happily, our salvation is not built on the fragile foundation of our emotions, or even on our faith. Our faith and salvation are based on the rock-solid foundation of Jesus Christ, and His work of propitiation and reconciliation. His work of salvation, which is a finished work. What He has done cannot be undone. And it is said that Cowper's final words on his death bed were, "I am not shut out of heaven after all." —I'm convinced he wasn't.

The gospel of grace is wide. Multitudes are going to be saved. Paul goes on to say, it "...was proclaimed in all creation under heaven..." (vs23): All kinds of people; Jews and Gentiles; male and female; young and old; rich and poor have been given the gospel and multitudes will be saved. The compass of Christ's sacrifice is worldwide. It's not about shutting people out, it's about gathering them in. It is a fountain that washes a multitude. And Christ invites people to come to Him and be washed and to be forgiven.

In Isaiah 65 the Lord says, "I have spread out my hands all day long to a rebellious people..." (vs2). —And He continues to do that; that's a true picture of the Lord. He is always ready to save, and He saves all who turn to Him; all who trust in Him. That's His promise. Our assurance isn't based on our feelings but on Christ's sacrifice. And the assurance God gives is in His Word. The scriptures are filled with His promise of assurance to those who trust in Him.

Now, can we trust Him? Can we trust His promises? Can we trust His assurances? Of course we can. It is impossible for God to lie (Titus 1:2).

Maybe there are some here who have not believed. You may think you're 'okay', that you are a "good liver" like Ignorance, and that will do; that will do 'just fine'... Well, it won't. You are a rebel with weapons in your hands. Lay them down. As Paul said, "...be reconciled to God" (2Cor 5:20). Trust in Him. He receives all who do. He

receives sinners and gives them eternal life. He receives His enemy and makes him His friend. Come to Him. 'Be reconciled.' May God help you to do that.

And you who have been, rejoice in what He's done for you. The grace that paid for all your sins and brought you into a peaceful relationship with Him—and not just that—brought you into His family and made you sons and daughters of God with a glorious inheritance. You're going to be perfect someday; and for all eternity: World without end and glory without end. That should cause us to rejoice.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for Your goodness to us. We thank you that we who have put our faith in Your Son can rejoice in that, and thank you for it: Because ultimately, it's Your work and not our own. It's Your grace, not our merit. We have none. And men hate to hear that; and that's true of us...was true of us...until You opened our eyes to see the reality as it is. And we thank you for doing that, and bringing us to Yourself, bringing us to Your Son, and giving us the hope of glory to come. Thank you for Him and for His death. And it's in His name we pray. Amen.

(End of Audio)