

Romans #93 Warning Against False Teachers

We are nearing the end of the epistle that Paul wrote to the church at Rome. His main message had been completed at the end of chapter 15. In this last chapter we had recorded for us greetings extended to many of Paul's personal friends and fellow servants in the ministry. But before the apostle closed his epistle with a doxology and benediction, he gave this warning to his readers respecting those who would bring them false teaching. We read this in **Romans 16:17-20**.

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. ¹⁸For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. ¹⁹For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. ²⁰The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

This warning appears to be somewhat abrupt in its placement here in Romans 16. But in other letters of Paul he gave rather abrupt interjections of warnings against false teachers (cf. 1 Cor. 16:22; Gal. 6:12-17). In Philippians 3:1 and 2 we read,

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. ²Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh...

And then later in the chapter Paul wrote,

“Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Phi. 3:17-21)

Let us look carefully at Paul's warning beginning with Romans 16:17ff. First we read, ***“I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them”*** (v. 17). Paul “appealed” to them. He expressed great concern for their well-being that they would not be corrupted by false teachers. Their teaching would be contrary to the faith that had been taught to the people of God. Their teaching results in divisions in the church. Their teaching would “create obstacles” in the path of the believers as they sought to walk with the Lord. Paul commanded the people of the church respecting these false teachers to “avoid them.”

Take note that the apostle said that errant doctrine is the cause of “divisions” and “create obstacles” before the people of God. We live in an anti-intellectual world and our churches many times have many people who are anti-intellectual in their view of the Christian faith. They do not like the word “doctrine,” or the idea of doctrine. The word they hate worse is “dogma”, which is a perfectly good word when used rightly, for dogma is nothing more than settled doctrine. But they manifest the spirit of which Paul warned Timothy, “For the time will come when they (here he was referring to professing Christians in the church) will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears,

they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3f). And so these ones do not like the idea of “doctrine.” They believe doctrine divides and causes obstacles for people. But Paul does not say that doctrine causes divisions and obstacles, but rather false doctrine results in these kinds of problems. One of the functions or purposes of the church is to move the people of God toward a unity of agreement as to what constitutes sound doctrine and then purpose to proclaim that doctrine (teaching) to the world. We read in Ephesians 4 these words:

¹¹And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴***that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine***, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-- Christ-- ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph 4:1 NKJ)

Notice again the result of false doctrine. It characterizes immature children, that is, unformed and immature Christians. In Romans 16:17 Paul referred to the troubled ones as “naïve”, which is similar to being immature. They are tossed about, unsettled, often confused, and often led astray, and it is false doctrine that is the cause of their difficulties. It is the duty of the church and its leaders to correct this problem and bring the members of the church to maturity by instructing them in sound doctrine, bringing them to a unity of “the faith”, which is the doctrines of the faith. And so Paul saw false teachers as ones who prevent the church from becoming what it could be or should be. Paul regarded false teachers through their false doctrine to cause divisions and place stumbling blocks before the people of God. Paul was concerned for the salvation of those in the churches, who professed to know Jesus Christ, lest they in the end are found not to have salvation, but rather are damned by the Lord on the Day of Judgment.

This was a serious matter for the apostle. This seemed to be always a very great concern for Paul, that those to whom he had ministered would be corrupted by error promoted by errant teachers. We read of the apostle’s concern for those in the church at Thessalonica.

Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, ²and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, ³that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. ⁴For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. ⁵For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, ***for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.*** (1 Thess. 3:1-5)

Paul was concerned that his labor would have been “in vain”, that is, in spite of all of his work, in spite of all of their claims to faith and obedience, they would not be saved in the end had they become corrupted respecting the gospel.

Paul had expressed the same concern for the churches in the region of Galatia. He wrote, “I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain” (Gal. 4:11). Again, the apostle was afraid that these churches had abandoned the gospel, having been corrupted by the Judaizing teachers. Paul would have regarded his labor among them in “vain”, for they would not be saved after all.

There is an important principle for us here: ***We have the responsibility as Christians and as a church to assure that we are not led astray from the faith through false teachers.*** The Scriptures are

full of warnings about the danger that false teachers pose to the people of God. We read in 2 Peter 2:1ff these words,

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. (2 Pet. 2:1ff)

Our Lord Jesus taught His disciples to be on guard of false prophets. We read in Matthew 7:13ff:

¹³“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

¹⁵“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. (Matt. 7:13-20)

Immediately after our Lord had pressed upon His disciples their responsibility to be wholly devoted and obedient to Him, He warned them of false teachers who would divert them from this end. These “false prophets” were in “sheep’s clothing”; in other words, they come as though they were members of the people of God, yet they were dangerous to the Lord’s people. This is the same concern and warning the apostle Paul gave to the church at Rome in Romans 16:17f.

We are to be on guard of false teachers, and they may be found in the church teaching the people of God. And so, how may false teachers be identified? Our Lord taught, “You shall know them by their fruit”; that is, by the way they live and by the kind of character that their belief has brought to their own lives. The Puritan pastor and writer, **Thomas Brooks** who ministered in London in the 1600’s, addressed this matter in his book entitled, *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*, which is available today. He wrote:

“Now the best way to deliver poor souls from being deluded and destroyed by these messengers of Satan is to display them in their true colors, so that being known poor souls may shun them, and flee from them as from hell itself.”

He then went on to identify *seven identifying marks of false teachers* that he had derived from the various passages of Scripture, which address them. These marks are as follows:

(1) The first distinguishing mark is that they are men-pleasers. They preach more to please the ear than to profit the heart.

(2) The second distinguishing mark of false teachers is that they are notable for casting dirt, scorn and reproach upon the person, names and credits of Christ’s most faithful ambassadors. In order to build themselves a following, they destroy others. (This fits with Paul’s characteristic that they tend to slander others.)

(3) The third distinguishing mark of false teachers is that they spew out the devices and visions of their own heads and hearts. “The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them,

commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart, not from the mouth of the Lord” (Jer. 23:16).

(4) The fourth distinguishing mark of false teachers is that they easily pass over the great and weighty things of both the law and the gospel, and dwell mostly upon those things that are of the least importance and concern to the souls of men.

(5) The fifth distinguishing mark of false teachers is that they cleverly disguise their dangerous principles and soul-deceiving notions with very attractive speeches and golden expressions.

Although I suppose it has always been the same way, in these days the content of the message is of lesser concern to the person in the pew than is the style of his delivery. Prior to my coming here 16 years ago, I went through the process of searching for a church to pastor. I was in contact with dozens of evangelical churches throughout the United States. I was amazed and alarmed at the kind of man the vast majority of these churches were looking for. The doctrinal stand was scrutinized superficially. It became apparent to me they were looking for a personality which would wow their congregations through pulpit style and gather in crowds of the unsaved through his personal charisma. The larger the churches tend to draw the more “dynamic” preachers. Character seemed to matter little in the process. Personality is the key ingredient for being called to large and would-be large churches in these days. The churches are ripe for picking by fruitless false teachers.

(6) The sixth distinguishing mark of false teachers is that they strive more earnestly to win men over to their opinions, than to improve their behavior.

(7) The seventh distinguishing mark of false teachers is that they exploit their followers through covetousness. “They eye your goods more than your good.”

Because they want the largest church, the larger crowds, they have budgets to meet, they tend not to preach those things that confront sin directly. They may talk about the sin “out there” in the cults, or the new age, among unbelievers, that kind of preaching solidifies a group in seeing itself as unique, but sin within the congregation is dealt with in a subtle manner, quickly, indirectly.

The consequence of being deceived by these false teachers is the forfeiture of salvation. The false teachers being referred to were ones who would teach serious error to the people of God.

Now when we say that the professing people of God could forfeit the salvation of their souls, we are not saying that true Christians can lose their salvation. And so, lest anyone misunderstand, let us affirm that God’s Word that speaks of the eternal security of the one that is in Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Himself said,

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. (John 10:27-29)

And yet the principle suggested is that we have a responsibility to keep ourselves in faith and fellowship with our Savior, living in obedience to the faith that He has revealed to us, if we are to receive our full salvation at the final judgment at the Second Coming of Jesus. God commands us to persevere in faith and obedience, even while He enables His elect to do so. He commands His people, by grace He enables His people to do what He commands.

But what this means is that every professing Christian has a responsibility to cleave to the Lord in faith and obedience. This is consistent with the biblical doctrine of perseverance. Here is a formal statement of the doctrine of perseverance that is taught in God’s Word:

Those who are the elect of God, who are recipients of God's effectual call, having been regenerated (i.e. born again) by the Holy Spirit, led to repent of sin and believe on Christ for salvation, shall never fall away so as to perish, but will be kept by the power of God unto the salvation which is reserved for them in heaven.

This teaching of Scripture does *not* say that everyone who professes to believe or believes for a while is saved eternally. This has reference to the elect of God, true believers who are truly born again, whose lives bear evidence of the presence of saving faith. Consequently, the common expression, "the eternal security of the believer" is somewhat a misnomer. Perhaps better, "the eternal security of the true believer", or "the eternal security of the saints" would be better still. A more misleading statement is "once saved always saved." The problem is that it is assumed that anyone who makes a "decision" for Christ is saved, and then it is falsely assumed of that person that he is saved regardless of his continuance of faith or obedience in Christ. But the Bible never promises salvation to a *temporary* believer (an apostate) or to a *hypocritical* believer (a hypocrite). Perseverance in faith and obedience is the grand distinguishing mark of a true child of God. Of course it is God who keeps His own unto their full salvation. Our confession of faith expresses it this way:

1. Those whom God hath accepted in the beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect unto, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved, seeing the gifts and callings of God are without repentance, whence he still begets and nourisheth in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit unto immortality; and though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, yet they shall never be able to take them off that foundation and rock which by faith they are fastened upon; notwithstanding, through unbelief and the temptations of Satan, the sensible sight of the light and love of God may for a time be clouded and obscured from them, yet he is still the same, and they shall be sure to be kept by the power of God unto salvation, where they shall enjoy their purchased possession, they being engraven upon the palm of his hands, and their names having been written in the book of life from all eternity. (John 10:28, 29; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 John 2:19; Psalms 89:31, 32; 1 Corinthians 11:32; Malachi 3:6)

2 This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father, upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ and union with him, the oath of God, the abiding of his Spirit, and the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof. (Romans 8:30 Romans 9:11, 16; Romans 5:9, 10; John 14:19; Hebrews 6:17, 18; 1 John 3:9; Jeremiah 32:40)¹

God keeps His own by His grace. How does He do so? *First*, He does so by giving His elect the grace of **regeneration**, or the new birth. Through the new birth God grants His people a nature that loves God, aspires to holiness, and detests sin. The new birth causes the heart to move to know God, please Him, doing His will.² *Second*, God keeps His own through **faith** that He gives His people and sustains in them. We read in 1 Peter 1:4 and 5 of His people, that they are ones "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." *Third*, God keeps His people through His acts of **providence**.³ God governs what transpires in the lives of His people so as to secure them in

¹ *The Baptist Confession of 1689*, Article 17, paragraphs 1 & 2.

² Jeremiah 32:37-42; Ezekiel 36:22-27

³ Romans 8:28; 2 Peter 2:7-10

faith and obedience. *Fourth*, God keeps His own through His administering *chastisement* upon His people when they stray in order to restore them to right faith and practice.⁴

But although God keeps His people; nevertheless, we also read that we have a responsibility to keep ourselves. We read in Jude 17ff:

¹⁷But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁸They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” ¹⁹It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. ²⁰***But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.*** ²²And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. ²⁴Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 17-25)

Now, some think wrongly, that because salvation is wholly a work of God’s grace from first to last, and that because redemption is secured by the perfect sacrifice of Christ, that they only need believe these things, and trust in these things, and all will be well, irrespective of how they live. They would say,

“My salvation is secure. I believe and am therefore safe. I need not be concerned with my attitudes or my actions, my heart and mind. I need not concern myself with the weightier matters of doctrine, the finer points of Scriptural teaching, I need not concern myself with repentance from sin, obedience to the Lord, that is, holy living. I am within the fold. Christ is my Savior. All is well with my soul.”

But this is wrong thinking. This is not in accordance to biblical teaching. First, recognize that because you believe all the right things, that in itself does not secure the fact that you are His. Some hypocrites believe all the right things. But those truths do not apply them if they fail or refuse to walk in obedience to the Lord. It matters how we think. It matters how we act and react to situations. It matters how we behave. It matters how we live. To say, “Keep yourselves in the love of God” as did Jude, in no way contradicts, “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless.”

People think that because they are saved by grace through faith, and not of themselves, it matters not what they do. They see grace as contrary to activity. They think to rest in God’s grace is to be passive with regards to one’s own efforts.

Let us look at a few verses that speak to *the compatibility of God’s grace and works*. Paul wrote of his efforts that he put forward in his apostolic ministry. In **1 Corinthians 15:10ff** we read,

¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. ¹¹Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Now notice what Paul was saying. He attributed who he was and all that he did to the grace of God. “By the grace of God I am what I am.” This led him to work all that much harder for Christ. Yet he acknowledges that even his desire and ability and success was due to the grace working in him. Grace does not lead one to be passive, but to be very aggressive and diligent for the things of Jesus Christ.

We may also read of the relationship between grace and works in **Philippians 2:12 and 13**.

⁴ Hebrews 12:3-7

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

Paul pressed upon his readers that they are to put forth before his readers the great occupation to which they were to give themselves. They were told, “work out your own salvation.” They were to give such care and attention and diligence to this matter lest they fail, that they were to do so “with fear and trembling.” **Matthew Henry** commented on this text:

We must be diligent in the use of all the means which lead to our salvation, persevering therein to the end. With great care, lest, with all our advantages, we should come short. Work out your salvation, for it is God who worketh in you. This encourages us to do our utmost, because our labour shall not be in vain: we must still depend on the grace of God. The working of God’s grace in us, is to quicken and engage our endeavors. God’s good-will to us, is the cause of his good work in us. Do your duty without murmurings. Do it, and do not find fault with it. Mind your work, and do not quarrel with it. By peaceableness; give no just occasion of offence. The children of God should differ from the sons of men. The more perverse others are, the more careful we should be to keep ourselves blameless and harmless. The doctrine and example of consistent believers will enlighten others, and direct their way to Christ and holiness, even as the light-house warns mariners to avoid rocks, and directs their course into the harbor. Let us try thus to shine. The gospel is the word of life, it makes known to us eternal life through Jesus Christ. Running, denotes earnestness and vigour, continual pressing forward; laboring, denotes constancy, and close application. It is the will of God that believers should be much in rejoicing; and those who are so happy as to have good ministers, have great reason to rejoice with them.

Although God saves us by His great grace and wholly by His grace through the merit of His Son, much of our salvation entails great effort. *Noah* had to build an ark to the saving of himself and his household. *Abraham* had to travel a great distance and then to live in difficulty all the days of his life. *Moses* had to forsake the riches of Egypt. *Israel* would need to escape Egypt and travel over a long and difficult journey unto its promised land.

It does not get easier in the New Testament. Granted, salvation is presented as a *gift* to be received, and it is! And in this, the individual is seen to be totally passive. But salvation is described as being received in other terms:

- It is an *inheritance* yet to be received after a life-long perseverance in faith (Rev. 2:11).
- It is *life* reached after a *small gate* has been entered, and a *narrow way* has been travelled (Matt. 7:14).
- It is a *prize* to be awarded after a long, *gruelling race* has been completed (1 Cor. 9:24).
- It is a *crown* which is obtained after a *brutal fist fight* has been engaged and won (2 Tim. 4:7, 8)
- It is likened to the *spoils of war* after a battle has been waged and the enemy vanquished.
- It is a *kingdom* to be entered after *enduring* much suffering (Matt. 11:12).
- It is compared to *the Promised Land* which is arrived at after a long gruelling wilderness journey (Heb. 6:12).

All of these images suggest effort, intense effort. They suggest hardship and conflict. They suggest danger and the threat of failure. All of these things suggest that we are in need of on-going grace if we are to receive that on which we have set our hope.

How indifferent to these things is the indolent, careless kind of Christianity that asserts if you but pray this prayer, if you but accept Jesus, you need not be concerned, for you are secure, you should put forth some effort, but in actuality, it is not necessary! No! The entire Bible speaks of a life of *self-denial*, a life of *watchfulness*, a life of *obedience*, a life of *difficulty*, a life of *endurance*, in short, a *persevering life of faith--* believing, trusting, clinging, hoping, expecting, waiting for the salvation that will be revealed in the last time.

Of course, this great effort we put forth is for our sanctification, not our justification. **Hebrews 12:12-15** read,

¹²Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, ¹³and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. ¹⁴*Pursue* peace with all men, and *holiness, without which no one will see the Lord*: ¹⁵looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God

Listen to the words of **Thomas Brooks** (1662) on this passage.

Consider the necessity of holiness. It is impossible that ever you should be happy, except you are holy. No holiness here, no happiness hereafter... There are many thousand thousands now in heaven, but not one unholy one among them all; there is not one sinner among all those saints; not one goat among all those sheep; not one weed among all those flowers; not one thorn or prickle among all those roses; not one pebble among all those glistening diamonds. There is not one Cain among all those Abels; nor one Ishmael among all those Isaacs; nor one Esau among all those Jacobs in heaven. There is not one Ham among all the patriarchs; not one Saul among all the prophets; nor one Judas among all the apostles; nor one Demas among all the preachers; nor one Simon Magus among all the professors.

Heaven is only for the holy man, and the holy man is only for heaven: heaven is a garment of glory, that is only suited to him that is holy. God, who is truth itself, and cannot lie, has said it, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” Mark that word, “no man” (Heb. 12:14).

Here are the words of **Arthur Pink**:

“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Prov. 30:12). Although they had never been cleansed by the Holy Spirit, nor their hearts purified by faith, (Acts 15:9), yet they esteemed themselves to be pure, and had not the least sense of their foul defilement. Such a generation were the self-righteous Pharisees of Christ’s day: they were constantly cleansing their hands and cups, engaged in an interminable round of ceremonial washings, yet were they thoroughly ignorant of the fact that *within* they were filled with all manner of defilement (Matt. 23:25-28). So is a generation of churchgoers today; they are orthodox in their views, reverent in their demeanor, regular in their contributions, *but they make no conscience of the state of their hearts.*

This is **Arthur Pink** from his book, *The Doctrine of Repentance*:

That sanctification or personal holiness which we here desire to show the absolute necessity of, lies in or consists of three things. First, that internal change or renovation of our souls, whereby our minds, affections and wills are brought into harmony with God. Second, that impartial compliance with the revealed will of God in all duties of obedience and abstinence from evil, issuing from a principle of faith and love. Third, that directing of all our actions unto the glory of God, by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel. This, and nothing short of this, is evangelical and saving sanctification. *The heart must be changed so as to be brought into conformity with God’s nature and will*: its motives, desires, thoughts and actions require to be purified. There must be a spirit of

holiness working within so as to sanctify our outward performances if they are to be acceptable unto Him in whom "there is no darkness at all."

Evangelical holiness consists not only in external works of piety and charity, but in pure thoughts, impulses and affections of the soul, chiefly in that disinterested love from which all good works must flow if they are to receive the approbation of Heaven. Not only must there be an abstinence from the execution of sinful lusts, but *there must be a loving and delighting to do the will of God in a cheerful manner*, obeying Him without repining or grudging against any duty, as if it were a grievous; yoke to be borne. Evangelical sanctification is that holiness of heart which causes us to love God supremely, so as to yield ourselves wholly up to His constant service in all things, and to His disposal of us as our absolute Lord, whether it be for prosperity or adversity, for life or death; and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

This entire sanctification of our whole inner and outer man is absolutely indispensable. As there must be a change of *state* before there can be of life—"make the tree good, and his fruit (will be) good" (Matt. 12:33)—so there must be sanctification before there can be glorification. Unless we are purged from the pollution of sin, we can never be fit for communion with God. "And there shall in no wise enter into it (the eternal dwelling place of God and His people) anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination" (Rev. 21:27). "To suppose that an unpurged sinner can be brought into the blessed enjoyment of God, is to overthrow both the law and the Gospel, and to say that Christ died in vain" (J. Owen, Vol. 2: p. 511). Personal holiness is equally imperative as is the forgiveness of sins in order to eternal bliss.

Plain and convincing as should be the above statements, there is a class of professing Christians who wish to regard the justification of the believer as constituting almost the whole of his salvation, instead of its being only one aspect thereof. Such people delight to dwell upon the imputed righteousness of Christ, but they evince little or no concern about personal holiness.

Now we could cite numerous passages to show that the grace of God is what enables His people to do what we have described. But that does not take away the responsibility, the duty, the necessity of giving ourselves over to these matters. We are to be diligent and we are to continue in our diligence to do the will of God from the heart. The Scriptures speak of the necessity of persevering in *our faith* if we would have salvation (Heb. 10:35-39; 1 Cor. 15:1f). They tell of the necessity of continuing in *the faith* if we would have salvation (Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 4:16). We must persevere in *godly behavior*, always watching our hearts and our behavior for we do not know when Christ will come, if we would have salvation (Luke 12:42-45; Matt. 24:36-51; 25:1-13). We must ever be *obeying our Lord's Words and repenting of sin* if we would be saved on the Day of Judgment (Rev. 3:1-4). This is the life of the one who has true saving faith in Jesus Christ.

We could go on and on about our responsibility to walk before God in a holy manner. Now again, as we have said before, the basis of our acceptance before God is not our own righteousness, but Christ's righteousness alone. And the only way that His righteousness can be credited to us is through faith in Him and His work on behalf of sinners. But that does not dismiss our responsibility to live godly lives, there is no basis for assurance of salvation for the one who fails to do so.

We are to be diligent in *all the means* that God has given us. We are to look to *His Word* to instruct, correct, rebuke, and exhort us. We are to resort to *prayer* to call upon Him for grace to help in every time of need. We are to be vitally connected to *His church*, her leaders, for instruction and guidance; her members, for mutual accountability and encouragement.

Now we may be assured that our Lord will not lose one of His elect. There is eternal security for each one of His sheep He has bought with His own blood. But He has appointed these means by which to keep His own. But if these things are neglected, there is no assurance that you will stand in that day.