



The Enemy and God's Judgment

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Posted online by A New You Ministry
www.anym.org**

Let us not forget. In the last days it will all be about deception. Jesus said that we must look out lest we be deceived. In the last days, which is now, things will not be as they appear. Only those who have a clear understanding of the Word of God will be able to endure what is coming upon the world.

In the past years in this country there have been some rather spectacular trials. These trials gained national attention. As you know, in this country a person is considered innocent until proven guilty by a jury of their peers. In criminal cases the jury must declare the accused to be innocent or guilty, and that decision must be based on the evidence that has been presented that convicts the accused beyond a reasonable doubt.

Now what does this have to do with anything? Surprisingly it has a lot. I don't need to remind you that there is a war going on in this planet. It has been going on for about six thousand years. We weren't there when the war began, we weren't there during much of the course of the war, but the whole human race will be there for the wind-up.

In this war our first parents, Adam and Eve, went over to the side of the enemy. Not only them, but everyone who has been born here since then, except one, has exhibited the characteristics of the enemy of God's government. In fact, the Bible states rather clearly that there is none righteous, no not one (Romans 3:10). And in another place it says that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

The good news is that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). This war has inflicted tremendous casualties. There has been untold misery, death and suffering from the word go. At one point the Son of God was even murdered in this war.

The enemy of God has fought and will continue to fight until the end. At the last he will finally be destroyed when he and his army of followers make a desperate suicide attack against the Holy City . That battle is called the Battle of Armageddon. Friends, the reason that I am telling you all of this is so that we will realize that this battle is a life and death struggle against the Holy God, the Creator and Sovereign of the Universe, by that old serpent, the devil, and those who ally themselves with him.

In this war there are some who never give up in their struggle against God. On the other hand, there are others who, due to conviction brought on by the Holy Spirit, give in to the Lord. There are others who, out of sheer fear, run up the white flag and declare that they are no longer on the side of the devil but that now they are on Jesus' side. These people are not sure what the issues are but one thing for sure, they can imagine what hell will be like and they want to stay out of it. Not only that, these same people are being told that if they accept Jesus they will be able to have almost anything that they could want so why not give Him a try?

The great controversy between Christ and Satan is not an "I'll root for my side and you root for yours" thing. It is a warfare of evil against righteousness, of sin against holiness. Don't forget, it was the devil that drew first. In heaven it was the devil that set out to destroy God. You see, that is the way that it is. Holiness is patient and long-suffering; unrighteousness is bigoted, hateful and violent. God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9), but the devil would massacre everything on the planet if he could. And believe me, he has tried more than once.

Our problem is that, from the time that we were born, we have all been infected with sin, and sin is even worse than AIDS because it not only infects the body but it also infects the soul.

That is what makes it all so complicated. You may not believe it, but if you were to take a person to heaven who was still infected with sin the whole thing would start all over again (Jeremiah 17:9). This is why the solution to the matter is that God will have to permanently destroy all of those who persist in being contaminated with evil. There is a cure, of course, but a person has to take it.

Since practically the beginning of the war, once it spread to this planet, there have been people, sometimes more and sometimes less, who have declared themselves to be on God's side. Some are sincere and others are not. For example, when the children of Israel left Egypt there was a large number of Egyptians who signed on so they could be with the winners. Throughout history there have been millions who have professed to be followers of God, some sincerely and others just go along for the ride.

I don't need to tell you that words are cheap. For example, a person can say anything to please the ears of another without meaning it. Yes, words are cheap.

There is another problem in this respect, and that is that man looks on the outward appearance and the problem that we have is in our hearts. So then a person can say anything that they need to and may still be the same in their hearts. But not to worry because, though we look on the outward appearance,

God looks on the heart.

Though that is wonderful, it also has its problems. This is because the crimes that the unrighteous have perpetrated against their fellow human beings have been real crimes--misery, grief, unkindness, cruelty and worse.

Knowing the heart gives God a definite advantage over us, but it also creates a situation in which it makes the process of salvation somewhat more complicated. God can tell when a person has really changed and when they haven't. But we can't.

Let me explain, because there have been so many other beings involved in the great controversy who can't read the heart as He can, God has chosen to have a trial so that everything will be clear to everyone involved. In the Bible this trial is called the judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10). When this trial is over those who are saved as well as those who are lost will recognize and admit that God was right and fair in what He did.

Friends, God uses the same principles in the judgment that we use here when someone is brought to trial. He uses evidence and witnesses. Of course, heaven is very high tech--much more than anything that we have here. But because the Bible writers could not have understood the judgment in terms of CDs, videos and digital media they were shown the judgment process in terms of record books.

Daniel 7:9,10 says, "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."

The Ancient of days in this text is God the Father. David wrote of Him, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psalm 90:2). It is God the Father who presides in the judgment. The holy angels are there as witnesses and as ministers.

The text goes on to say, "... behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away..." (Daniel 7:13,14).

These texts that I have just referred to are not a reference to the Second Coming of Jesus. These texts are referring to a scene that represents Christ's last work of mediation for this race and it is called the Investigative Judgment.

The judgment is about two groups of people. There is the part that deals with those who have claimed to be followers of Christ. The Scripture says, " For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17). Of course, it is logical to do this because, when Jesus comes the second time it is to resurrect the righteous and to take the living along with them to heaven. You remember the text: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the

trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1Thessalonians 4:16,17).

Then there is the part that has to do with the lost. Those who have refused to be saved will simply stay in their graves until after the millennium, and those who are not saved--who happen to be alive when Jesus comes--will try to commit mass suicide. They say to the rocks and the mountains, "...Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." (Revelation 6:16).

But let me get back to the matter of the great trial in heaven. The text says that the evidence is in the form of books. It says the judgment was set and the books were opened. In another place it says, "...and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Revelation 20:12).

We don't really like to talk about these things very much these days. This is because this generation is not into the concept of responsibility. But, friends, responsibility is exactly the concept on which the final judgment is based.

You may remember that the Book of Life contains the names of all who have ever given themselves to Jesus. Jesus Himself once said, "...rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20). Paul spoke of those whose names are in the Book of Life. Daniel in the Old Testament said that those who God would finally save would be "everyone what shall be found written in the book." The book of Revelation says that those who at last will enter into the city of God will be those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 20:12).

The Bible tells us that there is not only a book called the Book of Life: there is also one called the Book of Remembrance. In the Book of Remembrance the good deeds, believe it or not, are written of them that feared the Lord, and thought upon His name. Nehemiah refers to this when he says, "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God..." (Nehemiah 13:14). In the Book of Remembrance every deed of righteousness is recorded. Every temptation that was resisted, every evil habit that was overcome, every word of pity and compassion, every act of sacrifice, every suffering and sorrow that was endured for Christ's sake is there. David wrote, "Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?" (Psalm 56:8).

There is also a record of sins that have been committed. Scripture says, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." In another place it says, "Every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account in the Day of Judgment." Jesus himself said, "By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Even the secret thoughts of our hearts are recorded in heaven. "For God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." (Luke 10:20, Daniel 12:1, Revelation 21:27, Nehemiah. 13:14, Psalms 56:7,8, Ecclesiastes 12:14, Matthew 12:36, 37, 1 Corinthians 4:5).

I guess by now you may be thinking, "But this can't be true. We were taught that if we confess our sins, Jesus is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. How can it be then that He forgives our sins and then later in the judgment brings them back up again? I thought that the Bible teaches us our sins are cast into the bottom of the sea."

Friends, the issue in the Investigative Judgment is not God's faithfulness, but ours. The issue is not even were we sinners, but the issue is were we sorry, and after we gave our lives to Jesus and accepted Him as our Savior, do the facts bear out our commitment in allowing Jesus to work in us both to will and to do His good pleasure.

Some years ago an expression worked its way into our vocabulary. The expression is, "Sorry 'bout that." I wouldn't say that it is an insincere expression, but it really doesn't mean very much. It is kind of like saying, "Whoops," or "Excuse me." It doesn't stop doing anything; it merely apologizes for you being in my way. So when I say excuse me or sorry 'bout that, what I may well mean is, "Step back. I'm on a roll."

I am afraid that the whole matter of giving our lives to Jesus is much more serious to Him than it often is to us. I can understand how this would be, because another problem we have these days is in making a lasting commitment to anything.

The closest thing that can help us understand what making a commitment to Jesus means is the matter of marriage. And, unfortunately, you can see that in a time when fifty percent of marriages end in divorce and a significant number are what we call dysfunctional, the matter of making a commitment to God is getting either more and more problematic at worst or more and more shallow at best.

This is why, inasmuch as salvation is a life and death matter, it can't be based on a simple, "Your word against mine," or Jesus saying, "Leave them alone; they're my buddies."

Let's not forget that no matter how all of this ends up for you and me, the former covering cherub, whose name was Lucifer, and all of his crowd, which are a third of the angels, are going to one day be destroyed, and I am sure they will not go down without a fight and they will try to take everyone else down with them.

They will do this by trying to capitalize on the justice of God. Let me explain what I mean. By trying to capitalize on the justice of God, I mean they are continually crying foul or unfair. Let me tell you why. I am sure that you can appreciate the fact that those who God finally destroys must be shown to be fundamentally different from those whom He will finally save. Remember now, we are all sinners. So then if God would save one group of sinners and destroy another, there must be a difference between the two groups, and the difference must be able to be demonstrated by hard evidence so that even the devil can see the difference. Remember, God is the only one who knows the heart.

You see, this is what all the recordkeeping is all about. If the matter of being saved were just about repeating some kind of canned prayer or signing on some dotted line, guess who would sign up? I think even the devil would sign up. Do you really think the devil is looking forward to hell? Hardly! He knows that he is going there and he is making every effort to make sure that he is not alone.

This is why the Bible calls him the "accuser of the brethren." He is the adversary. When a person gives their heart to Jesus, that is not the end of the story of salvation for them, but only the beginning. Of course, when we commit our lives to Jesus, the Bible teaches that He will never be unfaithful to us or separate Himself from us or divorce us, but do I need to tell you we can and often do all of the above to Him. That is again why the judgment is a necessity. The Book of Life and the Book of Remembrance are the facts and nothing but the facts.

I don't need to tell you that, when a person is brought to trial, they usually claim to be innocent of all of the charges. I said usually .

A young man who worked for a district attorney's office tells the following story. On one occasion the authorities apprehended two people who were running drug operations. The men had no connection with each other, but the case that the state had on each one was about the same.

One of the men pleaded guilty, the other pleaded innocent. The one who pleaded guilty was given a suspended sentence. The one who said that he was innocent was brought to trial, found guilty and given a twenty-year sentence.

You may ask then why don't all of the crooks just plead guilty? "It is because of pride. Pride kills."

So, friends, in the judgment, Satan is our accuser. He accuses us of being sinners, and that we are. When we give our lives to Jesus, Satan then spends all of his time trying to get us to separate ourselves from the love of God and to be disobedient to His will. In the judgment he points to the record of our lives, to our character defects, our unlikeness to Christ. He points to all the sin that he has tempted us to commit and he says that we are on his side.

Jesus does not excuse our sins, but He points out our repentance and faith. He lifts His wounded hands before the Father and the holy angels saying, "I know them by name; I have graven them on the palms of my hands."

My friends, let us not forget a true Christian is a person with a broken spirit and a broken and humble heart. It is as if the Lord says to the devil, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee; is not this a brand plucked out of the fires?"

In the judgment Christ covers His faithful followers with His own righteousness, that He may present them to His Father "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing." Their names are written in the Book of Life, and concerning them it is written, "They shall walk with me for they are worthy." (Micah 4:8, Zechariah 3:2, Ephesians 5:27, Revelation 3:4).

Though Jesus forgives our sins when we ask, there is still a record of them in heaven. This record is not cleared until the Investigative Judgment. The apostle Peter distinctly states that the sins of believers will be blotted out "...when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ...." Acts 3:19-20. When the Investigative Judgment is over, Christ will come and His reward will be with Him to give to every one as their work shall be.

In the Old Testament the Investigative Judgment was symbolized by the Day of Atonement. These days the Jews still celebrate it and it is called Yom Kippur. You have probably heard about it. The Day of Atonement was and is celebrated once a year. In the Old Testament days, when the day was come to a close, the High Priest came out and blessed the congregation. In the same way at the close of the Investigative Judgment, the Scripture says Jesus will appear without sin unto salvation to bless His people with the gift of eternal life (Hebrews 9:28).

And so beginning in 1844 Jesus began the final part of His work as our mediator. At that time, as I stated before, those who will be saved are given the final blessing--a blessing based on the grace of

our Lord as it was shown in their daily lives. All of this, of course, is recorded in the books of heaven.

The sins that have not been repented of and forsaken will not be pardoned and blotted out of the books of record, but they will stand as a witness against the sinner in the day of God. A person may have committed their evil deeds out in the open or in secret, but Scripture is clear that every sin will be open and manifest before Him with whom we have to do. We are told that angels of God witness each sin that we commit and they register it in the records in the heavenly computers. A sin may be hidden, denied, or covered up, but it will finally be laid bare before all of the intelligences of heaven.

A person may have lived a life in which they deceived everyone all the time, and even themselves part of the time, but the fact is that none of us deceives God anytime. We are always trying to give a good impression or to develop a good image, but God is interested in our characters. We may deceive each other, but God knows the truth about each one of us.

You may be saying by now, "But what are you saying? They have been telling us that all we have to do is to have a relationship with Jesus and we are home free." The problem, ladies and gentlemen, is not shall we or shall we not have a relationship with Jesus, but rather what kind of a relationship will that be.

Contrary to what some may think, God is not, what we might say, a kind of first among equals. The talk these days that we ought to have a relationship with Jesus could make a person think that He is just one of the good old boys.

If we have made some mistakes in the past of not preaching enough about the love of God and preaching too much about the coming judgment, I believe we have, in the 21st century, to put it mildly, gone to the other extreme.

My friends, God is first our Creator, then He is our Judge. He is our Savior and our Sustainer. Of course, He is our Friend, He is our Father, and He is our older Brother, but a person who tries to relate to God as a Friend, Father and a Brother, but who does not relate to Him as Creator and Judge, is going to be messed up in the end.

Scripture calls us to fear God and give glory to Him. Think about it now. This is not how we relate to our buddies or our neighbors. We are called upon to love the Lord with all our hearts, with all our souls and with all our might. This kind of commitment is not the kind of commitment that we have with anyone on this planet, or at least it shouldn't be.

I believe to simply call upon people to have a relationship with Jesus without explaining what that means can be down-right misleading and could even be ultimately fatal.

It is not a pleasant thought to realize that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give account for the way that we have lived this life. The process is complicated by the fact that the devil is not going down without a fight and the judge of all the earth must do right. He will both save and He will destroy, and it will be based on the facts and nothing but the facts.

There is, as it were, a heavenly video that records every aspect of our lives. Whether this will condemn us ultimately or will be used to justify us depends upon whether or not we have let the Holy Spirit do its work in our lives.

You are probably aware that one of the most controversial doctrines is the doctrine of the Investigative Judgment. The reason many people these days resist it is that it represents not only the plan of God to save us from our sins, but it clearly shows our on-going responsibility to be faithful to Him.

The intercession of Christ for us in the sanctuary in heaven is as necessary to the plan of salvation as was His death on the cross. When He died on the cross He began a work which He has gone to heaven to finish.

Friends, we must by faith enter into the process by which He is saving us. He died on the cross alone, but He cannot save us alone. The Bible tells us that we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12) looking ever to Jesus who is the author and the finisher of our faith.

We say that we are Christians--that Jesus is our Savior and our Lord--but for many of us you would hardly know it! The Scripture says very clearly, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall receive mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

When we who claim to be Christians refuse to repent, when we hold on to pride, to selfishness, to lust, to bitterness and to resentment, Satan must laugh himself silly. How he must taunt Christ and the holy angels.

We may say, "But I have given up all the big sins in my life. Of course, I recognize that I do some things that I shouldn't, but then no one is perfect."

Have you ever thought, my friends, that the sins that we call the little sins are really the big ones? If it is true that we have given up some sins, they must have been the little ones. It must be the big ones that we are holding on to because they are the ones that we are willing to lose our eternal life over.

I have a good friend whose wife got cancer. He is a specialist in internal medicine. His wife had all the surgery that was possible in her case. Once I asked him about the surgeries. He told me that even if they are able to get the whole tumor, there might be at any one moment a large number of cancer cells that are simply floating around in the body's circulatory system. Unfortunately, they were not able to save her.

In the same way, we often are willing to have the Holy Spirit cut out a tumor of sin, but then we don't follow up, we forget that sin is, as it were, floating around in our very being. Satan knows that if we knowingly are holding on to any sin, in any amount, we will finally be overcome and lost.

You may say, "Does that mean that I must be perfect at all times? Must I be completely sinless at all times or I will be lost?" What it means, my friends, is that we must be fighting against sin at all times. We must, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be continually in a spirit of repentance. This is all that we can bring, as they say, to the table, yet we have the promise that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) The cleansing and healing from sin is something that He does for us and in us.

We are now living in the great Day of Atonement. In the olden days while the high priest was making the atonement for Israel, everyone was required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humble themselves before the Lord. Those who refused to do this were cut off from among the people. In the

same way, all of us who would have our names retained in the Book of Life should now, in the few remaining days of our probation, be afflicting our souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful, searching of our hearts.

We must put away the light and frivolous spirit that so many of us have. We are at war. We must all work with Christ to overcome the evil tendencies that are ruining our lives and carrying us away from Christ.

The work of preparation for the judgment is an individual work--a personal work. We are not saved in groups, though obviously we must encourage each other. You may have a husband or a wife, a son or a daughter, who is close to the Lord, but that won't fill in for you. Though all nations are to pass in judgment before God, yet He is going to examine the case of each individual as closely as if there were not another being on the earth. Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The judgment is now going on in heaven. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon--none knows how soon--it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives will come up to be reviewed. One day each of us must be on trial.

Jesus Himself warned us of this day when He said, "Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." (Mark 13:33, Revelations 3:3).

When the work of the Investigative Judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death. At the end of the Investigative Judgment Jesus says, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (Revelation 22:11) Probation ends a short time before the coming of Jesus in the clouds.

What if what I have been saying is true? Friends, it is true! Just about everyone on this planet, except those who are in denial, know that some day they are going to have to give an account to God for the lives that they have lived. The concept of judgment is burned into the very fiber of our being.

The only thing is most of the people want to bargain their way out of the judgment or they want to recast the judgment in such a way that it will no longer be a big deal. But it is a big deal. The two greatest events of a person's life are their birth and the time of their judgment before God. The Scripture says that "...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27).

Many people try to do with the judgment the same as they do when it comes time to file their income taxes. I must confess I am one of those who wait until the last day or so to send in my yearly tax return. Mailing your tax forms at midnight on the last day doesn't have a negative effect upon your taxes, but using this system to get ready for the judgment may be a fatal error.

The Investigative Judgment is on right now. Soon--and none of us know how soon--the judgment will pass to those of us that are alive. We have traditionally believed that the Investigative Judgment will close during the time surrounding the Sunday Law and all that will be happening at that time.

I don't know if you have thought of it before, but the Sunday law is the final test. I don't know if you remember the way that it is in school on the day of the final exam. Only a fool would go into the final exam with the idea that somehow he would recall what he had never learned.

The Sunday Law is the final test. A person who has not been particularly religious or who has been careless before the Sunday Law will simply flunk the test. You might say, "But what about those who right now may not be keeping the Sabbath? How will the Sunday Law affect them?" The Sunday Law is the test. That means a person who has not gotten ready for the test is going to fail it. How will a person get ready for the test? I will tell you how. By total commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ; By maintaining in the Spirit an attitude of complete repentance, and by submitting to the Spirit's leading them into a life of holiness and righteousness.

So then, it is not so much a matter of which church you belong to when the final test comes. When the final test comes and God leads his people into a complete commandment-keeping experience, it will not be about whether you were a Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist or whatever. Remember what Jesus says when the Investigative Judgment is over. He says, "He that is holy let him be holy still, and then he that is filthy let him be filthy still."

You see, it is not the Sunday Law test that will make a person holy. It is the blood of Jesus and the working of the Holy Spirit in the life. The Sunday Law though is the final test, which will demonstrate in a simple and a practical way before everyone on this planet who is who.

In Heaven, it is the Investigative Judgment that shows the rest of the universe who is who. On this planet it will be the Sunday Law that separates, as they say, the men from the boys. You still might be thinking, "I was always good at cramming for a test. When I see the Sunday Law about to happen I will jump back in the boat if I have to or at least I will get more serious than I am right now."

I believe a person who has this as their salvation strategy is going to be in for a big letdown. You see, the thing that prepares us for all of this is the Holy Spirit. The Christian life is a process of allowing the Holy Spirit to work more and more in the life. As we used to sing, "Open up your heart and let the sun shine in."

A person who right now is resisting the work of the Holy Spirit is taking a huge risk. The Scriptures teach in Ephesians 4:30 that we can actually grieve away the Holy Spirit, or at least so cauterize our own conscience that we no longer are capable of responding to His voice.

It is the Holy Spirit that calls us to repentance and engrafts within us the mind of Christ and He does this by invitation only. Over the long haul, a person who has repeatedly refused to yield to the Spirit becomes less capable of responding to His voice.

Being ready for the judgment and the coming of Jesus is not just about having all of your doctrinal ducks in a row either. We are told that many of those who formerly knew the truth will become the greatest enemies of God's people at the end. This means that in spite of the facts and the figures, those who consistently refuse the Holy Spirit finally become enemies of God and His people.

This is exactly the significance of what it means when Jesus pronounces those fateful words, "He that is holy let him be holy still." In another place the Scripture warns those who have known the truth but who have not lived it. It says, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62).

By now some of you might be thinking, "From what you have been saying I am afraid that there is no hope for me. I know that I have not been taking my Christian life seriously. Are you saying now that I

have gone so far that I can't turn back?"

No, I am not saying that. I am saying though that now is the time of salvation. Now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. We must repent while there is still time. All of the grace in heaven, all of the love that Jesus has for sinners, is not enough to save a sinner who hardens their heart and refuses to repent.

They are telling us all the time that Jesus loves us and that He died to save sinners and that there is no sin or sinner that He will not forgive. That is true. But let's get real, my friends. The problem is not the unfaithfulness of our Savior, but our unfaithfulness and disloyalty to Him.

The other day someone was telling me that they know of young husbands and fathers who are members of the church and who are in church every week, yet who often spend their lunch hours in topless restaurants, and their wives know about it.

And how often do we hear of church members doing work around the house on the Sabbath day - just like any other day of the week!

I know. When we begin to talk like this someone begins to scream, "But we are not saved by works."

People who really have salvation are not trying to see how much they can get away with, but whether they eat or drink or whatever they do, they do by the power of the indwelling Christ, to the glory of God.

Unfortunately for us, when our names come into judgment, we will not be there to try to smooth-talk our way into heaven or to plead temporary insanity. The judgment is set and the books have been opened. It is the facts... it is the facts.... and nothing but the facts.

May our lives be completely hid in Jesus, who is our hope and our help. To Him be glory and honor in the church, now and forever. Amen.