



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Acts 16:31

Winter 2024

"Guard-Rails"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, it's good to have you back. Well, we are sort of in-between series. We finished 1 Peter a few weeks ago and next week we're going to begin a new series in 2 Corinthians. And the week after that, Ian Hamilton will be here from Scotland, via Oklahoma City, so we look forward to that, (he was here last year, you'll remember).

But this morning, I'm going to do a doctrinal, topical study; and I think it is captured succinctly in the text that you have in your bulletin: Acts chapter 16, verse 31;

"They said...", *(now that's Paul and Silas, and they're speaking to the Philippian jailer),*  
"...Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." *(...and I think we're going to later understand that last part is, 'When they believe, they too, will be saved.')*

I'll expand on all of that, but let's now bow in a word of prayer.

LORD, we do thank You for Your goodness to us. And what a privilege it is to be here; we thank You for that. It's a privilege to be here because we're opening Your Word, Your inerrant Word; and as I consider some of the things of the subject of our text this morning, that should be apparent. We need Your Word in order to grow in grace, and knowledge, and progress in the Christian life; so we thank You that we have it.

We thank You we have this opportunity to consider a number of passages and we pray that You would encourage us, and build us up in the faith, and give us clarity of

thought. I do pray for that, that You would enlighten our minds this morning as we consider great truths throughout Your Word that are so essential for us to understand. So LORD bless us, build us up in the faith.

And then we pray Your rich blessing upon us as we consider the health needs of our congregation, and the general situation in a time like this in the wintertime when people are contracting viruses and becoming sick. We pray You'd guard us from that and we pray for those that are sick—that You would bless them and give them healing.

LORD we look to You to bless us, and we pray not only to physically bless us, but bless us now spiritually and build us up in the faith. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

*(Message)* J. I. Packer, (who was a very popular writer in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, and in fact came here on a couple of occasions and did some preaching and seminars), would often tell his students how important it is to know theology. He said, "Theology is for doxology and devotion. It is the praise of God and the practice of godliness."

In other words, 'To know God, to understand His ways, to worship Him correctly and live rightly, we need to know the fundamental doctrines of the faith, the basic truths about God. It is practical.'

Even so I would bet that many, if not most, Christians today, (present company excluded), find that statement far-fetched and distasteful—like it was when we were kids and our mother would say, 'Eat your spinach; it's good for you!' No kid likes spinach.

I did, (but I would never have admitted it), and I love doctrine. I don't think that's weird—I'm thankful I do; it is essential to spiritual health and spiritual growth. It's good for us.

But how is that? Well, it keeps us in the truth. It protects us from self-delusion. It protects us from heretics and heresy—and spiritual fads. It keeps us in, "the ancient paths", to quote Jeremiah, (18:15),... "the straight way", (Psa 107:7). And it edifies; it increases our love for the LORD, which itself is the great motivation for 'a right life'—for obedience and progress in the faith.

So to that end I'm going to consider, in this hour, two fundamental doctrines, *justification* and *sanctification*. 'Two distinct doctrines that cannot be separated, but should not be mixed'; and I hope to explain that. I'm going to base much of the definitions given for each of those doctrines on the Westminster Confession of Faith, which theologian B. B. Warfield called, "The ripest fruit of Reformation creed-making." So this is ripe fruit, fruit full of vitamin C—and so this is good for us.

But first we'll begin with a very familiar event, the conversion of the Philippian jailer in Acts chapter 16; for this gives us an example of both of these doctrines, both of justification and sanctification. It was Paul's second missionary journey, and his first excursion into Europe. He and Silas, Timothy, and Luke, answered a call in a night vision of a man saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." (Acts 16:9).

They came to Philippi, a very Roman town in northern Greece—but they didn't find the man. Instead, their first encounter was with women, Jewish proselytes meeting on a Sabbath by a river. Paul preached the Gospel, and verse 14 states, "A woman named Lydia...was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul."

"The Lord opened her heart". That's the grace of God, and true of every believer. God is the initiator, always. How else can the spiritually dead respond? And every one of us is that by nature; Paul makes that clear in Ephesians, chapter 2. (*Verse 1: "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins..."*). And the response to that, (to God opening the heart by the initiative of God), the response to that is inevitable; it's faith, trusting in Christ as the Savior.

Paul and his company, and their ministry there in Philippi, continued until Paul cast out 'a spirit of divination' from a slave girl, a fortune teller. (Acts 16:16),.She had a number of owners who profited greatly from her prophesying and her divination; and this wrecked their business, for she no longer had that spirit, that demonic power. She is now free of that, but they don't have their investment, and so they complained to the authorities.

The authorities turned Paul and Silas over to the jailer who showed no mercy. He beat them with rods, threw them into the deepest, darkest chamber of the jail, and put them in stocks. But at midnight, while Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God ... [What a picture that is! These men are in the deepest, darkest dungeon, and what are they doing in spite of the pain of being in stocks and chains, they're singing praise to God!] ...now see that is the consequence of knowing the Word of God and knowing the things of God—it enables us to prevail over circumstances.

But as they're doing this and singing hymns it also says the prisoners were all listening to them. The LORD then shook the prison with a great earthquake. The jail doors opened; the chains fell off of the prisoners. When the jailer saw the scene he thought the prisoners had escaped; and rather than face the repercussions of that, he drew his sword and started to fall on it.

"But Paul cried out with a loud voice saying, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!' (Acts 16:28). The man grabbed a torch, rushed into the cell, trembling with fear, fell down before them and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' (vs30). They said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved...' (vs31a).

That's it! It can't be any simpler than that. That is the mercy and the goodness—that is, (as we just sang about), the grace of God. It doesn't make it hard, it doesn't make it complicated with ceremonies, and tasks, and burdens. As Paul wrote in Romans 10, (vs5-10), 'To have righteousness, to have salvation, we don't need to go up into heaven to bring Christ down, we don't need to go down into the abyss to bring Christ up...we don't need to do the impossible.' It is near us, in the Gospel—and received through faith alone!

And we see that all through the Bible. Genesis 15:6, one of Paul's favorite texts, is prominent in the Book of Romans and prominent in the Book of Galatians; Genesis 15:6. "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness." (Gal 3:6).

And all through the Gospel of John we see that. John 3:16(b), "...that whoever believes in Him, (*in Christ*), shall not perish, but have eternal life." "...whoever believes...". John chapter 5, verse 24, "Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My word and believes

Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." John 6:40, (we have in our bulletin), "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him...", (*in other words, 'Whoever 'hears' Him, ('beholds' Him in the Word of God), and believes in Him'*), "...will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." In John 9, He asks the blind man, (whom he had healed earlier), "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (vs36). When Jesus identified Himself as that Son, the man responded, "Lord, I believe." (vs38). —And we know he did, because the next thing he did was worship Christ. (ibid.).

But then, go back to chapter 2 of the Gospel of John and we read, "Many believed in His name, observing His signs..." (vs23). They had seen the miracles that He had done and it had convinced them that, 'Yes, He's to be believed in.' "But Jesus...was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men." (vs24). So there is genuine faith, and there is false faith—incomplete faith.

What then is 'genuine faith', or, 'saving faith'? I think it can be defined in three words. Now this is not my construction, but this is quite prominent and quite common. First of all, it's *knowing*, secondly, it's *assenting*, (giving assent to), and finally, it is *trusting*.

First of all, *knowing*. We have to *know* what the Gospel is, in order to respond to it. We can't believe in what we don't *know*. So first of all there's *knowledge*. There's knowing the facts of the Gospel: The deity of Christ, the humanity of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ, the atonement that's been achieved. We learn these facts, and that the crucified Savior has been raised from the dead. So knowing the facts.

And then secondly, giving *assent* to them—believing that they are true.

But then thirdly, there is *trust*—trusting in those facts, trusting in that great message. That's the third act—and it's an act of the will. It is an act of entrusting oneself to Christ Himself—and resting in that.

We see that in the Philippian jailer. He heard the Gospel: It was "Believe in the Lord Jesus", which means trusting in Jesus who is LORD, who is Yahweh, who is God—God the Son and Savior.

The name, '*Jesus*', speaks of His humanity; '*LORD*', His deity. '*Jesus*'; His humanity and His work as the Savior. 'The LORD saves'...that's the meaning of *Jesus*; that's the meaning of His name. And so the word, *LORD*, speaks of His deity, the word, *Jesus*, speaks of His humanity. He is the God-Man, the Savior who died for us, who died in our place...and the jailer believed.

Now did he understand everything that he heard? It's a rather simple message. How much of that did he know, and did he understand? It's not likely that he understood a lot about that. Remember, he was a pagan; the Gospel has just now come to Europe. And this man's a pagan, a Roman who heard the Gospel there for the first time. He could barely articulate it, but he knew it was true—and believed.

How much faith does it take to be saving faith? How much faith does a child have? Jesus said, 'Faith the size of a mustard seed can move a mountain.' (Mat 17:20). That's saving faith.

It has been likened to an open hand that receives a gift. And sometimes...well, we just had Christmas and if you think of a child opening a present containing an object that they may not familiar with, they still take it—they 'receive it'. Then as they look at it and play with it, they understand what it is. And so it is with this gift of faith that we receive. We receive it as with an open hand, a gift...and in this case it's the gift of forgiveness and eternal life. We may not understand a lot about it when we first believe—but we will if it's genuine faith.

'Believe in Christ and you will be saved.' Nothing can be simpler than that...and nothing is more impossible. Man, men and women, children and adults are, by nature, dead—without spiritual life, incapable of understanding and believing. God must open the heart; God must give spiritual Light...He does, abundantly. That's Ephesians chapter 2, as I mentioned earlier. "You were dead...But God, being rich in mercy...", (even when we were dead), "...made us alive together with Christ." (Eph 2:1,4,5).

And when a person is alive with the life that God gives, ['spiritual life', 'regeneration', 'being born again'], he or she believes, must believe, can't help but believe—and believe willingly, gladly, joyfully. His or her eyes have been opened to the glory of it all, the beauty of it all—and it's compelling and it causes faith. And at that moment, the sinner is *justified*—at that very moment!

Which brings us to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and I'm quoting the shorter catechism which states,

"**Justification** is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone."

At the moment of faith, God declares the believer to be innocent of all sin, of all wrongdoing—and also to be righteous, that is, to be in complete conformity to the Law of God and have fulfilled it fully.

Now that is a legal declaration. It is the announcement a judge makes in a court of law when he or she declares a defendant innocent of all charges made against him or her. That is demonstrated very clearly in Deuteronomy chapter 25, where Moses instructed judges to judge impartially, fairly, honestly: 'Don't take bribes, don't show favoritism, don't favor the rich over the poor, or the poor over the rich.' Instead, he said in verse 1, "...justify the righteous and condemn the wicked."

He didn't say, 'Make the guilty person righteous.' Rather, 'Only declare what they are; only acquit, pardon the person who is actually innocent, righteous.' That's what God does with the believer.

But how can that be? How does He do that? Because, as you reflect on that, (and it doesn't take much reflection), you realize we are guilty. We're not innocent; we're all sinners. We all "fall short of the glory of God", and that's Romans chapter 3, verse 23. And that's all through the Word of God; we are a sinful, fallen people. How can we be justified?!

Well, we can do that because we have a substitute, God's Son, His eternal Son, who took on flesh—He became a true man. And in His humanity, one man for a multitude, suffered in our place. And because His human nature was joined to His divine nature, [His temporal nature, (like ours), was joined to His infinite, eternal nature], His death is of **infinite** value, and sufficient for all of the people for whom He died—sufficient to pay all of their debts, all of their sins, in that moment.

So, at the moment of faith we are joined to Christ. And in being joined to Him we're joined to all that He is...and all that He has done. We are joined to the living Christ and to His life. In fact, we are said to be "in Christ" so that when the Father sees us, He sees the Son. He sees us clothed in His righteousness—debts all paid, righteousness all fulfilled. Or, as the shorter catechism states, "God accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone." At the moment of faith, Christ's payment and perfection are imputed to us—they are put to our account and they are ours. 'The judge' pronounces us forgiven of all sin and innocent—fully righteous. That's justification.

"Now how does that work...", (to quote Dr. Packer), "...for the praise of God and the practice of godliness?" Well, in that we see that salvation is altogether of the LORD... that's how it works for our praise of God and practice of godliness. That's Romans chapter 4, verse 5, "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited unto righteousness..."

Notice that. He justifies, not the righteous, justifies not the people who have 'turned over a new leaf', or have 'reformed their life' and prepared themselves in some way..."He justifies the *ungodly*". (ibid.) He saves us where He finds us—in our sins. Or as P. T. Forsyth put it, "We are rebels, taken with weapons in our hands."



Paul understood that. Christ captured him on the Damascus Road with arrest warrants in his hand; He saved that jailer with a sword in his hand—both men, in their ungodliness, without a thought for the Lord in their minds.

And He saves us in our sin. He saves us in our sin—but He never leaves us in our sin. He changes us; He transforms the sinner. Still, as Forsyth also wrote, "Redeeming authority says, 'Be free and obey.' It does not say, 'Obey and be free'. Put another way, it doesn't say 'Understand fully, commit yourself fully...then be free.' He shines His Light—the Lord God shines His light into dark hearts so that they believe; and at that moment, his faith is credited unto righteousness.

It's all of God! It's all of free grace, which is sovereign grace. We can take no credit for our salvation, not even for our faith, which is a gift.

So rightly understood, that leads to what Dr. Packer called, "The praise of God." —That's how these things work to that. Christ has made peace between God and men; between the Judge of all the earth and every believer who is joined to Him...and that is the ground of our assurance.

First of all, what a blessing that is to know that we have peace with the Lord God, and, (*secondly*), that He's obtained what we could never obtain for ourselves, (or even want to obtain for ourselves).

Well, we have that peace with God and that not only gives us joy, and gratitude, and praise to God, it also blesses us practically in the sense that it is the ground of our assurance which affects our practice of godliness—because without assurance we cannot live confidently and boldly, we cannot live joyfully...we could only live in a very frustrated way.

The doctrine of justification is practical. Paul commanded "joy" in Philippians chapter 4, verse 4; "Rejoice in the Lord always...". The Christian life is a sober life, it is a serious life. But it's also to be a joyful life, a confident life—and justification, understanding it correctly, is the ground and the basis of that.

We have peace with God through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. That peace gives assurance of salvation. We cannot be more acceptable to God than we are at that moment of faith. He accepts us completely; He loves us infinitely and eternally; He sees us as His Son.

Well, that means we don't have to strive to gain His approval. It's not partial approval that we have to make up for; for we have the full approval of God at the moment of faith. We don't have to live under some burden to please Him further to gain something more from Him. And what that should lead to is such gratitude that we want to please Him...that we want to obey Him.

And so the child of God will strive to live a holy life. After all, justification doesn't change our being; it doesn't infuse us with righteousness. It 'declares' us righteous, it 'declares' us forgiven...but we are still sinners. In fact, Luther called Christians, "Righteous sinners." We still sin.

And that brings us to the second definition, that of *sanctification*. Again, the shorter catechism of the Westminster Confession of Faith:

**"Sanctification** is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness."

It is the Holy Spirit who renews us in our mind and will, and does so by means of the Word of God. As we study Scripture He applies it—the Spirit of God applies it to us and transforms us. It's nourishment to our soul; it's transforming.

Scripture is essential for spiritual growth. We know that from the Lord's 'High Priestly Prayer', in John 17. In verse 17 He prayed to the Father for us; "Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth." That's the Bible.

1 Peter chapter 2, verse 2; "...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation..." We can no more grow spiritually without the Bible than a baby can grow without milk. It's a process.

But *justification* is not a process. Justification is an *event* that takes place at a moment in time, at the moment of faith—and it is permanent. *Sanctification*, on the other hand, is a *process*, a lifelong process of transformation.

We still sin; so just as a child learns to walk by taking a step, and falling, and getting up, hopefully with the hand of his father or mother, (or *her* father or mother), and taking another step, and falling...so too we sin. But we *repent*, and we return, and we walk. That's our life.

Now what about *repentance*? Where does it fit into all of this? *Faith* and *repentance* are often described as two sides of the same coin. In fact, I would say, when a person believes in the Gospel, he or she repents. The Greek word, *repentance*, is actually two words: The preposition, '*after*', and the verb, '*to think*'. So it has the idea of, 'to have an afterthought', which is understood as 'a different thought'. So it has the idea of, 'to change the mind', or it can be defined as, 'a change of mind'.

In Hebrew, it's a very simple word, the word, *šûb*, which means, '*turn*'—'*turn*'. It is a work of God, it's a work of grace. You see that when it's used in Jeremiah 31, verse 18, (and that's the great chapter on the New Covenant), but Jeremiah prays, "Bring me back that I may be restored." ...('God, You must bring me back in order that I be restored'). "Bring me back that I may be restored", now that is the New American Standard Bible. The King James Version gives a more literal translation: "...turn thou me, and I shall be turned..." ('if you do it, LORD, it will happen, but I'm dependent on You.')

So, that's repentance. Repentance is turning—turning away from sin; turning away from error; turning away from unbelief. And it happens when the sinner...believes. He or she 'turns to Christ'. I think Calvin is right that, 'Faith occurs first.' He wrote in the Institutes, "Now it ought to be a fact beyond controversy that repentance not only constantly follows faith, but is also born of faith.

Everyone who believes...repents. Everyone who turns to Christ in faith...by doing that turns away from unbelief. And it continues throughout our life. Because we believe the truth, we hate the error, we hate the results of error. Because we believe the Light,

we don't believe in the darkness. Repentance has its own results. It's what Paul called, in Acts chapter 26, verse 20, "...deeds appropriate to repentance."

Luke wrote in Acts 19, of the great revival that took place in Ephesus and then affected all of the province of Asia. It was an amazing time of salvation, an amazing spread of the Gospel. He writes of that in verses 18 and 19 of Acts chapter 19, that in Ephesus the new converts, 'kept coming and confessing their sinful practices', (now that confession is, 'a deed of repentance'); "And many who practiced magic brought their books..." —and burned them. That is a 'deed', 'a product of repentance', (and a deed appropriate to it).

Repentance is an essential and inseparable part of saving faith. Just as those who are born again, every saint constantly has faith with lives lived by faith continually—and does, (as a result of that), 'deeds of faith', righteous deeds. So too, the saint is continually repenting and doing 'deeds of repentance'—*turning* from that which is wrong and that which is false.

Now that is *sanctification*. The more we grow in our faith, the more clearly we see God's holiness and righteousness, and the more we see our sin and are grieved by it, —and the more we turn away from it. It's a *process* of our life.

Justification and sanctification cannot be separated from one another. The justified sinner will progress in sanctification, will progress in holiness and understanding. The Reformers saw that. They gave us the slogan: *sola fide* —'by faith alone'. Salvation is not gained by good works, or, 'works of the Law', but, 'by faith alone in Christ alone.' But they also said, 'Justification is by faith alone...but not by a faith that is alone.' Good works will always accompany it, but again, it is all a gift of God—the product of sovereign grace.

Saving faith, and repentance from unbelief and ungodliness, is a gift of God. Justification is a gift of God, given, not earned. Sanctification is a gift of God of His sovereign grace. When we believe, 'we are "sealed" with the Holy Spirit'; we see that in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 13, and Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30.

And that Spirit sanctifies us, begins His work in us. Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10, states that clearly: "We are His workmanship." What you are as a child of God is God's work, from beginning to end: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." (Eph 2:10). Therefore good works will be there, in varying degrees—just as knowledge will be there and clarity of understanding will be there, also in varying degrees. But righteous deeds will be a part of the new life; understanding will be a part of the new life; it's what God has purposed for all of us. He's purposed us to live for righteousness—and His purpose cannot fail.

So again, salvation is simple. It's as simple as it can be: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." How much faith? Small faith? The smallest faith is sufficient...like a child's. How much does a child know about anything? How much did the thief on the cross know when he asked Jesus to, 'Remember him when he entered His kingdom?' (Luk 23:42). Not a lot; (now he was a Hebrew, so he would have had, I suspect, some knowledge...but not a lot). Jesus said, "Truly...today you shall be with Me in paradise." (Luk 23:43).

I have a friend who not long ago was telling me about hearing Dr. Johnson, (so I'm quoting my friend, but I believe that this is the quote), and he quoted Dr. Johnson as saying something like, "A person can be saved without knowing about the Trinity...", [and I suppose we could add to that, 'without understanding the 'Hypostatic union' of the joining of the divine nature with the human nature in the one person of Christ], so, "A person can be saved," he said, "without knowing about the Trinity. But when he hears about it, when he hears the teaching about it, and doesn't believe, he can't be saved." So, sometimes it's an exposition of the Word of God and an understanding of the fullness of God that separates the true believer from the false believer.

Small faith that is genuine faith is always, by nature of the case, 'uninformed' faith. Now in saying that I'm not saying that's okay, and that you can continue on like that. I'm just saying that's the reality of the case; that's the reality of things. When a

person first comes to an understanding of Christ, maybe as a child or even later as an adult, they don't know much. That's the way things are.

But that will not remain the case. There will be growth—and that growth will take place by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit instructing us and applying it to our hearts. The saint will recognize the truth—and will receive it.

This is what happened to the Philippian jailer and his family. He believed when he heard the Gospel from Paul and Silas, but he could not have known much at that moment, (again, he was a pagan). He just knew that Jesus was more than a man, that He was 'Lord'—and he knew that He was a Savior. But, the evidence of his salvation is that he took them, (Paul and Silas), home.

Luke wrote, "And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were on his house ." (Acts 16:32). They taught them more about the Gospel...and maybe taught them about the Trinity, taught them about the incarnation; and I'm sure he did about Christ being the eternal Son of God...and all these great doctrines. They spent the evening teaching him, and then Luke wrote, "And he", (the jailer), "took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household." (Acts 16:34).

He was a *changed* man. That's not justification—it's sanctification in which he and his family were renewed in the whole man and enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness. Justification is a judicial act. It takes place once and for all. It changes a person's legal status with God. It declares the believer innocent. Sanctification is a process, a transformation of the believer's soul, making a person increasingly righteous and holy. The two are distinct...but they cannot be separated.

Mixing them results in error...so they can't be separated, but they can't be mixed. Large religious organizations do that.

J. I. Packer, in this little article that I've been referring to, wrote, "Official Roman Catholic theology includes sanctification in the definition of justification, which it sees as a process. That is, it sees justification as a process rather than a single decisive event,

and affirms that while faith contributes to our acceptance with God, (it never denies that faith is important), but goes on to say that our works of sanctification and merit contribute, too."

In other words, 'A person is saved by works.' And according to that, justification is never final in this life. Every day we're seeking to be justified. So maybe a person can conclude the day, 'Well, I'm justified today...but then there's tomorrow.' So salvation is never assured. A person must always be working to gain God's acceptance with that system. Not even at death can a person be assured.

But again, Paul wrote, "Having been justified by faith...", (at the moment of faith, even weak faith), "...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom 5:1).

Now, is that what is called 'easy believe-ism', or, 'cheap grace'? Well it depends on what that means. Can a person profess faith, then live with complete indifference toward godliness? No! Salvation is to godliness, it is to righteousness. But righteous deeds are the fruit of the Spirit. —That's sanctification. It makes us want righteousness and to strive for it.

The lesson is this, (I can bring this to a conclusion): 'Every child of God is a sinner, saved by grace.' But in order to understand that and be moved to righteousness, we need doctrine. The Gospel itself is doctrine. It's a great statement of doctrine; and it should be explained fully; and parents should explain it fully to their children. And we, when we give the Gospel, should explain it fully—all of the details of the Gospel. And that's our task.

Doctrine may be spinach to some, but doctrine is the *guardrails* of the Christian faith, of the Christian life. It is essential. It is essential for us because without it we'll surely go off the path to our spiritual ruin. Now, I'm not saying we will lose our salvation. We cannot lose our salvation: At the moment of faith we have peace with God...and that's eternal.

But we can live a life in which we squander so much. We can live our life in the 'spiritual desert', or the 'spiritual swamp', confused. We need doctrine. Doctrine, the truth of God, the Word of God, that is the guardrails of the Christian life.

So may God help us to avoid that kind of destruction, or waste, of life—and enable us to advance in the faith by studying the Word of God and understanding the great doctrines of the Word of God. The Gospel, the 'Good News of salvation', is very simple: "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved." At that moment you're justified, forgiven forever. And at that moment, based on that, the Holy Spirit begins sanctification—transforming the mind in order to produce holiness in life.

If you've not believed, you're invited to come to the Savior to recognize your need, and that you are guilty and lost. And by believing, simply by trusting in Christ, you will be found and saved. May God help you to do that.

*(Closing prayer)* Father, we do thank You that by Your grace, through faith alone, we've hidden ourselves in the *Rock of Ages*. We're safe and protected in Him. Your wrath fell on Your Son—and not us, He took it in our place. That's His gift, and we receive it as a gift through faith alone. Help us to understand it more clearly.

We spend our life growing in understanding, in knowledge, and in wisdom—and in righteousness, (in right living). So LORD, may that be our desire and may that be what You produce in us. We thank You for Your goodness and grace.

And now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In Christ's name. Amen.

*(End of Audio)*