

THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE **(LESSON THIRTY-FOUR)**

THE SECURITY OF THE CHRISTIAN **(PART SEVEN)**

JUDGMENT OR CONDEMNATION?

In our study of the doctrine of the Security of the Christian, we have argued that this doctrine represents the greatest of all assurances. It does not, in any way, represent an invitation to moral slackness. It is a biblical doctrine plainly rooted in the Scriptures, being part and parcel of the revelation of God.

When we speak of the security of the Christian's position in Christ, we are saying that once a sinner has been genuinely saved, he or she will be preserved by the power of God until the return of Jesus Christ for His church. The security of the saved person is bound up with the sovereignty of God, the unchangeableness of His purpose, and the constancy of His good pleasure. It is not based on the person's merit or deserving but wholly and solely on the finished work of Calvary. It is the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ and not the faithfulness of the saved individual that guarantees this security.

Salvation is the result of the atonement wrought on the cross of Calvary by our Lord. We cannot do anything to earn or deserve it, nor can we do anything to lose it. Salvation is a grace gift from God through faith. In **Ephesians 2:8-10**, the apostle Paul writes, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"* (**New Living Translation**).

The inescapable truth is that persons who are saved fail over and over again, sometimes miserably. But there is no failure which has the potential to undo the perfect work of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, which means that we are secure.

It is our persuasion that if God has elected persons to be saved and if He is truly sovereign, then those persons will be saved. The assurance of their ultimate salvation does not depend on their constancy, or upon their own inner resources of obedience, courage or loyalty or anything that is inherent in them. Their security lies outside of themselves. It rests solely in the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the unchangeableness of God's purposes in numbering them among His elect. The elect did not choose Him, rather it was He who chose them according to **John 15:16**. The Christian's security lies in this choice of God.

But what happens when a child of God does disobey and commit sin, and which child of God doesn't? Are there any consequences? Is there punishment for the disobedient? If so, in what sense is there now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus (**Romans 8:1**).

A careful reading of Scripture will reveal that what often seems to be the consequence of disobedience and therefore is assumed to be punishment, is not, in fact, punishment but chastening. In **Hebrews 12:6** we are informed that *"Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."* Such chastening is a demonstration of His concern for our spiritual well-being. Indeed, if we respond readily to the conviction of the Holy Spirit when we sin, and repent of our sin there may not be any need for God to chasten us.

In **1 Peter 2:24**, we read the following concerning our Lord: *"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."*

The **New Living Translation** renders the verse as follows: “*He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed.*”

The truth of the matter is that the Lord Jesus Christ took these offenses upon Himself long before we were even born. The penalty of these offenses, though they were not yet committed, was paid there and then. That judgment is past. When troubles come our way and we feel that they are connected to our own unrighteousness, we should remind ourselves that we are not being punished but being chastened now in order that we should not be condemned with the world later on.

In **1 Corinthians 11:32** Paul writes, “*But when we are **judged**, we are **chastened** of the Lord, that we should not be **condemned** with **the world**.*” It is in this sense that judgment begins at the House of God according to **1 Peter 4:17**).

The word translated “*judged*” in **1 Corinthians 11:32**, is the translation of the Greek word **krino**, a word which means simply “to assess” without any necessary connotation of whether such assessment is favourable or unfavourable. The same applies to the word translated “*judgment*” in **1 Peter 4:17**.

The word translated “*condemned*” is a translation of the Greek word **katakrimo**. The word is formed from the same basic root **krino**, but it is compounded with the prefix **kata**, which means down, thus, giving the sense of condemnation to the word. It is important to note these different meanings, for many passages in which the word **krino** occurs are used to support views which go far beyond the original text.

In **1 Corinthians 11:31** we read: “*If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*” Here the first word judge is **dia-krino** which means to examine critically, to keep a critical eye on one’s own behaviour.

If we take action to correct what we find undesirable in ourselves, we shall not need to be assessed by God and chastened. We will consider two passages from the Book of **Psalms** in this regard:

PSALM 19:12-14

“Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.”

PSALM 139:23-24

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

We are in a position, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to correct our own faults by mortifying the deeds of the body, for example; and when we undertake to do this faithfully there is no need for the Lord to impose His chastening upon us. But whether we do anticipate His chastening or not, the end effect is the same: what we experience is correction not condemnation. The truth is that for the child of God, such correctives are not penalties but remedies.

When we do commit sin, it is very important for us to understand that as the children of God we are no longer in a Court of Law before an outraged Judge, but in a family setting before a disappointed Father. The “**must**” of the law has become the “**should**” of the family. Righteous anger is replaced by genuine parental disappointment. What is being endangered is not **position** but **fellowship**. We must come to appreciate that the chastening of God is more of a privilege, than a penalty; it is a proof of concern, not a demonstration of anger.

The following illustration may help to make this point a little clearer especially if the words set in capitals are placed one against the other in each instance.

TRANSFORMATIONS

An offended JUDGE	becomes	a disappointed FATHER
A forbidding COURTROOM	becomes	a warm FAMILY CIRCLE
Strict PUNISHMENT	becomes	remedial CHASTENING
Moral ANGER	becomes	parental CONCERN
Must or else	becomes	SHOULD because

RELATIONSHIP to God is now made real by **FELLOWSHIP** with God

To recognize this transformation is of profound importance to the child of God, for what was once a cause of fear on **legal** grounds, has now become a cause of concern on **familial** grounds. We seek the Father's forgiveness not because we fear his wrath and the consequent severing of our relationship with Him as though we had lost our membership in His family, but because we become aware of His disappointment with our sin and the consequent loss of fellowship. Confession ensures the restoration of this sense of fellowship. It is forgiveness, in this context, that we are seeking forgiveness for having disappointed Him even as we seek forgiveness from our friends when we disappoint them.

Forgiveness in the legal sense is not at issue here; that has already been taken care of. Yet, although we are legally forgiven, we may still grieve the Lord and lose the sense of His presence and find ourselves out of fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

For the child of God, unconfessed sin is still offensive to God because it entails a breach of fellowship. So, we seek his forgiveness on this account. And when we nourish an unforgiving spirit towards another brother or sister, we endanger our fellowship at that level, too.

It is not legal forgiveness we need in such a case but family forgiveness.

1 John 1:3-7 is instructive in this regard:

3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Legal forgiveness is essential for sonship; it is necessary in order to establish relationship within the family of God. **Familial** forgiveness is essential to maintain fellowship.

But this does not mean that we are free to disobey. There is danger in disobedience. The penalty is loss of fellowship both with the Lord and with His people. Certainly, we are not left without responsibility, for it is our responsibility to maintain **fellowship** both with the Lord and with His children. But what a blessing it is that we do not have the responsibility of maintaining our **position** as members in the family of God! If we did, we would be in a constant state of being disowned and being reinstated. How in the world could such a state of affairs be termed “abundant life?” (**John 10:10**)

The scriptures indicate that one day, we will be called upon to watch a re-run, perhaps on DVD, of our Christian lives as God has seen them, and all that we have done in self-will will be tested by a fire that will entirely consume the impurities. This process of refining fire is set forth in **1 Corinthians 3:10-15**: *“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus. Now if any man build on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work, of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”*

The **New Living Translation** renders the passage as follows: *“Because of God’s grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have — Jesus Christ. Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials — gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person’s work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.”*

The reassuring thing here is that even if a person’s total life work as a child of God should turn out to have been built of perishable things such as wood, hay, or stubble, so that his or her building is wholly consumed by the flames, yet he or she is safe. He or she is preserved beyond destruction even though all else of his or her own doing should prove to be perishable.

There are a number of similar passages in **Corinthians**. It is apparent that the Christians in the city of Corinth were particularly subject to the evil influences of their pagan environment. Some, evidently, became so corrupt that the Lord could no longer allow them to remain in the world as part of the living Body of Christ, and He took them home rather than permit them to completely poison the life of the Church.

In **1 Corinthians 5:1-5**, Paul writes: *“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, **that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.** For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that has so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, **to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, in order that the spirit may be saved in the day of Jesus Christ.**”*

Here, we see Paul instructing the saints in Corinth on how to deal with gross immorality in the church. The offender was to be publicly delivered to Satan for *“the destruction of the flesh.”* Many commentators hold the view that this is a reference to the person’s removal by death. And yet Paul gave the Corinthians every assurance that although the action that he recommended appeared to be very harsh, the purpose of the action was to ensure the person’s eternal salvation! The seemingly unmerciful recommendation was, in reality, full of mercy and grace!

The object of this drastic step was twofold:

- 1) to preserve the health of the local church (**1 Corinthians 5:6, 7**); and
- 2) to prevent the individual himself from a kind of spiritual reduction to zero. This drastic step, which by some has been taken to mean that the individual’s behaviour might deteriorate to the point of complete loss of salvation, clearly demonstrates precisely the opposite.

Such occasions were apparently not infrequent in the earliest days of the Church. But not every serious failure was a cause for such drastic surgery. Remedial action of a less dramatic nature was often possible. As John wrote: *“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it”* (**1 John 5:16**).

Clearly, there were alternatives in some cases, but not in all. In this light, we see at once that the reference here does not appear to be to a loss of salvation but to a situation in which disobedience has proceeded beyond the point where the offender will benefit by chastening. All that remains is to take him home, in order that his spirit may be preserved. Thus, Paul in **Romans 8:13** warns the Roman Christians likewise: *“If you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.”* He is speaking here of a physical body and of physical life, not of the salvation of the soul. Gross disobedience could bring death. It would be better to amend one’s ways and live.

It appears that in Corinth, the Lord’s people were in the habit of meeting for a kind of Communion feast. Some were making it not so much a memorial of the Lord’s death, which it was intended to be, as an occasion for merrymaking and indulgence in purely carnal appetite. Paul wrote to them to remind them that what they were supposed to be celebrating was the Lord’s death (**1 Corinthians 11:23-26**) and that by eating and drinking unworthily, they were guilty of sacrilege. *“Let a man examine himself,”* Paul wrote, *“and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep”* (**1 Corinthians 11:28-30**). Now, what does this last observation signify? It signifies that by their improper attitudes as the Lord’s people, many were spiritually enfeebled, and many others had already been taken home by the Lord and were now asleep in Jesus.

In verses **31-32** Paul writes, “*For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, **that we should not be condemned with the world.***”

The **New Living Translation** renders the verses as follows: “*But if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way. Yet when we are judged by the Lord, **we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned along with the world.***”

The Lord’s sudden action is not a final judgment but the emergency operation of a spiritual surgeon who quickly removes the compromised organ to save the patient’s soul.

In **1 Timothy 1:18-20** Paul writes, “*This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, **that they may learn not to blaspheme.***”

The **New Living Translation** renders the passage as follows: “*Timothy, my son, here are my instructions for you, based on the prophetic words spoken about you earlier. May they help you fight well in the Lord’s battles. Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked. Hymenaeus and Alexander are two examples. I threw them out and handed them over to Satan **so they might learn not to blaspheme God.***”

The word “*learn*” in verse **20**, is a translation of the Greek word **paideuo** (pahee-dyoo’-o); which means to train up a child, i.e. educate, or (by implication) discipline (by punishment).

As it relates to Paul's use of the word in the passage we are considering, **Vines's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** has this to say: "In **1 Timothy 1:20** (passive voice) it is translated "might be taught," **RV** (**KJV**, "may learn"), but, 'however the passage is to be understood, it is clear that not the impartation of knowledge but severe discipline is intended.'"

Commenting on verse **20**, the noted theologian Albert Barnes made the following remark: "The meaning here is, that Paul excommunicated them, and not improbably brought upon them, by giving them over to Satan, some physical maladies, that they might be reformed."

It appears as though Hymenaeus and Alexander, though severely disciplined were not eternally destroyed.

The true child of God does commit sin, does get dirty and needs cleansing daily. In **John 13:8-10**, we read the following: "*Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.*" The all-over washing we received in Jesus when we were saved is "once for all." It is only that our daily walk soils our feet. Only our feet need cleansing every day if we walk in his fellowship unbroken. Let us ensure that we attend to the washing of our feet every day.

The Lord Jesus Christ made, once for all, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for our sins. If He died for my sins, why must I also pay the penalty of disobedience whenever my life is displeasing in his sight? I am truly forgiven already, wholly freed from the penalty of all that I have done not in accordance with his will, and of all that I do daily, and of all that I shall yet do.

I am covered by a blanket of pardon that is so comprehensive that I am no longer regarded as a sinner before the Lord but as righteous, not because of what I am in practice but because of what He did on my behalf when He offered Himself in my place. I am convinced that there is now no condemnation any more to them that are in Christ Jesus, and that this declaration is unconditional.