

# Indefensible Inflexibility

Acts 15:35-41

*Halifax: 4 November 2012*

## Introduction

Today in our sermon series we come to the end of Acts chapter 15.

- You will remember that Acts 15 **began** with a fight that was waged in the church.
  - Well Acts 15 also **ends** with a fight that was waged in the church.
  - But there is a great difference in the character of these fights...
    - The fight at the beginning of the chapter was one that definitely needed to be fought out to the end.
      - The Judaizers had come with a false gospel.
        - They were insisting that circumcision and the observance of the Law of Moses were necessary for salvation.
          - The very gospel of free grace was at stake!
          - The Judaizers were calling into the question the saving relationship of the Gentiles that Paul and Barnabas had reached.
        - The matter could not be overlooked!
          - There was no place for agreeing to disagree.
          - There was definitely no room for flexibility and compromise.
          - The very peace and well-being of the church depended on those who held the truth being inflexible.
    - But the fight that takes place at the end of the chapter is one that did not need to be fought out.
      - It was a quarrel between Paul and Barnabas.
      - It was a case in which two brothers dug in their heels about a matter of personal opinion where God's truth was not in jeopardy.
        - Their inflexibility was indefensible.
          - We all need to learn the difference between matters of God's truth and matters of personal opinion.
          - Often, we are just the opposite of what we should be—
            - We are soft and flexible with the truth, but entirely unyielding with our personal opinions.
    - The Holy Spirit has recorded this shameful event for our learning,
      - and we will do well to consider what is taught here.
      - There are many sad examples of quarrels in the church that ought never to have happened, and this one is given to serve as a warning to us..
        - But everything in this passage is by no means negative.
          - In fact, we will see in the first place, a very positive lesson!

TRANS> This passage shows that we—we who believe—should:

**I. Let the loving care of Christ be embodied in each of us as it was in Paul and Barnabas.**

A. We are all members of His body, and we are all called to love one another as He has loved us and given Himself for us.

- That does not mean that we all must go and die on a physical cross.
- Nor does it mean that we must all be apostles as Paul and Barnabas.
  - But it does mean that each one of us is to selflessly and lovingly use our gifts to bless each other!
  - Christ is in heaven now, reigning and ruling and giving us grace for our work,
    - and all of us together make up His body to carry out His service in His kingdom—
      - some as exhorters, some as comforters, some as helpers, some as encouragers, and a host of other things...
      - Some as parents, some as children, some as workers in the home and some outside the home...
        - but wherever we are and whatever we do, we are part of His body and we are to be laying down our lives for one another as He has done for us.

B. See the wonderful example of the loving care of Christ in Paul and Barnabas.

1. First, see their diligence in caring for the saints at Antioch...

- Verse 35 tells us how they laboured there.
  - **Acts 15:35: Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.**
- Now think about their situation at this time.
  - a. They had just fought a hard battle with the Judaizers—and they had been victorious for the gospel.
    - What do we often do after an important victory—after success?
      - We praise God, but we also congratulate ourselves.
      - We consider how hard we have laboured and how we stood up to the adversaries.
    - And then we feel that we deserve a nice break.
      - There were plenty of others labouring at Antioch, so they might have excused themselves for a season.
        - Besides, they were moving into more important work than ordinary teaching and preaching among the house churches at Antioch.
      - But you see that there was no such behaviour in these faithful servants of God.

- There was much ordinary work to be done and they threw themselves into it with their whole heart.
- b. They stayed at the work because they loved the saints.
- They wanted to make sure that the saints at Antioch were settled after the Judaizers had distressed them with their false gospel.
  - They remained there for a time—for as long as they thought necessary—
    - but they also knew that God had work for them to do elsewhere.
2. In verse 36 you see how Paul makes a proposal to his dear friend and co-labourer Barnabas:
- **Acts 15:36: Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.”**
  - This is another example of their loving service.
- a. We saw back in chapter 14 how Paul and Barnabas boldly went back to the places they had ministered...
- They went back even though there were many in those places who had actually attempted to kill them and who still wanted to kill them...
  - Despite this, they still returned because they loved the dear people who had come to believe.
    - They knew how Christ had given Himself for them and they were glad to go to them to minister to them even if it put them in harm’s way.
- b. You see that Paul and Barnabas want to go back again and see how the ones they have led to the Lord are doing!
- They love them!
    - They care about them!
    - They want to do what they can for them!
  - Do you love people enough to check in on them—to see how they are?
    - That is what Paul and Barnabas did even though they had to travel in a day when travel was very difficult, dangerous, and expensive.
    - That is what they did even though they had hostile enemies who would want to kill them when they saw them.
- c. There are all sorts of inconveniences about serving your brothers and sisters...
- There are always inconveniences and sometimes downright dangers, but for us it is usually just inconveniences...
    - There are costs to be borne—costs of gas or taking the bus, costs of preparing food, costs of time...
      - But you must not let such things stop you for doing good.
    - Now don’t misunderstand me!

- Some of you are very busy serving already—perhaps you have a lot of children and you are hardly able to get everything done.
  - I don't mean that you need to feel guilty that you are not doing enough for others! That is silly! You are living for others daily!
- It is legitimate to say “no” to one kind of service in order to fulfill another—
  - but it is not legitimate to say “no” to service because of selfishness—because of inconveniences or even dangers!
  - If you love others with the love of Christ, you will not let anything stop you from reaching out to them...
    - You will find all sorts of avenues of service.
      - You will feel yourself a debtor to everyone because you will be so mindful of all that Christ did for you.

C. In Barnabas and Paul, we also see an example of diversity in united service.

1. You see in verse 36 how Paul very naturally turns to Barnabas to go with him to minister.
  - It was natural because they had always served together—they had a wonderful history together!
    - When Paul was only known as a violent persecutor, it was Barnabas who introduced him to the churches in Jerusalem as a changed man.
    - When Paul was in Tarsus and Barnabas needed help in the ministry at Antioch, he went to get him to help with the teaching and preaching.
    - Then together they went to Jerusalem to deliver the gift from the saints at Antioch...
    - And then they were sent out from Antioch on their mission together...
      - They endured dangers from robbers, long days on the road, and hostile people in the places they ministered.
      - They worked together and they had victories together and disappointments together.
        - That creates a deep bond of friendship.
    - And now most recently, they had overcome the Judaizers together and were working side by side in Antioch....
      - So Paul, sensing that the time has come for them to go and check on the new churches, naturally turns to Barnabas to go with him.
2. Consider further how their gifts and personalities complemented each other...
  - a. Barnabas was a generous, warm-hearted man, who was always ready to help those who were in need.
    - He had set an example in Jerusalem as one who sold his own land to meet financial needs.

- He was a guy who was named the Son of Encouragement because that is what he was—an encourager through and through!
- b. Paul, on the other hand, was an amazing teacher.
- He had an understanding in the Word that was second to none!
    - He had a clear vision of ministry, a wisdom and understanding of what needed to be done.
    - He was a man of no compromise who was ready to stand valiantly for the truth when necessary.

TRANS> What a tremendous team they were!

- How beautifully they complemented each other.
3. My brothers and sisters, we need each other in the body to fulfill all that Jesus Christ is.
- No one person has all the gifts and graces that are found in our dear Lord Jesus, but together we make up His body...
    - He is so full of virtue and goodness, that it takes all of us to make up His body—one is a hand, one is an eye, another is an ear—all the parts are needed for His loving service to be seen.
    - Whatever is virtuous, whatever is lovely and pure and holy and good in each of us—all rolled together—makes up our dear Saviour and Lord...
      - Let each of us do his or her part in the body...
      - And let each of us honour the other members.

TRANS> O that we would embody Christ's love in our congregation!!

- And in our Presbytery and our Synod and in the universal church!!
  - And in our marriages and our families as well—with our mutual gifts and strengths.
- But there are challenges that come with our diversity of gifts and personalities.
  - We are all still plagued with remaining sin, and we are prone to divide when we ought to unite—to divide over personality differences or personal opinions...
  - This is our next point...

## **II. Beware, brothers and sisters, of unwarranted divisions!**

- A. There are matters of opinion that arise when both parties have a case.
1. We have an example in verse 37-38 with Paul and Barnabas about whether or not to take John Mark on the mission with them.
- You may remember this young man.
    - His Jewish name was John and his Roman name was Mark—
      - As you know, many of the Jews had two names.
      - This fellow is the one who will later write the Gospel of Mark.

- He was the son of Mary—the Mary whose house was used for some of the church’s meetings in Jerusalem.
  - To have such a house meant that they were wealthy.
  - And Mark was also a cousin to Barnabas, so Barnabas took a special interest in him.
  
- a. You see in verse 37 that Barnabas was determined to take Mark with them.
  - The problem was that Mark had abandoned them very early on in the first mission...
    - When they got to Perga, before they even make the difficult trek to Antioch of Pisidia and ran into wave after wave of persecution, Mark had departed for Jerusalem.
    - Perhaps he missed his mom and the comforts of home, but whatever his reasons, it is seen as an unwarranted abandonment—
      - a breach of his obligations.
  - But Barnabas was *determined*—the tense in the original suggests that he kept insisting—that they take John Mark along.
    - Barnabas wants to give him a second chance!
      - He knew that it was wrong of Mark to leave,
        - but he was also confident that Mark had repented and would not abandon them again.
  - I don’t think we should make too much of the fact that Mark was his cousin.
    - Barnabas would have been this way toward any young man in this situation.
      - After all, he is the Son of Encouragement!
      - This is simply who Barnabas is!
        - A warm, loving brother who full of grace and mercy and always ready to give a guy a chance.
  
- b. But verse 38 shows us what Paul thought about all this!
  - **v. 38: But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.**
  - This was not a high school mission trip—this was a serious apostolic mission!
    - It was the work of the Lord and the last thing they needed was a whining unreliable young man!
      - He had quit the work before the hardest part had even begun.
      - Paul had no patience for such softness!
      - We serve a Saviour who was crucified for us!
      - What kind of example had Mark set of this devotion?
  - Paul was happy to restore sinners to the church when they repented...

- but he knew that a higher standard is required for a minister!
- He was so ashamed of what Mark had done before that he did not want to risk it again.
  - Paul was just as insistent that Mark should not go.
  - Often, sessions can have discussions like this.

2. So who do you think was right?

a. I bet many of you have taken different sides...

- I could easily go through the congregation and point out different people who are more like Barnabas and those who are more like Paul...
  - I love you both!
  - The Barnabases are the ones that excel in gentleness—they are not so judgemental—they are compassionate and understanding...
    - They understand your struggles better and are willing to identify with you.
  - But the Pauls are the ones that hold you to things—they are not interested in your lame excuses—you have a duty to fulfill!
    - They will always push you and challenge you to do more than you are doing.
- You know, there are couples in our church where one is a Barnabas and the other is a Paul...
  - And there are couples who are both Barnabases.
  - And there are couples who are both Pauls.
- I don't mean to say that you are all one or the other—there are some that are more in the middle...
  - But don't be proud about that—
    - If you are in the middle it may be the case that you are just always wrong—soft when you ought to be firm, and harsh when you ought to be gentle.
  - Jesus does not fit in any category because He has the strengths of both men...
    - On the one hand, he challenges you and holds you to your duty...
      - Remember the disciple that wanted to go and bury his father first—and Jesus rejected him?
    - On the other hand, He is gentle and understanding, ready to restore you.
      - Remember how He dealt with Peter after Peter had denied Him?

b. It is hard to say whose opinion is right in this situation with John Mark.

- Different commentators take different sides...

- Those who side with Paul point out that the church recognised Paul, for in verse 40 it says that he was sent off with their commendation...
  - It does not say that about Barnabas and Mark...
  - Moreover, we are told about Paul's labours and the blessing of God on them immediately after this, but nothing is said of Barnabas.
    - But that does not prove that Paul was right—God blesses us despite our wrong judgements, and so does the church.
    - Barnabas may very well have been blessed too—Luke doesn't tell us about Peter and John either.
  - Well, those who side with Paul will also point out that Paul was now the one who was clearly in charge of the mission and Barnabas should have submitted to him.
    - But these men were Presbyterians—maybe they should have gone to the Presbytery about this matter!
- But there is a good case for Barnabas too... for saying that he was in the right.
  - Those who side with Barnabas point out that later on Mark is shown to be a faithful minister!
    - Not only does he write the gospel that bears his name, but Paul himself admits that Mark is useful to him and asked that he be sent to him.
      - But these arguments only show that Mark was restored to usefulness—they do not prove that the right time had come to give him a second chance.
  - Many other commentators admit that it is very difficult to decide who is right in this matter—that the text does not tell us.

TRANS> Whatever the case, one thing is definitely true here...

#### B. We must be very careful about making too much of our own opinions!

1. You must not divide the church because you refuse to let go of your personal opinion.
  - You need to look at the matter and say, "Is this nothing more than my opinion?"
    - Should I divide the church over which missions the church supports provided they are not apostate?
    - Should I divide the church over a case of church discipline that I do not agree with?
    - And in your home—is it wise to insist on where to go for supper or about which house to buy?
  - We must not be ignorant of Satan's devices.



- He loves to sow discord among the brethren and he is happy to use you as his instrument.
    - I am not suggesting for a moment that we should not fight for the truth—when the gospel is being jettisoned.
      - It was totally right for Paul and Barnabas to fight for the gospel of grace when the Judaizers came.
      - That was a matter about which they could not give way without causing great harm to the church.
2. But was the matter of taking John Mark an issue that would really cause that much harm—whether he went or not?
- a. Think about it.
    - Even if one of them was right and should have held his ground—
      - that still means that the other was holding on to an opinion that he should have relinquished.
      - At least one of them was guilty of holding on to a mere opinion.
  - b. But I am personally of the opinion—hmm—that both of them should have been willing to let go of his opinion in this case.
    - This was a matter of opinion!
    - 1) Paul could have said,
      - “I don’t agree with you, but because of your insistence, I am willing to let him come. But don’t be surprised if he turns away again.”
      - What harm would it have caused if Paul had done that?
      - I suppose it would have a bad example of too much tolerance for half-hearted people in missions—there is way too much of that today—
        - too many missionaries abandon their work when they begin feel the pressures and the rigours—sometimes after only a couple of years!
          - But it still seems that Paul could have let it go—it was only his opinion.
    - 2) But on the other hand, Barnabas could have let go of his opinion.
      - He could have said,
        - “Very well then, you are in charge. I personally think Mark is quite ready, but if you don’t, I will defer to you. Perhaps he can go with us on a future trip if he continues to show maturity.”
      - If God was really working in Mark, would it harm him to wait a few years until Paul was more that he had changed?
        - I suppose it could be argued that a wrong message would be given that God is a restoring God.

- It might cause Mark and others to think that they must remain on the shelf forever once they have failed.
  - But it still seems that Barnabas could have let it go—it was only his opinion—and he is supposed to be the gracious one!
- 3) And because it was just an opinion, why did they not take it to the Presbytery to let them decide?
- The Presbytery had commissioned them in the first place—why not let them approve of their helpers if they could not agree about it?
- C. Consider the melancholy outcome of refusing to let go of our own opinions.
- It can lead to such division in the church that you can no longer work together with the other members.
1. Such was the case with Paul and Barnabas!
- **Acts 15:39: Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another.**
- a. First, this is very sad because these two were very close friends.
- As I mentioned earlier, they had been through so much together and had served one another...
    - but now they could not work together as they had in the past.
    - It must have been a painful loss for them, all because neither would defer to the other.
- b. Second, this division is sad because it had potential to hinder their ministry.
- It was as if these two were made for each other...
    - Now they no longer had one another as a complement.
- c. Third, this division is sad because it had potential to divide the church.
- When leaders divide like this, it is only natural for people to start taking sides and you end up with two churches...two denominations.
    - This happened in Scotland over the Burger Oath—whether it was right for business men to take an oath—the church split over this!
    - To their credit, Paul and Barnabas did not let this infect others.
      - They continued to regard each other despite their difference.
      - But it can hardly be imagined that there was not some division about this in the ranks of the church.
- d. Fourth, the division of Paul and Barnabas is sad because it would give the enemies of the gospel an excuse to dismiss the gospel...
- “Look at those Christians—they quarrel over the least thing.”
    - “There’s not much to that religion.”

- Even though we do not preach our own righteousness—it is not good to give believers an occasion to mock.
- e. Fifth, this division is sad because it had a tendency to discourage the saints.
- As Paul went around without Barnabas, all the churches would be asking “Where is Barnabas?”
    - and he would have to say, “We got into a quarrel about whether to take John Mark and could no longer work together.”
  - This would certainly discourage those who looked to these men for an example.
- f. And sixthly, related to this, their division make their ministry less effective to those who were themselves being contentious...
- What would two women like Euodia and Syntyche say when the apostle exhorted them “to be of the same mind in the Lord.”
  - Even if they did not say it, their thought would be,
    - “Well what about you! We have a better reason for our quarrel than you had for your quarrel with Barnabas!”
    - Saints ought not to respond that way—but you all know that we do.
      - Yes, even we ourselves must not comfort ourselves saying, “Well Paul and Barnabas divided!” to justify our own divisions!
2. When you see the melancholy consequences it ought to make you think twice about holding on to your mere opinions.
- a. Do you really want to lose friends (even family) over an opinion?
- Do you really want to hinder mutual ministry over a mere opinion (you need people that are not just like you)?
  - Do you really want to divide the church (or even your own family—you know this same issue of holding on to your own opinion can also cause trouble in your own household—it can divide husbands and wives and parents and children)?
  - Do you really want to discourage other believers over a mere opinion?
  - Do you really want to give unbelievers an excuse?
    - There are many people today that want nothing to do with the church because of all the divisions.
    - Many of our divisions are necessary (as was the division with the Judaizers), but shame on us if it is only over an opinion.
  - Do you really want to make your own ministry to others less effective (when they can justly point their finger at your bad example)?
- b. Is holding on to your own opinion really worth all of that loss?
- What kind of pride is it in you that makes you unwilling to let go?
    - Is it not diabolical?
    - It is certainly not godly...

- James says:
  - **James 3:17: The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**
- 3. But I do not want to overstate the wrong in what Paul and Barnabas did.
  - Because of their prominence, a little fault like this tends to be magnified.
  - We must remember that these were some of the best servants that the Lord has ever had.
    - Even after this division,
      - They continued to regard one another as other scriptures show.
      - They did not try to draw others in with them as many after them have done.
      - They did not start attacking each other and looking for other faults in each other to try to justify themselves...
        - No! These men were worthy examples in almost every way—even in their quarrel!
  - We certainly would not be wise to trash them for this one mistake in order to make ourselves feel better...
    - There is a wicked selfish tendency in us that makes us rejoice in the iniquity of godly persons—
      - We like to find faults as if that will somehow excuse us.
    - It is far better to deal with your guilt by resting in the finished work of Jesus rather than in looking for faults in the godly.
      - We should desire that there would be more blameless people—like Job, and like Zacharias, and like Paul and Barnabas.
      - And we ought to hold such men in high esteem.

TRANS> But even so, it is a melancholy thing whenever there is division, and this is written for our warning and admonition.

- Our sinful actions can certainly make a mess of things...
- But now I want to show something that is a great encouragement!

### **III. For God's true people, sovereign grace always has the final word!**

- No matter what we may have done or failed to do—no matter what sin we may have committed—Grace always prevails!
  - Consider two ways...
- A. First, grace prevails in that Christ's work in His church still goes on—despite our sin and failings!
  1. Such was the case with Paul and Barnabas...

- a. First, you can see that though they went in different ways, both continued in the ministry!
    - In fact, it would seem that God even used their division to double their efforts...
      - Barnabas went to his home island of Cyprus with John Mark,
      - And Paul went first to Syria and Cilicia, and then back to the churches in southern Galatia that he and Barnabas had planted.
      - And look, we are told right here in our text that the ministry of Paul flourished...
        - Verse 41 says that he went through and strengthened the churches...
          - And if we read on in Acts and beyond, we read how Paul went on to do great things for the Lord!
          - And we are given peeps of Barnabas along the way that show that he also was greatly used by the Lord.
            - Despite what they did, God continued to use them.
  - b. Not only that, but because of the division, Paul was able to engage Silas to go along as his companion—
    - a man who will prove to be very useful in the work of the church.
      - We will see very soon that the fact that he, like Paul, had a Roman citizenship will prove to be very useful.
        - The Lord knew all of this of course!
        - Silas was also a representative from the church in Jerusalem.
          - This helped tremendously in dealing with the Judaizers.
  - c. If there had been no division, there would have only been one ministry team going out and Silas would likely not have been chosen to go...
    - The Lord had all of this planned out in His providence.
    - It does not excuse the sin in the division of Paul and Barnabas, but it certainly overrules it!
2. Always remember that the Lord will build His church—it is His work and He will do it.
    - a. We need not suppose that our wickedness or our folly can prevent Him.
      - Somehow, the Lord will take all that happens and bring it together until His kingdom is fully established.
    - 1) We are reminded of the story of Joseph...
      - Through a series of providences, his brothers sold him into Egypt and supposed that they were rid of him for good...
        - But the Lord used their sinful action in His marvellous providence to move Joseph to Egypt so that He could save the family of Israel and all of Egypt through Joseph.

- When Joseph's brothers came bowing and trembling before him in fear after Joseph had been made ruler of Egypt, Joseph beautifully declared the truth of overruling sovereign grace...
    - **Ge 50:20: But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.**
      - God's sovereignty does not excuse our sin—but it magnifies the grace of God and the goodness of God in overruling it..
- 2) We can even consider the big picture—the sweep of God's hand across years of history...
- For example, over the centuries, Israel's sin continued to the point that the Lord finally drove them out of the land, just as He had the Canaanites.
    - Only it was different because His promise of grace was in it.
  - The temple was destroyed, many people died, and many were taken into exile,
    - but the outcome was that through their destruction God promised the New Covenant—
      - He promised that He would gather and restore them from the exile, which began in the day of Ezra and Nehemiah—
        - And then bring forth the Messiah who would save His people from their sins—
          - bringing complete forgiveness and pouring out His Spirit upon them...
          - Resulting in the salvation of the remnant and the calling of the nations to salvation.
  - You see that God used, even the grievous sin of Israel that led to their demise, to magnify His grace.
    - Out of the ruins and the rubble He raised up the true temple of God, Jesus Christ!
    - Grace rules! Grace has the last word.
- b. Can we not expect the Lord to use our sin and folly in the church in a similar way today?
- Too often, believers see the pitiful condition of the church—
    - We see the sin and the apostasy and the division and the unbelief.
    - It is all there—we are a dreadful example...
      - We see all of this and we despair because we have forgotten about the sovereign hand of Almighty God!
      - We have forgotten about the way our God takes what is ruined by sin and raises it up to glory.
        - Can He not do that with the church today?

- Do you believe that?
  - If you do, you will not be idle.
    - You will go to prayer and you will go to work—not as a fearful Christian, but as a Christian who trusts in the living God.
    - You will do things that are right—even when you are in the minority—because you are not looking at statistics,
      - you are trusting in your God.
      - You will even die for Christ as a martyr if you are the only Christian left (as far as you know) in all the world.
  - We have made a muck of the church, but He will raise it up and make it glorious.

TRANS> So that is the first encouragement—that despite what we do, grace has the final word in the church.

- But I want to show you a second thing that we may consider from this passage...

B. We learn here (secondly) that grace also has the final word in our individual lives.

1. John Mark had grievously sinned—there was no debate about that—he had abandoned his calling...

- If God were not the God of grace that He is, this might have been the end of any ministry for him.
  - But as I have already told you, he ends up writing the gospel that bears his name...
    - 1 Peter 5:13, Peter calls him “Mark my son”
    - In Colossians 4:10, Paul commends Mark to the church and tells them to welcome him when he comes.
    - And at the end of his life when he writes to Timothy from prison, Paul says:
      - **2 Tim 4:11: “Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.”**
        - Isn’t that precious?
          - The aged Apostle, longing for the service of the one he had once refused to bring along!
          - Mark was restored!

2. My dear brothers and sisters...

- It does not matter what you may have done...
  - You may be crippled and broken and nearly ruined by sin...
  - But sin shall not have the last word in your life.
- I believe there are some believers whose glory will not be seen much in this life...
  - They are suffering and struggling along, and they never seem to get out of it—but God is still at work in them...

- And everyone will be amazed when their beauty is revealed on the last day.
- Is that day not called “the revealing of the sons of God” in Rev. 8:19?
- Does Ephesians 5:27 not tell us that Christ will present the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish?
  - What a glorious thing...
    - His grace takes us, as broken and ruined as we are, and it lifts us out of the ash heap and makes us princes.
- Don't you ever forget it!
  - You are not the one who does the saving—it is Christ!
    - It is not sin that has the last word, but His powerful sovereign grace.
  - If your thought in hearing that is,
    - “Ah, then I can go on and sin as I please and it won't matter,”
      - then you are not yet a partaker of grace and you are yet without hope...
      - You need to repent and turn to Jesus for salvation from sin, not plan how you can get away with it—that is not the point.
  - But if your thought, when you hear that grace has the last word, is something like:
    - “How can this be? I am not worthy of the least of God's mercies—but I will keep looking to Christ my only hope.”
      - Then you can be sure that you will be revealed in glory.
    - Thanks be to God for His marvellous grace!