

MCLEAN BIBLE CHURCH
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>> LON SOLOMON: It's great to be together studying the word of God as the McLean Bible Church family. Two weeks ago we began a four-part mini-series within our study of the book of Genesis entitled our salvation in Jesus Christ. And in part 1, we talked about how our salvation works. And we learned that the answer to that question is imputed righteousness. Which means that when we believe in Jesus Christ, we really don't become righteous, we're sinners through and through still.

But God -- Genesis 5:6 -- credits our account with righteousness, not a righteousness that you and I earn by our own human effort, but with the righteousness that Jesus purchased for us on the cross and that God deposits into our account as a gift.

And then in part 2, we learn that as followers of Jesus Christ, our salvation in Christ, our imputed righteousness, our place in heaven is eternally secure. That when we give our lives to Jesus Christ, we are irreversibly saved, irretrievably saved for all of time in community, regardless what we do or don't do here on earth from that point forward. Praise the Lord and hallelujah.

Now, however, all of that left us with some lingering questions that we're going to talk about today. You know, we sang a moment ago one of my favorite hymns, and that hymn of course is "come thou font of every blessing" this hymn was written by a man named Richard Robinson. And shortly after coming to Christ he wrote this song. But then something went horribly wrong in Mr. Robinson's life. He began to go back and drink again. Hard. He began to swear profusely and to live profanely. And to disavow all connection with Jesus Christ for years. He spent time away from the Lord.

And one day he got into a stage coach. And as they were riding along, a young lady in the coach looked up and said to him, sir, listen to this wonderful poem. And she began to read, come thou font of every blessing to my heart to sing thy grace.

And Robinson sat there in stunned silence until finally the young lady reached the words "prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love." And unable to contain himself any longer, he blurted out, madam, I am the poor soul who wrote those words. And I would give a thousand lifetimes if I could get back to the feelings I had then.

Just a complete -- to complete the story, Robinson never did return to an active walk with Jesus Christ. Now, what do we do with this? I mean, did this man lose his salvation? Did Robinson -- did he fall from grace? What in the world happened?

And what about a person who claims to be a follower of Jesus Christ but their Christian life isn't what it ought to be? And what about a person who claims to be a follower of Christ but then they turn their back on Jesus and they just walk away? And are we saying that because our salvation is eternally secure, it really doesn't matter the kind of life we live here on earth as Christians? And what if I lose the feeling like Richard Robinson did, does that mean I've lost my salvation? These are the questions that we want to answer today. So are you ready? Yes.

Okay. Here we go. Question No. 1, what about a person who claims to be a follower of Christ, but their Christian life isn't what it ought to be?

You know, a follower of Christ who goes right on living la vita loca, the person who never does establish a distinctively Christ-like lifestyle? Is that person's salvation still eternally secure? Well, the problem with this question is that it's based on a faulty understanding of God's plan of salvation.

You see, when it comes to our salvation, the Bible is clear that human good works have nothing to do with it before or after we're saved. Listen to Romans 3:20. It says therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the Old Testament law, by human good works, by human religious activity. So how does a person become righteous in God's sight? Well, we've already learned about this. The next verse says, but now a righteousness from God, an imputed righteousness from God, which is apart from human performance, has been made known to us. This imputed righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Ephesians 2:8 says, for it is by grace that you have been saved through faith, it is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not the result of human works.

Friends, the point is this: We didn't get our salvation through good performance, and we can't lose it through bad performance. Through our Christian life not being everything it ought to be. Our salvation is the undeserved grace of God from start to finish.

Now, this idea that we get our salvation through faith in Christ but we keep it by performing good works and religious activity, this is not a new idea. As a matter of fact, we find this idea right in the New Testament. This was the problem the believers in Galatia were having. And look at what Paul wrote and said to them, you foolish Galatians, tell me one thing. Did you receive eternal life by observing the law, by good works, by religious activity, or by believing God's promise by faith? Well, of course it was the latter.

Next verse, are you so foolish, Paul says, having begun by the spirit, and by God's grace, are you now being perfected by the works of the flesh? Paul says, what's wrong with you guys? You didn't get your salvation by good works or religious activity, by the works of the flesh, so why would you try to maintain your salvation by the works of the flesh?

Friends, the bottom line is not -- not only is it the grace of God that saves us, it is the grace of God that keeps us saved, not our Christian lives being what they ought to be. Besides, whose Christian life is ever what it ought to be? Not mine. For sure. And not yours either.

You say, Lon, wait a minute. Before you go commenting on what my Christian life is, how do you know anything about my Christian life?

Lon, as a matter of fact, I don't smoke or drink or cuss or chew or hang around with them which do. So how do you know anything about my Christian life? Maybe you don't. But hey, do you look at women? Hey, do you gossip? Do you think and say evil things about other people? You say never. The boss? Okay. Enough said. (Laughter)

Do you speed? Do you roll stop signs? Do you covet shoes and purses as you walk through the mall? (Laughter)

Of course you do. We all do. Friends, listen. If the only followers of Christ who got into heaven were those whose Christian lives are what they ought to be, heaven would be empty. There would be nobody in heaven.

The reason there are people in heaven is because, as 2 Timothy 2:13 says, even if we are faithless, God remains faithful. He cannot deny who

he is. Praise God for that. Now, question No. 2 -- you can clap.
(Applause)

All right. You say all right, Lon, so what you're saying is because I'm eternally secure, it doesn't really matter what kind of earthly Christian life I live. Right? Wrong. Wrong a thousand times wrong. I didn't say that. And the Bible doesn't say that. What the Bible says is that the kind of earthy life we live has nothing to do with us getting into heaven, but friends, it has a lot to do with the kind of reception you and I receive when we arrive.

Listen to 1 Corinthians 3:11, for no other foundation can anyone lay, that is for their Christian life, than that which is already laid which is Jesus Christ. Now, if anyone builds on this foundation, they can use gold, silver or precious stones, or wood, hay, and stubble. What's Paul saying here? He's saying there's two kinds of Christian lives that can be built on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

The first kind of Christian life is the kind that uses gold and silver and precious stones. This represents a Christian life. Characterized by obedience to God and service for Christ. And living under the Lordship of Christ.

And then there's a second kind of Christian life that you can build on the foundation of Jesus, and that is one that uses wood, hay and stubble. This represents a Christian life. Characterized by disobedience to God and spiritual waywardness and living for self.

Now, watch, Verse 13, each person's work will become clear because it will be revealed by fire, and this fire shall test the quality of each person's work. If a person's work, that they built on the foundation of Christ -- we're talking about our Christian lives here -- survives the test of fire, that person shall receive a reward. But if any person's work is burned up, that person shall suffer loss of reward, yet he himself -- say the next three words with me -- what are they -- shall be saved.

Friends, what God is saying here, is that when we get to heaven, God's going to pull out his cosmic flame-thrower and he is going to open fire on our Christian lives. Now, not what we did B.C., before Christ. Everything you and I did B.C. is -- wend under the blood when we got saved. It's not at issue.

What we're talking about here is what we did after we came to Christ. And when the smoke clears, God's going to see what has survived. Gold, silver and precious stones, they'll still be there. Wood, hay and stubble will all be burned up. And then God says, I'm going to reward each person for what survives.

These are the rewards in heaven that the Bible is constantly talking about. Revelation 22:12, Jesus said behold I am #5e coming quickly and me reward is with me to render to every person according to what they have done in their Christian life. This is why John, the apostle, wrote Christians and said, look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you have worked for in your Christian life, but you may win a full reward. But please notice, this is so important, don't forget what Verse 15 says. It says, even if all of a believer's works get burned up, even if they had done nothing worthy of reward -- 1 Corinthians 3:15, yet he himself shall be saved. Why?

Because being saved and being getting into heaven depends on when Jesus did on the cross, not what you and I do in our Christian lives.

You say all right, Lon, so wait a minute. Let's say that I don't care about rewards in heaven. Let's say that I'm perfectly happy to get

into heaven just kind of whoops, slip right under the wire. I'm happy to get in, just like that. (Laughter)

Are you saying to me that then I have license to sin whenever I feel like it and disobey God whenever I feel like it, live any way I feel like it if I don't care about rewards? Heaven?

Whoa, not so quick kemosabe. No, no. Rewards in heaven are part of the issue. Be we also have to remember about the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. Remember we said last week that as part of the contracts God makes with every single follower of Christ, one of the terms of this contract is that he puts the Holy Spirit inside of us, the Holy Spirit indwells us. What does the indwelling Holy Spirit do? He does a lot of things. And one of the things he does, John 16:8, he convicts people concerning sin.

Listen to David's testimony. After he had committed sin with Bathsheba. O Lord, David says, rebuke me no longer in your anger and chasten me not in your wrath. Verse 2, for your arrows have sunk deep into me and your hand has come down on me. Verse 3, there is no soundness in my flesh and no health in my bones because of my sin. Verse 4, my sinces have gone over my head as a heavy burden. They weigh too much for me. Verse 5, my wounds grow foul and fester because of my folly, I am bent over and prostrate. I am utterly spent and crushed because of the tumult in my heart. What's going on here, friends?

What's going on is that the Holy Spirit is whooping a serious case of conviction of sin on to this man. That's what's happening. And finally, David says, okay, all right, enough. Uncle. Uncle. Verse 18, I confess my inequity, David said. And I am sorry for my sin. Folks, mission accomplished. By the indwelling Holy Spirit.

You know, as a brand-new believer in Jesus back in 1971, coming from a Jewish background, of course I knew nothing about nothing. The Bible, the church, nothing. And there were a lot of people trying to talk me out of my faith. And so I often get asked the question, well, you know, in those very early days of your Christian life, where you couldn't defend yourself, you know, and whatever, what kept you stuck to Christ? What convinced you that this was real? Was it the new joy that you found in Christ, was it the new power you found in Christ? What was it? Was it the new freedom from guilt that you found in Christ? None of the above. You know what it was? It was the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Friends, the very first week I gave my life to Christ, suddenly things I could do the very week before without a pang of conscience in the world, I could lie, I could cheat, I could steal, I could curse, I could lust over women, I did all of that. And without a thought. Suddenly when I tried to do it now, I got beat to a pulp on the inside.

By the Holy Spirit. And more than anything else, that's what convinced me that something supernatural, something spiritually unprecedented had happened in my life. Because I knew I wasn't doing this. So who was it? Listen to me. Anybody who tells you that eternal security gives license for true believers to sin, anybody who says that, believe me, that person has never had a head-on collision with the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. Because if they had, they would never say that. Not just about rewards, you're a true believer, you try to go disobey God to live anyway you want, and you watch what happens. Take Psalm 38 and pin it on the dashboard, because that's the Psalm you're going to be singing every day 'til you get right with God. He's going to whoop it too you. And he should. We're now the children of God.

You say, well, Lon, I'm still a little worried about the way you're preaching all of this stuff of. You know, grace and eternal security. It just sounds dangerous to me. It just sounds like it's libertarian to me. You know? I'm just nervous about this.

Well, friends, I suggest you go out into our lobby here at Tysons and pick up Chuck Swindoll's "Grace Awakening". Go on Amazon and order it. Read that book and I promise you after you read it, you'll feel a lot better about how I'm preaching this. All right? Let's go on.

No. 3, question No. 3, you say okay, Lon, so what about the person who at one time claimed to be a Christian, like Richard Robinson, and then they turned their back on the whole thing and walk away. And never come back. Didn't that person lose their salvation?

Well, listen. If a person really genuinely trusted Christ, even if they do this, the Bible is clear they will still go to heaven when they die. Why? 2 Timothy 2:13, even if we are faithless, God will remain faithful.

Every situation is unique, but in the vast majority of these cases where this happens, I believe the best explanation biblically is that these folks were never really saved, born again, to begin with.

Jesus talks about this in the Bible. In Matthew Chapter 21, Jesus uses a fig tree that had lots and lots of leaves but no fruit to describe the spiritual condition of such folks. Jesus' point was some people who profess to be followers of Christ have lots of leaves. They go to church, they sing in the choir, they say the right things -- praise the Lord! -- they sing the right songs. They got all kinds of leaves, but there is no spiritual fruit underneath all this spirit actual performance, there is no genuine relationship with Christ. Sadly, there are thousands of people like this. Raised in church all their life. They're all leaves, however, and there are no fruit.

When this person walks away from the faith, friends, they're not losing their salvation, Jesus says, they never had it. And he talks about this again. In Matthew 13 in the parable of the four soils where he tells about one kind of soil that gets initially excited about the gospel, but there's no depth of soil in this person. So the seed of the gospel withers and dies. And when this person walks away from Christ, they didn't lose their salvation, they never had it.

And I wish I had more time to deal with that parable. I don't.

But you can go right out in our lobby here at tie sans or go on our website and download it or podcast it, an entire message I did on that parable from the series people Jesus met, part 33. And you can hear us talk about the whole thing.

But here's what John said. 1 John 2:19. John said, they went out from us because they were not of us. Because if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us. But they went out from us so that it might be evident to all that they were not of us. Did you follow that? Yes. You followed that, right? (Laughter)

Right. You say okay, Lon, let's talk about me now. Okay?

What if I simply wake up one morning and I've lost the feeling like Richard Robinson did, that I'm saved, that I'm a born again, that I have eternal security. Does that mean I lost my salvation?

Well, for us living in America today, this is a real problem, because our culture bases everything on feeling. If you don't feel in love with your spouse anymore, our culture says, divorce him. If you don't feel like you like your job anymore, our culture says, quit. If you don't

feel like staying out of debt, our culture says, don't. Madison Avenue has brain washed us into believing that our feelings are the engine that should pull the train.

But my friends, the world view of the Bible is exactly opposite of that. According to the Bible, our feelings should be the caboose and the engine that pulls the train needs to be the word of God. And the promises of God.

So if you wake up one morning and you don't feel saved, you don't feel eternally secure, remember, John 3:16 says, when you trust in Christ, people who do that shall not perish but have everlasting life. Do your feelings that morning change? John 3:16.

Romans 8:1 says there is no condemnation to those who are in ye sus Christ. Do your feelings that morning change Romans 8:1?

John 5:24, says when you trusted Christ, you have crossed over, you are crossed over, and you always will be crossed over from death to eternal life. Did your feelings change that Verse?

Jesus says in 10, 28, I give my sheep eternal life. And they shall not perish. Does your feelings change what that Verse says?

My point, friends, is our eternal security is not based on how we feel, it is based on the nonnegotiable promises and declarations of the word of God, which remain the same regardless how you and I feel.

Now, we've answered our questions. But we got one more.

And you all know what this is. So all of you folks at Loudoun and all of you folks at Prince William and everybody over at Bethesda and all you guys down in the edge and around the world in the Internet campus and here at Tysons, are we ready? Yes. Come on, now. Here we go.

1, 2, 3.

>> ALL: So what!?!?!?

>> LON SOLOMON: Yeah. You say, Lon, so what? Well, you know what?

I don't have a lot of time left. But in the little bit I have left I want to talk to you about what we just discussed in question No. 4. That is, letting our feelings play too big a part in our lives.

I want to warn all of you us as believers to be careful of the feeling-oriented life. Because friends, as followers of Christ, the only way we can live a Christian life that has stability and consistency and resiliency is to live a life that has God's promises and the word of God as the engine and our feelings as the caboose.

So when we're facing hard times and we feel alone, God says, don't listen to your feelings. Don't believe your feelings. Because you're not alone. Because I promise, Hebrews 13:5, I will never leave you, nor will I ever desert you. And as a follower of Christ, when we need guidance and wisdom and we feel adrift, God says to us, don't listen to your feelings, because I said to you, I promised you, Jeremiah 29:11, that I have a plan for your life, a plan for good and not for evil that I'm working out. And I promised you, Isaiah 30:21, that you will hear a voice behind you saying this is the way, walk in it.

And when we look at the world around us, and we feel hopeless, God says, don't listen to your feelings, go to the word of God. Learn the word of God. You'll find more hope than the word of God than you know what to do with.

Romans 15:4, whatever was written in the Bible in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through the encouragement of the scriptures we might have -- what? Hope. And I love, Hebrews 6:19, which

says that God's promises in the Bible give us -- I love this -- hope that forms an anchor for our soul, steadfast and sure.

You know, a while back I had a gentleman in my office whose wife had died of cancer. And he said, you know, Lon, he said, so many days even now -- back then and now -- I feel like God is just not there. I feel like God just doesn't really care. I feel sometimes like maybe God isn't even real. Can you identify at all with those feelings? I think he thought because I was a pastor I never felt anything like that.

And I said, oh, sir, I can identify with those feelings. I said, when my little girl was on the ground having seizures and stopped breathing and I was giving her CPR while we were frantically awaiting the ambulance to arrive, and when we were riding at two o'clock in the morning in the back of the ambulance going to the emergency room, and when we were sleeping in a chair in the ICU for two or three days in a row while they were trying to stabilize Jill, I said, I'm telling you, I know what those feelings are like that you're having. Lord, where are you?

Lord, do you even know -- Lord, hello? Hello? Here I am. Here we are. Are you there? Why don't you do something? I said, I know what that feels like, sir.

I said, but I want to tell you something. You have to make a decision. And your decision has to be are you going to let your feelings define reality for your life, or are you going to let the word of God and what God says define reality for your life? That's the decision you have to make.

And Brenda and I decided that to the best of our ability, we were going to let the word of God define reality for our life. So even though we felt alone, we knew we weren't alone. Why? Because God says we're not alone. And even though we felt adrift, we knew we weren't adrift. Why? Because God says he has a plan for our life that he's working out.

And even though we felt hopeless many days, we said we're not without hope. Because the Bible tells us that we have the hope of the promises of everyone of God's promises in the Bible. And that's an anchor for our soul. And we let the Bible define reality for us. Not our feelings.

Folks, listen to me. Many of you are going through hard times. Tough situations. And you feel just like that man in my office did sometimes. Lord, where are you? Lord, do you even care? Lord, what's going on in our world? Lord, look at this. Friends, you can't let feelings be the engine. They got to be the caboose. The engine has got to be the reality of the word of God. And what God says.

And you know something I learned? I've learned that wherever the engine goes, eventually the caboose follows. Have you learned that?

You make God's word the engine. And you put your feelings in the caboose. I promise you, that engine sooner or later will bring that caboose around. And you'll feel different.

Folks, the Bible says, Nos. 23:19, God is not a man that he should lie. And God tells you something, you can define reality by it first. Learn the promises of God. Get into the word of God. Learn what God says. No. 2, believe him. I don't care how you feel. Believe him anyway.

And number three, rest all of your weight on those promises of God. Not on how you feel or what you think or what Madison Avenue tells you or what your friends say you should do or how things look at the moment. Put all those things in the caboose. Let the engine lead the train. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, thanks for talking to us today about real life problems. You know, we are all feeling driven beings. Our feelings go up and down and all around. They change, they -- they completely morph. Lord, help us not to build our life on them. But on the statements and the promises of the eternal word of God. Let the engine be the engine for us, Lord. And remind us that the caboose will always follow eventually. And our feelings will be different.

And so, Lord Jesus, for many of us here who are struggling through tough things, and our feelings are on the ropes, help us, Lord Jesus, to take our eyes off of them and put the word of God right where it belongs, as the definer of reality for our life. And the sole definer of reality for our life.

Change our lives because we were here today, Lord. Thank the way we react to life because we were here today. And we pray these things in Jesus' name -- and what did God's people say? Amen.

>> LON SOLOMON: What did you say?

>> ALL: Amen.

>> LON SOLOMON: Have a great week. Bless you guys.

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