***Reconciliation, No. 3  
  
Colossians 1:15-20  
  
COL-149***

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Our subject is "Hymn in Honor of Christ," segment number 39 in Colossians 1:15-20.

**Justification**

Once the unsaved person believes the gospel of the grace of God, and thereby trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation, he is credited with God's absolute righteousness. This is imputed to him. 2 Corinthians 5:21 declares this when it says, "He made him (God the Father made God the Son), Who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf (He bore our sins), that we might become the righteousness of God in Him," that we might receive, to our credit, absolute righteousness, which is essential for entrance into heaven. We now possesses God's absolute righteousness positionally. We are not actually made righteous. We are positionally righteous. In time, in God's presence we will actually be absolute righteousness, positionally, or declared by God the Judge to be justified. That's what justification means – that you are declared to be absolute righteousness.

The classic passage on this is found in Romans 3:24-26. I received a call from Jack Smith, our in-extension Berean missionary in Kentucky. He had just been working through the seven tapes in the Roman series on the doctrine of justification (seven tapes – fourteen messages). He was beside himself with enthusiasm. He was amazed. He could not believe what he had heard. And the thrill of the realization of what these three verses were saying had just so captivated his soul, that he said, "This is absolutely a masterpiece of expository preaching. It should be hung in the Louvre. It is a classic gem," which then led him off into his distress over the fact that people don't realize what has happened to them – what these verses are declaring. And his distress was that even here in Berean Church, he said, "I have the sense that there are Christians who have experienced the magnificence of these three verses, but they're still living in the world." This man says, "I hesitate leaving my house when I have to do something, because I'm almost sure that God is going to bring someone to me, before I get very far, who needs to know about this great work that God has done of justification, declared in these verses." He said, "And that's the way it should be."

However, the average Christian can walk out of his house, and nobody is ever going to bother him. He said, "If the people of your congregation grasped what they are hearing, and what you are doing, Sunday-by-Sunday, they'd fill Texas stadium with people who are rushing to the Word of God – who are rushing to the realities of what God has done for them. Instead, it's, "Ho-hum. Yeah, that's nice. It's a great thing He has done." This man was deeply moved. I've spoken to him many times. And he was fed up with Christians who cannot live up, who still want to be in this world, who still want to live according to the hope of existing in this world. And they do not remember the principle that: "Only one's life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last."

He told me that he had been moving and dealing with Roman Catholics now. Roman Catholics, as you know, are taught that justification is a gradual process. It takes them all their life. By their own works, they must add to the works of Christ to be able to deserve His justification. You cannot believe in Jesus Christ in a Roman Catholic Church, and be saved with immediate instant justification. It is something that you must gradually accumulate for yourself. And you never finish in this life. So, you have to end up in purgatory, where you still work on accumulating the merits that entitle you to the justification that God has provided through Christ on the cross.

Jack said, "I went out and got the latest edition of the Roman Catholic Catechism. I read through it carefully." And he said, "And I can say to you, without a doubt, that anybody who reads that book, and believes it, and follows it, will spend eternity in the lake of fire, because at the heart of the catechism is justification through your merit over a gradual long period of time." This was the core of the reformation debate. And when the reformers discovered that these verses, starting with Romans 1:17, which is what kicked Martin Luther into high gear, and then these verses summarizing what Paul is saying: the reason he wrote this book of justification is that it's an instant provision of God as a gift apart from human doing. Everything suddenly and dramatically changed. And they understood what it meant that Christ became sin for us, so that we become His righteousness. We gain His absolute righteous standing.

He said, "I've led six Catholics to salvation now. I'm working on the priest." He said, "It's not a matter of *if* he's going to be saved. It has now come to only *when.*" So, I'll keep you updated on the progress of this outreach.

In any case, Jack was very moved in what he had learned, and the implications of that – of what we do with it. So I said, "Jack, put it as a testimony on a tape, and I'll play it for the congregation, or I'll get it out to them. And he said, "If God keeps me alive for the next hour, it'll be done." So it's on the way.

I know exactly what he means. I go through the same frustration – the realization of what God has done here, and of how little we are compelled to want to do something to get it out. Okay, maybe you can't be the speaker, but in heaven's name, you can be the supplier, providing you know what on earth is going on. Romans 3:24 says, "Being justified." that's in the present tense, meaning that you're constantly (always) justified. Once you're in, you're constantly in: "As a gift by His grace." It is as the kindness of God. It's something you don't merit. He's given you the gift of justification through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, because Christ has paid the redemptive price on the cross of death, we've been redeemed from Satan's control. Now God can declare us to be absolute righteousness. And that's the act of a judge who says, "I now declare you to be righteous." That is a positional truth, until someday, in His presence, it becomes an experiential truth.

Romans 3:25 says, "Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood." Christ was displayed publicly; His blood was shed; and, His death was provided to be the satisfaction (the propitiation) for the justice of God. God could not be holy, and still wink at sin. Death had to be paid by someone. And "through faith" refers back to the beginning of this Romans 3:24: "which is in Christ Jesus." It is through faith in Christ Jesus: "This was," he said, "this act of God was to demonstrate God's own righteousness, because in "the forbearance of God, he passed over the sins previously committed."

Here was Adam and Eve. They believed on the coming Savior, and God said, "Okay, I'm taking you to heaven." But God was not just in doing that. The sins were not paid for. But He said, "I'm taking you in on credit." Abraham got in on credit. David got in on credit. All the Old Testament believers got in on credit. And the devil was just sitting there watching, and saying, "Okay God, you cast me out of your kingdom. You cast my demons out of the kingdom, because we sinned, because you are supposed to be so fair and just that you demanded that. And here you are, letting all these people into heaven, and nobody has paid death for their sins."

However, God was biding His time. And the apostle Paul wanted to make this so very clear. Nobody is in heaven where God has been unholy in the process. God was waiting until the proper time for Christ to pay the price, and then all the markers that had been piled up for all those people in the past were called in, and they were paid off. Paul is so conscious of wanting to make it clear that justification is not a fiction. It was real because it was on a solid real base.

In Romans 3:26, he comes back to it again: "For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness (God the Father's righteousness), at the present time, that he might be just. There is no compromise of His holiness, and at the same time, the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" – the justifier of the one who does no more than trust in Christ for salvation. That is the magnificence of justification. That is at the heart of what God had to do to maintain His holiness, and still be able to take unholy people into His heaven by giving them, to their credit, the absolute righteousness of God Himself. This is not God's own actual attribute, but a God-like righteousness is what He gave them – that absolute perfection.

These three verses were explained in 14 messages. And Jack Smith said, from one to the other, that each one was a mounting impact. And suddenly, he said, "I'm overwhelmed with the realization of what God has done for me – who I am, and what I should walk out through the week, and leave nothing of what I have, or what I am, or what I can do, held back to getting this message out, and to letting people know what God has done." Because the believing sinner is justified, he stands adjusted, positionally, to God's standard of absolute righteousness.

So, he is declared to be reconciled to God. And that's what we have been looking at in Colossians 1:18: "And through Him, to reconcile all things to Himself." Because justification has been provided, now you have absolute righteousness. Therefore, you have been reconciled (adjusted) to God's standard for going to heaven. You have to be as perfect as God Himself. The believer is thus changed from enmity toward God to compatibility with God.

In the beginning, man and God were friends. There was no problem between them, and no wall. When Adam and Eve sinned, they now became enemies of God. God turned His back on them because they were under His condemnation. Man turned his back against God because he was now a sinner. Between them stood this horrible, horrible wall, separating them: the wall of sin; of spiritual death; of human good; of divine justice; and, of being in Adam. And man could not remove it. God Himself came in through Christ, and He made man savable. He removed the wall by replacing it with the cross. Now God, since He had been satisfied in His justice, and death had been paid for the sins of the world, could now turn, and once more face man.

Man however, while potentially reconciled, still must make the decision to accept that reconciliation. So, when he trusts in Christ as Savior, this reconciliation is affected, and he is now at peace with God. He has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Man has been reconciled. God has been propitiated. The sinner has trusted in Christ, and subjective reconciliation (that is, absolute righteousness) is imputed to the believer. That is what the apostle Paul is talking about. And it's all the result of justification.

Since the provision of reconciliation is essential for entrance into God's holy heaven, it is entirely the work of God. God says, "I will not let man have a part in this, because you can't. You can't provide anything to it. I do it all. Therefore it is irreversible. It is provided in perpetuity." A Christian cannot lose his reconciliation.

Now, you can see the ignorance that is out there among Christians. Because they don't understand these verses that we looked at in Romans that give us the basis of justification, and that give us the basis of our reconciliation, and that it is all a provision of God, they always think they can do something to undo what they had no part in doing in the first place. As the death of Jesus Christ for sin provides the believer with justification, so the resurrection life of Jesus Christ preserves him in salvation. It is because Christ lives that we are never going to be able to lose our salvation and die again.

John 14:19, "'After a little while,' Jesus said, 'the world will behold Me no more. But you will behold Me. Because I live, you shall live also." And there's no other way into heaven except through Jesus Christ.

Now, what in heaven's name are we muddling around about in our daily lives. We're moving through a society that is making its own religion. Jesus has told us that these people are off-base. Only a few of them are going to make it into heaven, simply because Christ is the only way. And He has said, "No man comes to the Father but through Me." The Muslims are never going to make it, no matter how many bumper stickers you see about Islam now on cars, being for peace and friendship. It is headed for the hell-hole of the lake of fire. The Hindus are never going to make it with their multiplicity of gods, and their concept of human potential godhood. The Mormons are not going to make it with their potential godhood aspirations. The Roman Catholics are never going to make it because of their works salvation, and their dependence upon Mary. And everything except justification as an instant act – a free gift from God. All the religions that require water baptism are never going to make it. All of the Eastern religions: Shintoism, Buddhism, and Taoism – none of them are going to make it into heaven.

However, you are. And you stand in the midst of such misrepresentation by even Christians themselves, because they're so untaught and so ignorant. And the average Christian does not know that if he walks into a church, and the preacher does not open his Bible to a book every Sunday, and proceed, verse-by-verse, to explain it, they should walk out the door and never come back. And a lot of people hear that said, and they recoil, and they reject it, because: "The preacher does that is so nice. And my husband just loves him. My wife just gets all oozy over him. I can't believe that this man is costing us our eternal welfare, either in salvation or in rewards." You better believe it, buddy. And when it takes a preacher time to go through the book, you know he's doing his job.

My daughter, Heidi, whose husband is now stationed in Virginia, are attending a little Baptist church. And she said, "As we as we got acquainted with the pastor, we found out that, on Sunday mornings he was teaching through the book of Revelation, and Sunday nights he was teaching through the book of Romans. And her husband said, "Oh no, we just got through with all that with Heidi's father, with the tapes we've been getting for years." And they said, "How long will it take you to go through Revelation?" And he said, "Probably five years." They said, "How long for Romans?" I don't know what he said. She said, "It took my father 12 years." "Well," I said, "one thing, Heidi: to signal that he's a student of the Word, and he's digging out the deep things of the Spirit of God. And he is not just going to preach the gospel to you. You are going to learn the mind of God so you can live your life by God's thinking. That's the magnificence of the Christian life.

Now, why on earth aren't we telling that to people? Why on earth aren't we standing by to pour everything we are and have to make that possible?

The news this morning and last night has demonstrated to us again how magnificence and power and prestige can be snapped out in an instant, and a life brought to an end: "Only when life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. And that's true when you're 36 too.

In Romans 8:11, we have this same principle: Because He lives (Christ lives), we're going to live. We're not going to lose this salvation, because of the way that it was structured, and the way we received it. Romans 8:11: "But if the Spirit of Him, Who raised Jesus from the dead, dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, Who indwells you." If you are a Christian, God the Holy Spirit indwells you. It is the Spirit of Christ. And because Jesus lives, that Spirit is going to resurrect you as well.

Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also, with Him, freely give us all things?" Now, why, in God's name are you standing around waiting for something to happen in life before you get going? He Who did not spare His Own Son (God the Father, Who did not spare His Own Son) – He delivered Him up for us all, with all the humiliation and suffering that was involved in that. And if that wasn't enough, because that gave you justification, He is now going to give you all things.

You might say, "Oh, but if I give my stuff away, I'll starve." No you won't. You'll just get fatter. He is not going to desert you. He is not going to leave you. And I'll guarantee you that this is the principle of what R. G. LeTourneau and others have said: "You cannot out-give God." One of the missionaries who died in Ecuador said, "Only a fool would try to hang onto that which he cannot keep." And your material possessions are only going to be kept as you spend them for God. "How will He not also, with Him, freely give us all things?" And when I say your material possessions are only going to be kept when you give them freely to God, I mean that's how you're going to keep them now for your use. And the ultimate removal of your material goods is when God takes a life. That's it. And you no longer have access to anything. Think what you might have done with it. You're going to live.

Romans 8:34 says, "Who is the one who condemns us? Christ Jesus is He who died. Yes, rather Who was raised, Who is at the right hand of God, Who also intercedes for us." What sad requests the Lord Jesus must have to make as He intercedes for us to defend us against the attacks of Satan, because we're failing to be what we should be, and do what we should do as Christians, as the children of God. And the devil is throwing it up into the face of God: "There he is. There he is – this wonderful Christian – cheapskate; self-centered; and, knowing justification, but look where they're living – right there in the world. They get up in the morning, and not like the example of our good friend Jack Smith that's focused on the things above: "What should I do, Lord? I'm just a groveling little twit down here on earth, moving from thing to thing in this world. And my life is not being poured out on the altar of sacrifice in His service.

1 Corinthians 15:22-23: "For as in Adam, all die. So also, in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; after that, those who are Christ at His coming."

Hebrews 7:25: "Hence also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him (through Christ), since He always lives to make intercession for them." What a travesty it is for Roman Catholics to be taught that they cannot have instant justification. They can only gradually accumulate it, all their lifetime, and out in purgatory, until finally, possibly they make it into heaven. And yet, God says, "Because Jesus lives, we will live." How can that be? Because He's done everything necessary for us to live forever in heaven. There is no question. We draw near to Him through Christ, and He thereafter makes intercession. We're under His protective custody.

The security in salvation of the reconciled believer produces a spirit of joyous exaltation. Romans 5:11: "And not only this, but we also exalt in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we now have received the reconciliation." A Christian who understands that he has been reconciled permanently and irrevocably to God's standard of righteousness, has a deep sense of relief – of appreciation of joy. The reconciled believer sleeps soundly at night, because he's not afraid if he dies during the night. The reconciled believer walks confidently by day through the devil's world, because the devil's power has been broken over him. A believer has no fear about his future destiny if he understands the doctrine of reconciliation. If he's reconciled, God is his friend. And God is going to take care of him, both now in an eternity. The reconciled person no longer has any cause to dread facing God. Therefore, he takes great delight and great joy in God, Whom he loves supremely. It is reconciliation (the understanding of what God has done for us in adjusting us to Himself) that gives us such overwhelming joy.

The assurance of reconciliation – it is the consequence of justification. The marvelous benefits of justification are a great comfort to the believer who has to continue living now with the sin nature. That's what's important about understanding justification: "I am, in the eyes of God, absolute righteousness, but I don't act like that. I don't think like that. I don't always live like that." It is a great comfort to the Christian who obviously sees his own daily evil that he has to deal with, and sees that he is, at the same time, completely justified, even in the midst of that evil. The believer's spiritual witness and moral fallibility tends to make him uneasy as to his destiny in eternity. And how easy it is to clear that up. Just show a person the inner circle and the outer circle diagram: the outer circle of eternal fellowship; and, the inner circle of temporal fellowship, maintained by confession of known sins. You never leave the outer circle: "I'm always saved. I'm always going to heaven." So, I do sin, but it doesn't put me into the fear of going into the lake of fire. And yet, most of the denominations that you're acquainted with, and that your relatives are in, have told them exactly that. They sin. The flames are there.

One of our men was speaking to a man recently, and of all things, the man was going to a Baptist church that was teaching him that he could lose his salvation. So, he asked him, "Well how does that happen?" He said, "Well, I sinned." Our man asked him, "Well, how much sin do you have to have? How serious?" And the man wasn't sure. I mean that's terrible. At least you should know what sins you shouldn't do to stay in. If you don't even know what sins you shouldn't mess with, you really have a problem. And then when he stepped up one more step, he said, "Well, how do you get back in salvation? Since Christ did not pay for that sin, obviously (the sin you committed took you out), He's going to have to die again to pay for that sin. But the Bible says that He can't sin again." Well, pretty soon, our man had this guy so frustrated that he just gave up.

Now, do you think that that poor little man is sitting in the church right now this morning where somebody is explaining the Bible to him, verse-by-verse, from a book of the Bible, and stopping to explain to him the great doctrines of the Word of God. Is he going to stop as we will stop in short order, and pull together a whole doctrine of reconciliation in about 20 points? Bing, bing, bing! You'll know what it says from one end of the Bible to the other. You can bet your booties that he isn't. He's sitting there being manipulated in his emotions, because he is not a student of the Word of God, because nobody's teaching it to him.

We, with our spiritual weaknesses, with that sin nature that's in us – we know that we are still justified. We need the assurance that our lack of consistency daily does not doom us to that lake of fire. These benefits of justification clearly remove any ground or foreboding or doubt as to a believer's ultimate destiny in heaven. We're not worried about that. We have been saved permanently from the guilt of sin. We are being saved from the power of sin, through the power of the Spirit of God, and we shall be saved, in time, from the whole presence of sin. It's all coming.

All of this is made possible because God can now pour forth His love to those who believe in Christ. He can grace us out without limit. The Bible tells us, as you know, that God is not willing that any should perish. He's doing everything he can to keep you from perishing in the lake of fire. That is His mission. That is His desire. And He has left no stone unturned to make that possible. God wants to pour forth his love, but he has to have a target. There's only one thing that God can love. Here you are. Here is the love of God. And that love wants to be directed to you. How will it get there? Only if you have the target. And there's only one target: absolute righteousness. It's the only thing that God loves: His own perfection – His Own absolute righteousness. Now that's kind of sobering, isn't it?

What does the unbeliever have? Does he have that? No. He doesn't have that at all. So, the love of God that is potentially there for him cannot be expressed. He does not experience the love of God. How about the Christian who's out of the inner circle? He's out of the inner circle. So, he is out of the position of absolute righteousness functioning. Can God love him? No, because he's out of the circle of inner fellowship. He's not under the love of God. Can you realize what that means? How many of your friends and relatives are constantly walking outside of the love of God? They've got great physical problems, and great agonies. And they're calling on God. God's love wants to help him, but He can't. Why? Because there is no target of absolute righteousness for the love to hit. That target is not there. Your problems are not going to go. You're going to stay in your misery.

**God's Love and Wrath**

It's the integrity of God that governs all of his dealings, you must remember, with mankind. His holiness is never compromised. Before Adam and Eve sinned, their point of contact was God's love, with all of its consequent blessings. They were fully graced out. But once they sinned, the point of contact with God was no longer His love. It was His justice. And consequently, the wrath of God came down upon them.

Now, which do you want to be under? Do want to be in contact with God inn His love? Or do you want to be in contact with God in His justice? If you are not in contact with God's love as an unbeliever, because you do not have absolute righteousness, then you will come in contact with His absolute justice. And you will spend the wrath of God experience in lake of fire. If you are a Christian who is out of temporal fellowship, and the result will be that you are now not able to be treated in love by God, but you'll be treated by His justice. And as a result will be discipline – miserable discipline in your life. And you'll be wondering: "Why is this happening to me? Why are things going like this? What is this whole miserable life I'm in: this problem; and, this problem? The love of God could do so much for me." Get into the inner circle of absolute righteousness. Then God's target of love will be able to hit you. Get into the place where you are in fellowship with Him. Adam and Eve could have nothing but the justice of God.

Love always has to be exercised on the basis of justice, or it degenerates into an evil in itself. That's what we must remember. A love which is not exercised in justice will degenerate into an evil itself. That's what happens on the human plane. You tell me: what happens when a parent exercises love toward a child which is not based upon justice in dealing with that child's actions. That child does something outrageous. That child does something evil. That child steps out of line. And you comfort him, and look the other way. And you do not deal with the justice that is required first so that you can exercise love. If you exercise love without having exercised the justice, you corrupt the child. And consequently, that child bears the bitterness – the bitter result of your foolish love. Love cannot permit a child to get away with wrongdoing. It will destroy the character of the child. Love can only be free to function in the child's life when the wrong that he has done has been punished, and justice has been met.

What happens in society here in America today? Society is destroying itself because it's acting in love toward evildoers instead of acting in justice toward them. And our jails are filled with people who ought to have been executed for what they did. And our society is filled with people who have been turned loose by liberal judges, who should be under punishment for what they have done, but justice has been ignored, and human good love has been substituted for it. And consequently, American society is on the slippery slope to its own moral destruction. And I doubt that anybody can turn it around, and climb back up.

Sweetness and light is what the sin nature likes to crank out, and seeks to bypass the realities of sin in people. Well, that's how people do it. But I can guarantee you that the Word of God makes it very clear that God will not compromise His integrity. He's not going to become unholy so that we can be blessed with His love when we deserve His discipline. Justice is always going to be met first. Then God has a target for His love: His absolute righteousness functioning.

Today, a lost sinner's point of contact with God, therefore, is the justice of God. And that's why the unsaved person is under the wrath of God. And because he's under the wrath of God, he can't do anything to be saved. And he can't do anything to keep his salvation.

John 3:18, "He who believes in Him is not judged." Justice has been met, so God's love is ready to be poured out, "But he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in name of the Only Begotten Son of God." And God's justice says that those of you who have not believed in Christ – you will spend eternity in the lake of fire. God would rather love you, and take you up into His arms, and take you into His heaven. But He can't extend love when there's no target for it. His absolute righteousness is what He loves.

Look at John 3:36: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life. But He who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides in him." How do you obey the Son? You obey by what He said: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." That's what the Son has said to do. If you do not obey Him in that, and trust in Him, you are doomed.

After a lost sinner believes in Christ as Savior, he then comes under the fullness of the love of God. Once a sinner is reconciled to God's justice, he has God's love functioning toward him, because there is no threat to God's integrity in that relationship. God can express his love for believers because God loves His own holiness, which He now sees in the believer to whom He has credited His own absolute righteousness. And so the believer is reconciled to God. Because justice has been met, and God has been satisfied, and the believer has been declared absolute righteousness, now he is compatible with the character of God, and there is no blessing that He will withhold from you.

If you're going to teach your young children anything (your youngsters), this is what you need to get across to them. And never let them get involved in something that denigrates, in any way, the understanding of what justification is, and how justice is the way that God deals with us. Now, how are you supposed to act? You don't know unless somebody has taught you the Word of God.

I've talked to a couple of our men. I want to replace the sign that we have for: "Now Enrolling at Berean Christian Academy" with something to the effect that says: "Berean Memorial Church" on a stiff frame out there: "We teach the Bible every Sunday, verse-by-verse, so that people can have the mind of God to guide them in their daily living. Morning service, 11:00 AM. Evening service, 7:30 PM." When they see that "7:30 PM," they're going to say, "Ooh, what kind of a place is this? Churches don't have evening services. Or they get them early enough so you can still hit the evening movie. And when they see "verse-by-verse," they'll say, "Whoa. Wait a minute. What kind of a church is that? Who preaches through a book verse-by-verse? Why would they do that?" And when the see "The mind of God," they'll say, "Now, I'd like that, to use in my daily living for decision making. I'd like that." Maybe it'll trigger some anointed person to say, "Aha. So, that's the way it is." And if you sit in a church service, and let your youngster sit in a church service where it's all hullabaloo, and topical preaching, and jumping around, and always zeroing in on the gospel, you are teaching them to denigrate their own potential as the servants of the Most High God, and the honors and privileges appertaining to being a member of the body of Christ. And don't think that that's not going to be brought up at the Judgment Seat of Christ. I can guarantee you it will be.

So, parents should be alerted for their youngsters, as well as they should for themselves, as to what is involved in this business of reconciliation. The blessings which God's love could bestow on you and your family are restricted by His justice, which must deal with our sin, whether we are outside of the family of God. Our sin problem then is our refusal to accept the covering of Christ. If we are in the family of God, our refusal is to confess and make right what is wrong in the life. The unbeliever's contact with God must first be with divine justice, and only then will he experience the love of God.

So, learn to distinguish between the blessings that come from being related to God in the right way, and from being reconciled to God. When you are reconciled to His standard, enormous blessings are yours. But you know what's deceptive? You can create a lot of blessings for yourself. All it takes is a little money. I've been reassured again by the sweepstakes people that I am next on the list. They send it to me. I've had my third communication now. They're kicking in with – I think it's $20 million this time. I've told them exactly how I want it: what quantity; and, so on. But then I have to think: "What am I going to do with that? How am I going to handle that?" I don't know how to live that way. I don't know how to live with that kind of unmitigated potential. The evil world has all that power all the time. And suddenly, for a group of believers who know what it's all about, and propagating the Word of God, to have unlimited financial capacity?

Well, I could create a lot of happiness for myself and say, "Isn't it wonderful how God is blessing me." No, it isn't. I just got the money so I can do it. That's one thing about being poor. When God comes through with the funds, and when I can pay the salaries in Berean Christian Academy, I know that God has blessed me. If I could just dip into my own account and pay it, well, I would consider him blessing me, even if He didn't replenish the account. But if it's an unending account? You have to be careful to distinguish when you have prospered yourself, and you have created a happy blessing for yourself, and when it has actually been when God has prospered you, and when God has promoted you, and your happiness is really divine happiness. There are always Christians who make the mistake to think that if they promote themselves, there have been promoted. No, you haven't. If God hasn't promoted you, you haven't been promoted. And these external things are not the sigh.

I understand exactly what Jack Smith is talking about: living in Christ; eyes on the Lord; it's a lifestyle which is all too rare among Christians, but at least those of you who attend this congregation have the information given to you every service to make it possible to do that, and then to be prospered, not by yourself, but by God. And it's all built upon maintaining your own integrity. You have been reconciled to God's standard. Now, act accordingly.

Furthermore, do not ask other people to do something which compromises their integrity. That won't bring you real prosperity and happiness if they do it. You'd be surprised how often I'm asked to do something that's a compromise of integrity that somebody wants done. If you ask somebody to compromise their integrity, it will cost you your prosperity and your happiness. It'll turn to ashes in your mouth.

What you should do is follow God's example: deal only on the basis of that which is compatible to your reconciliation, to His standard of absolute righteousness. And then expect other believers to do the same.

Reconciliation is a great, great position that is ours just because God loved us, and because we have His absolute righteousness so that he can love us, and He wants to do this for us. And out of that reconciliation, here we are, hand-in-hand, with God our Father. Instead of going through this world living with your Father, you're hand-in-hand with the world. Do you want to live with them? You can be walking through life as a friend of God.

Every now and then, somebody in the Bible, like David, is described as "a friend of God." How many of us could qualify for that? Just living with my Heavenly Father. And do you know what? If you grasp the consequences of justification, your reconciliation to Him, so that you really start living with your Heavenly Father, nobody's going to have to tell you to pray. How many times does a child who lives with his mother and father have to be told: “Ask your parents for something?” Talk to your parents about this problem." That is a natural thing to do. And I've discovered that the more you live in the enclave of the presence of your Father, as you're walking through your day, the more you're going to be talking to Him. And thus you will fulfill the biblical admonition: pray without ceasing.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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