

Lesson Fifteen

THE INTERPRETER'S HOUSE #7 - The Man in the Iron Cage

We have met again this evening to continue our study in the book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, written by John Bunyan. We have progressed thus far in our study of the book to the House of the Interpreter, and we have gone through five rooms in this house. In the first room we encountered a picture of a sober man that was hanging on the wall which represented the role of a true minister of the gospel. The second room was the dusty parlor where the young convert learned the differences between the law and the gospel, how they are related to each other, and yet in many aspects are distinct from one another. Then we went into the third room where we saw the two young children named Patience and Passion, who represented two different types of characters in the world—the first one who would have everything now, and the next one who was content to have his reward in the world to come. In the next room, we saw a man with a bucket pouring water on a fire in an effort to put it out, and on the other side of the wall, we saw a man pouring oil at the base of the wall into the fire. Here the young convert learned of the sustaining ministry of the Holy Spirit. This confirmed his hope that since God had begun a good work in him, He would keep on by His sustaining grace until he enters into the Celestial City. Then in our last setting, we saw the stately palace where a Valiant Man set forth with the determination that he was going to enter into that palace. Here we learned about the cost of a godly life. That is, it is going to cost us something to be a Christian, in the sense that persecution, tribulations, trials, the world the flesh and the devil are going to be against you. There is going to be a battle that will be fought, not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and wickedness in high places. The Valiant Man determined that he was going to enter into that stately palace, so he went up and said **"Set down my name, Sir"** and as a result of his determination which was brought about by the Holy Spirit, he was enabled to enter.

Tonight, we come to the sixth room. The other five rooms have conveyed very hopeful pictures. They have been joyous in the sense that there was encouragement and joy. There was expectation, happiness, and so forth that those figures represented. But all of the Bible is not situated like this. In other words, there are some portions of Scripture that give a very fearful tone, and Bunyan, being very faithful to the Scriptures, portrayed this for us in tonight's passage. In another room we see a man in despair in an iron cage. It is a very depressing scene, and Christian wants to get away from him very quickly. Perhaps even tonight you will want to pass on very quickly from this room. But there is a

reason for this, and if we are going to go forward in our journey toward the Celestial City, we must be made aware of what this portrays. I will read to you now in the account of this portion in Bunyan's book.

Now, said Christian, let me go hence. Nay, stay, said the Interpreter, till I have showed thee a little more, and after that thou shalt go on thy way. So he took him by the hand again, and led him into a very dark room, where there sat a man in an iron cage.

Now the man, to look on, seemed very sad; he sat with his eyes looking down to the ground, his hands folded together; and he sighed as if he would break his heart.

Then said Christian, What means this? At which the Interpreter bid him talk with the man.

Then said Christian to the man, What are thou?

The man answered, I am what I was not once.

Chr. What wast thou once?

The man said, I was once a fair and flourishing professor, both in mine own eyes, and also in the eyes of others: I once was, as I thought, fair for the celestial city, and had then even joy at the thoughts that I should get thither.

Chr. Well, but what art thou now?

Man. I am now a man of despair, and am shut up in it, as in this iron cage. I cannot get out. O now I cannot!

Chr. But how camest thou into this condition?

***Man. I left off to watch and be sober; I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts; I sinned against the light of the word, and the goodness of God; I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone; I tempted the devil, and he is come to me; I have provoked God to anger, and he has left me: I have so hardened my heart, that I cannot repent.
Then said Christian to the Interpreter, But is there no hope for such a man as this?***

Ask him, said the Interpreter.

Then said Christian, Is there no hope, but you must be kept in the iron cage of despair?

Man. No, none at all.

Chr. Why? The Son of the Blessed is very pitiful.

Man. I have crucified him to myself afresh; I have despised his person, I have despised his righteousness, I have counted his blood an unholy thing; I have done despite to the Spirit of grace: therefore I have shut myself out of all the promises, and there now remains to me nothing but threatenings, dreadful threatenings, faithful threatenings, of certain judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour me as an adversary.

Chr. For what did you bring yourself into this condition?

Man. For the lusts, pleasures, and profits of this world; in the enjoyment of which I did then promise myself much delight: but now every one of those things also bite me, and gnaw me like a burning worm.

Chr. But canst thou not now repent and turn?

Man. God hath denied me repentance. His word gives me no encouragement to believe; yea, himself hath shut me up in this iron cage: nor can all the men in the world let me out. O eternity! eternity! How shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in eternity!

Then said the Interpreter to Christian, Let this man's misery be remembered by thee, and be an everlasting caution to thee.

Well, said Christian this is fearful! God help me to watch and be sober, and to pray that I may shun the cause of this man's misery. Sir, is it not time for me to go on my way now?

I want us to note carefully at the latter part of this, that the Interpreter says to Christian, ***"Let this man's misery be remembered by thee and be an everlasting caution to you."***

What is this fearful, discouraging, depressing scene that we have before us, and what

value is there in it for any true saying of God. Simply said, this scene sets forth the warning and misery of apostasy. I will say that again. It describes the warning and misery of apostasy. We are not talking about a temporal fall into sin. We are not talking about our day-to-day dealing with sin. We are talking about those who would go back and apostatize by denying anything to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. It involves those who have once embraced the principles of the gospel, but have now turned against them. The principle that is taught by Bunyan is there is nothing but misery that lies ahead for them.

The scene of the Man in the Iron Cage describes the warning and misery of apostasy of those who go back and deny anything to do with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want us to look at this carefully and then look at several Scriptures. In fact, we are going to spend most of the message dealing with the Scriptures that set this forth. This is a very sad thing about a man in an iron cage who can't get out. We are reminded of a similar account at the beginning of the book called the Slough of Despond. Remember that before a person was converted, he might get into a depressed state of mind. This saddened Christian when he saw the man in the iron cage, and he asked him, "what he was."

The man said, "I was once a fair professor." Notice that he does not say, "I was a possessor, or a true believer." He says, "I professed the Christian religion, and others thought I was a good Christian. But in all of this, I have now changed."

And now Christian said, "What are you now?"

He said, "I am now a man of despair shut up in this cage and I can't get out."

Christian says, "Well, how did you get into such a condition as this?"

He said, "I left off to watch and I gave myself over to the lust of the flesh, the world, and so forth. I have grieved the Holy Spirit, and now He is gone. I have tempted the devil and have provoked God to anger. He has left me, and now my spiritual state is such that I have

so hardened my heart that I cannot repent."

This troubled the Christian with what he has already learned that God is a merciful God. He has already learned that the sustaining work of the Holy Spirit will keep all true believers until they reach the Celestial City. So he turns to the Holy Spirit (the Interpreter), and asks him this question, **"is there no hope for such a man as this?"**

Notice very carefully beloved, the Holy Spirit does not give His assessment of the situation, but says, **"ask the man."** When Christian asks the man, **"is there no hope?"** The man says, **"No, none at all,** there is no hope." However, that is not God's assessment of the situation. A man may get himself into such a condition in thinking there is no hope like the individual did in the Slough of Despondency. If you should ever come across a person in this condition, there is always hope by offering him or her the free mercy of God in the gospel. Now this man in the cage was in such a condition that the Bible, the gospel, or the messengers that came from God, gave him absolutely no hope or promises whatsoever. He read the Bible but could find no promises for him. Therefore, he found himself in a terrible condition of despair. The Christian asked, "Why don't you repent and go to Jesus and ask Him to be forgiven of this terrible act?" He said, **"I have crucified Him to myself afresh; I have despised His person, . . .I have done despite to the Spirit of grace,** and now when I go to the Bible and pray, I come in contact with nothing but a fiery judgment. There is no hope, and **God has denied me repentance."** Notice again, this is the man's assessment of the situation, it is not God's assessment of the situation. That is, this man feels in his own condition that there is no hope for him, but we know there is always hope with God. Jesus said, **"with men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."** (Mark 10:27).

Before we actually get into the Scriptures which give us a warning and show us the misery of apostasy, lets look again at the first paragraph we read tonight. Christian has been through five rooms and has probably learned more than many individuals learn in five years in the average church today. However, he is now ready for action and says to the Interpreter, **"let me go hence."** He is stating that he has learned all this and is ready to go. He is saying, "Let me loose." The Interpreter says, "Nay, wait just a minute, **tarry till I shall show thee one thing more, and then thou shalt go on thy way."** This reminds

me so much of new converts today when they get a little bit of teaching, and then have no more time for learning. They need action. As a result, they have no time any more for Bible study, no time for prayer, no time for communion with God. They just want action, action, action. They say, "lets go, go, go and get involved in this activity for the Lord, and let's go over here and do this and this and this." As a result, what happens? They lose their communion with the Lord. This is a very important thing. When the convert says, "Now, let me go, I have learned all I need to learn now, let me into the action," the Interpreter says, "wait just a minute, there are a few more things you need to learn before you are ready to go into your course of battle."

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action at the expense of learning and communing with God, Bible study and prayer, it is eventually going to falter and come short of that which God desires. May you and I learn tonight that no matter how busy we may become in the Lord's business, if we leave off our Bible study and prayer and communing, it will not be long before we will become as dry as dust in our service that we are so active in. So never let your activity for the Lord interfere with your communion with the Lord.

In connection with the gospel, the Bible sets forth several warnings against unbelief and departing from the living God. I won't comment on all of these passages of Scripture. If you have your Bibles, open them, and we are going to look at these passages, because the same Bible that sets forth **"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"** and gives so many great and precious promises, in connection with those promises, that same Bible gives some severe warnings. We would not be true to the Bible if we did not cover all of them, or if we only preached part and did not cover the other part. Let's look at some of these verses in the Bible.

I Corinthians 9:24-27 - The Apostle says, **"Know ye not that they which run in a**

race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." This is quoted by probably the greatest

Christian of all times, none other than the Apostle Paul. In my personal estimation, he is second to Jesus Christ Himself, and is the greatest preacher on grace. Paul had more enlightenment and understanding into the things of God, setting forth free grace and free justification in this passage, and yet he is setting forth this, **"I keep my body under subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself have become a castaway."** There has been a lot of discussion on this word, "castaway." It is translated in other places in the New Testament as "disapproved." So what was the Apostle talking about when he said that "I keep my body under subjection unless I prove to be a castaway?" Some believe that Paul is not talking about his personal salvation, but he is talking about the rewards he will gain by giving faithful service unto the Lord. That is the view which is taken by Dr. C. I. Scofield in his footnotes in the *Scofield Reference Bible*. Here is his statement:

The Apostle is writing of service, not of salvation. He is not expressing fear that he may fail of salvation, but of his crown.

When Paul says, **"I keep my body under subjection,"** this is one view that would be a sound interpretation, but there is one thing that puts a "monkey wrench" into this, and that is the word **"castaway."** Scofield does not point out that the word "castaway" is translated "reprobate" about six times elsewhere in the New Testament." A reprobate is one who is forsaken or cast off by God; one in whom God leaves to himself to go his own way. So if this be the case, the Apostle is talking about far more than just the matter of his rewards. That is, to lose a few rewards is one thing, but to be a reprobate from the faith is another thing. So I think that in this text, Paul was setting forth his concern that when he was preaching to others about his faith in Christ, he exhibited an example of running a good and Godly race, and that he was a possessor, and not just a professor of his faith.

In II Corinthians 13:5, Paul is writing to this same church, when he says, **"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your**

own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Reprobate is the same word, *Dokimos* (or castaway) he used in I Corinthians, that is, if Jesus Christ truly dwells in a person as one of God's chosen people, then he is not a reprobate. However, if Jesus Christ does not dwell in a person, which is the mark of a person who has been left to himself to do what he would do with his life, then that person is a reprobate.

It is a most horrible thing for God to turn a person over to a reprobate mind. We often talk about the will of man, but one of the most horrible things that God can do for a person is to let a person have his own will. This is as if God is saying, "You don't want my Son or to have anything to do with Me, therefore I will let you go your way." If you will look through the New Testament, you will see that a reprobate is defined as "a person who God leaves alone and allows to go his own way."

Now lets go to John chapter 8 to show that the New Testament makes a difference between "true saving faith" and "temporal faith" that may spring up for the moment, but then will turn against the Lord. This is an important text of scripture. There are several others that could be used, but time will not permit us to view them all. In the New Testament there is found such a thing as a temporal faith, a faith that is not rooted in the Holy Spirit by regeneration, but a faith that is strictly external. This temporal faith can be likened to a plant that grows on a rock and has no root or does not have good ground. In John chapter 8 we will see an example of some people who made professions of faith in Christ, and yet before the day was over, they ended up throwing stones and tried to kill Him. Starting in John 8:28 - ***"Then said Jesus unto them, 'When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things. and He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.'"*** Notice carefully verse 30. ***"As He spake these words, many believed on Him."*** You may ask, "Pastor Gables, are these not true Christians? Were they not converted, were they not saved at this point?" Now lets look how Jesus deals with these who made this profession of faith. ***"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, 'If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed.'"*** He is not saying, "if you continue to keep My words, then you will be a Christian," but He is saying, "if you continue in My word, it will prove that you have truly embraced Me and have become one of My

disciples." In other words, Jesus is stating His suspicion regarding these professions. Remember, the Lord knows the heart. You and I know the outward appearance, but only the Lord knows the heart. He knew the heart of a Judas. Now look at these individuals as He goes on to speak to them. **"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."** These are the same people who the Bible said believed on Him. **"They answered Him, 'We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?' Jesus answered them, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.'"** Now look over in verse 37: **"I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill Me, because My word hath no place in you."** Now remember these are the same people that the Bible said believed on Jesus just a few minutes before. Now Jesus said this to these same people, **"My word has no place in you."** They said, "We are descendants of Abraham. We are one of God's people. We are the Jews, Abraham is our father." Jesus said, **"I know that you are Abraham's seed, but you seek to kill Me because My word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with My Father and you do that which you have seen with your father.' They answered and said unto Him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus saith unto them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham, but now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I have heard of God, This did not Abraham. You do the deeds of your father.' Then said they unto Him, 'We be not born of fornication, we have one father, even God.' And Jesus said unto them, 'If God were your father, you would love Me for I proceeded forth and came from God, neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Even because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.'"**

Again, be reminded that these are the same people that just a few minutes ago it was recorded that when Jesus spake these words, **"many believed on Him."** Now notice He says to this same group, **"Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on Him, 'You are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father you will do.'"** Now surely no one can make the statement, "you are of your father the devil" to any child of God. Here is a group of people who made a temporary profession of faith that Jesus was the Messiah, but yet they had no understanding of their sin. They said, "we are not in bondage to any man." We are Abraham's seed, and how then do you say, we shall be made

free, and Jesus said, "Whoever commits sin, is the servant of sin." Now look down in verse 58 in the remainder of this chapter about this same group of people. **"Jesus said unto them, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.' Then took they up stones to cast at Him."** Here is a group of people who had made a profession of faith in Christ but ended up trying to kill the very one who they said they believed in. Here is one of many examples that could be used in the New Testament, in which it is recorded of people who externally identify with a profession of faith, but have not actually been made partakers of an internal quickening work of the Holy Spirit of God.

That brings us to this point. There is a work of the Holy Spirit which stops short of salvation. Think on that for a moment. There is a ministry of the Holy Spirit which does not result in regeneration and conversion. This is what produces many temporal illuminations by individuals. That is, not all people that experience a work of the Holy Spirit are converted. There is a convicting and enlightening work of the Holy Spirit which comes up to conversion but it does not result in an effectually converted person.

Look in Hebrews chapter 6 to see an example of this. There are several texts that we could use, but because of time's sake, we must limit it to this one text: This is a very sobering thing. Look at Hebrews 6, beginning in verse 4, **"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,"** (the phrase "made partakers means they "went along") **"And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."** Now look carefully at verse 9 - **"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you,"** (that is you Hebrews) **"and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."**

This is a very sobering passage of Scripture. Many of the Jews in the time of Christ embraced the teachings of the Lord, leaving the Old Testament principles of worship, the

priesthood and the sacrifices, but as time went along and persecution came upon the scene, many of those renounced the Lord and went back to the old system of Judaism worship, and offering the sacrifices in the temple. The writer of Hebrews wrote this letter to deal with this situation. Many were returning to Judaism, leaving the principles of grace and going back to the Old Testament rituals and system of worship. But now notice that here is a work of the Holy Spirit. If you will look carefully, you will see some distinctions between that of a true converted person and that of one who is not. The verse says, **"It is impossible for those who were once enlightened."** That is, they were given an understanding of the message of Christ and the gospel as distinct from the heathen who had never heard the message.

"And have tasted of the heavenly gift." It does not say that they swallowed it like Jeremiah did, and it became part of their system, but they have tasted of the good things of God. They went along, or were made partakers and carried along with the ministry of the Holy Spirit in convicting them of their sin and so forth. They had tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come. They had a glimpse of heaven and a glimpse of what it means to be a godly individual. But now notice the warning is this - **"if that person shall fall away,"** here is what the consequences are. It is impossible **"to renew them again unto repentance seeing they crucify to themselves the son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame."** I believe the writer of Hebrews was Paul, and he is giving a warning to these Hebrews Christians. Let me paraphrase what he wrote.

Now you have seen many of your very own go back, but he says, **"Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you."** That is, things that accompany salvation. We are persuaded that you had more than just an illuminating work, that you have actually been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and that He is now living within you so that you cleave unto the principles of grace. Don't go back to that old priest, don't go back to that sacrifice because there is no longer any efficacy in that. It is in Jesus now. Don't turn your back against Him and go back into the rudiments of the things of the world.

I wish we had more time to deal with this, but we must go on to several other passages of Scripture which set forth a warning to those in this professing group. I don't know everyone's heart here tonight, but I am authorized by God to give you the promises of the gospel. **"Whosoever will, let him come."** (See Revelation 22:17). You know your heart, but I don't. Even with this group that is here tonight, there are warnings to be said. That is because I do not know who is here and is a possessor. We are commanded by God to give you warning lest you also turn against the Lord. You say, "I hope I would never do

that." If you are a true child of God, you will never apostatize. You may stumble on the Rock, you may fall into sin, but you will never apostatize because the work of grace is pouring the oil on the fire. But if you are not a true child of God, there will come a time in which your profession will be relinquished, and you will deny the Lord. You will go back into the things of the world and have nothing to do with the Lord anymore. That is a sad, sad thing. These warnings are addressed to Christians at large. They are given promises and warnings to cleave unto the promises that are in the gospel.

Look in I Corinthians 10, ***"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;"*** (Now notice this term, "ALL.") ***"And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them;"*** (now notice that it is no longer "all" but "SOME") ***"as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."*** With this great group that left Egypt, some of them were destroyed in the wilderness and it is given the reasons why. The Bible gives us this warning, ***"they are written for our admonition."*** or "for our example that we might not follow after them."

Turn to II Peter 1 starting in verse 3 - ***"According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."***

Notice there are great and precious promises given unto us who have been called by God. But now notice in verse 10: ***"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."*** If you look into the verses in between those two verses, you will see ***"giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."***

So Peter says, "Examine yourself, that is, give diligence to make your calling, your regeneration, your new birth and your election sure, because if you do these things, you shall never fall." So here is Peter's warning to these professing Christians. Remember that Peter had to write to a group because he did not know the hearts, only God knows the heart, so he had to deal with people on strictly an external basis.

There is another passage of Scripture in Hebrews 3:12 - Now remember here is a warning to "brethren." ***"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."*** Some would like to turn that around and make it read like this: "You will be saved if you will do these things unto the end." But now notice, that is not what it says. Look at it carefully. The writer says, "we are Christians if we hold steadfast our faith unto the end." In other words, it proves what we already are. It is not, if you do this, then you will become this, but it says, if you have been made a partaker of Christ, we will hold steadfast our confidence unto the end. So when we come to the Lord in faith, it is a beginning of an experience in which the Bible describes as ***"the just shall live by faith."*** It is not just a "one-time thing," but it is a principle of life that is implanted within us that enables us to lay hold upon these great and precious promises which are in the Gospel.

Hebrews 10:26 - ***"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the***

knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." I wish I had time to deal with that. This is not talking about an individual sin that a Christian commits, but it is talking about the Hebrews, who after knowing there was salvation in Jesus Christ in His once-and-for-all sacrifice, would turn their back upon that and willfully go back to offering sacrifices in the temple. This is a warning to any person who would apostatize and deny the person and work of the Lord.

Look down in verse 38 of the same chapter. **"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."** But the writer qualifies it in verse 39 - **"But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."** That is, we are not of those who are being persuaded to go back into the Old Testament rituals in denying the perfect work of Christ on the cross. We are not one of those who would profess faith in Christ and then go back into those things, but we are those who believe to the saving of the soul. We have our hope which is sure, fast and anchored in the rock, Christ Jesus.

Look in Hebrews 12:25 - **"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."** Look at verse 28: **"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire."** All through the book of Hebrews, there has been a warning, and an encouragement. There are certain promises in the gospel, **"Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."** (John 6:37). The simplest child that believes that promise becomes a Christian, and because of the work of grace, that person shall always remain a Christian and shall enter safely into the fold. But lest there be someone who would just externally profess faith in Christ, and then at a later time deny that, then the warning is that you no longer have a basis for assurance. That is, the only basis for assurance is to those who are believing the promise of God.

Let me say this regarding my own personal experience. If you say, "Pastor Gables, how do you know that you are saved?" My answer is, I know I love the Lord, and I know that Christ died on the cross for my sins. I know secondly that I have been made partaker

of an experience of a work of grace which I cannot explain. I know that when my faith remains small, and I stumble and fall, there is something that picks me up and keeps me going. I know because of this, that the work of God on the cross, and the work of God in my heart, are harmonizing together, and the promises of God are sweet and pure and refreshing to me when I go to the Bible and to Him in prayer. But Beloved, there is a warning given. Do not think that a person who despises those promises and says, "there is nothing in Jesus Christ and in His work for me," that person will have any basis for a Biblical assurance that he is one of His. So we conclude that we should serve God reverently with fear, because "our God is a consuming fire."

How many of you here tonight can tell me what the beginning of wisdom is? **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,"** (Psalm 111:10), and it is that which brings us to see the precious promise that we lay hold in Jesus Christ. Because our God is a consuming fire we dare not trust in anything else for our salvation other than what Jesus has done on the cross and is doing in our life. We dare not go back to those Old Testament sacrifices. We dare not go back to some other Grecian philosophy or pagan encounter of salvation. We must believe those promises.