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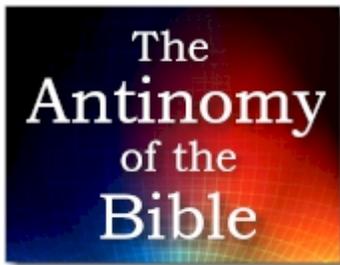
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The Antinomy of the Bible

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., 1975

Transcribed and edited by David Sielaff, July 2012

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for July 2012](#)



The antinomy¹ of the Bible. It almost sounds like a disease. It is not. There are antinomies in the Bible and here is what the word means when you break it down: *Anti-* means “against,” as in being against something. The *-nomy* portion of the term derives from the Greek word *-nomos* which means “law.” Antinomy then is a figure of speech that grammarians use to talk about literature that is against itself.

A person begins to write or say something, and in the next sentence or paragraph he or she apparently contradicts what was said previously, and yet both are correct. That is antinomy. Antinomy is something that is against law, it is not in agreement with the law of normal discourse and exposition.

Usually when a person starts out discussing or writing on a particular subject, in the first paragraph he or she says something significant about that subject. The second paragraph may be different, but usually the subject supports what is said in the first paragraph, and the third paragraph supports what is said in the second and the first. The person goes all through the discourse and the topic supports what is said from the beginning, in the middle, and in the end. There is no antinomy in that writing. It is all in agreement.

When you and I write a letter to our mothers or relatives, we try to make everything agree very well with itself. We would want it to be that way. Sometimes you might make a statement that could be taken out of context when compared to another statement you make later on, and they could be completely contrary to each other. This is antinomy.

There are quite a number of them in the Bible. If we understand how they work we can come to appreciate and interpret the Bible far better. I think they are very important to understand. I want to give you a simple antinomy that you all know about. It is found in Proverbs chapter 26, and we will compare verse 4 with verse 5. This is a simple antinomy, but a most interesting one. Some people might consider that this is a contradiction. It certainly is an antinomy, and a good example of one. Here is Proverbs 26:4:

“Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like unto him.”

• **Proverbs 26:4**

¹ Antinomy is not to be confused with antimony, which is a metallic element. DWS

That is a good statement to make, and we are able to understand it. Now look at verse 5:

“Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.”

• *Proverbs 26:5*

Verse 5 tells you to do just the opposite than in the previous verse 4. This is an antinomy. How many have difficulty in understanding this? I do not think any do. What you find in this Book of Proverbs, and what Solomon pointed out in his Book of Ecclesiastes, was that there is a time to die, there is a time live, there is a time to do this, and a time to do that. There is a time, these two proverbs show, to answer a fool according to his folly. Then there are other times when it is better to refrain from answering a fool in the folly that he is using. So I do not think we should have any difficulty with this antinomy.

That is a simple example of antinomy. Now let us go to New Testament examples. Go to Ephesians chapter 4; look at verse 26. In the midst of the conflict Paul says:

“Be you ANGRY, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”

• *Ephesians 4:26*

Here he clearly says **“Be you angry.”** The word “angry” is a verb here. It means that your action should be one of anger. Is there any doubt about that? I do not think there is at all. Look at verse 31, just 5 verses below when the apostle Paul also said this:

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and ANGER, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”

• *Ephesians 4:31*

Here he says have no anger at all. In this instance the word “anger” is a noun. Formerly he says **“Be you angry.”** Now what do you think Paul means, should we be angry or not? Put away all anger in one place, be angry in another. In fact, even our Lord Himself was angry on one occasion in Mark 3:4. He was looking around Him at the Pharisees and what some of them were saying about His healing on the sabbath day. They were accusing Him of doing wrong. He said this in Mark chapter 3:

“And he said unto them, ‘Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?’ But they held their peace.

And when he had looked round about on them with ANGER, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he said unto the man, ‘Stretch forth your hand.’ And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.”

• *Mark 3:4–5*

We see our Lord, who did not sin, getting angry. Why was He angry? Because the righteousness that He was doing to heal that man was being repudiated by people around Him. He was performing that healing on the sabbath day. You see, they were great sabbath keepers. They did not like that He healed on the sabbath. He got angry. What kind of anger did He have? Obviously it was an anger based upon righteousness, and seeing the wickedness that was in their hearts. In chapter 4 of Ephesians if you get the context, it says in verse 24 that:

“... that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be you angry, and sin not: ...”

• *Ephesians 4:24–26*

It means be angry about all unrighteousness of sin, but obviously do not sin. That is the context: **“... and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil”** (Ephesians 4:26–27). It is true that from time to time anger comes up, does it not? Sometimes it comes up in a wrong way. The anger

that we can express should be the same type that Jesus Christ expressed. Obviously that is the context the apostle Paul intended. When you come down to verse 30,

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”

• *Ephesians 4:30–31*

This means anger, obviously, in the wrong sense, where righteousness is not involved. Within six verses Paul seems to contradict himself, but he really does not. It is the context that you must take into account.

I want to say one thing now before going on to another point about antinomy. You must interpret it correctly. In this case there are no major doctrines involved. Go to Philippians chapter 3:

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect [using “were ... perfect” as a verb here]: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of [by] Christ Jesus.”

• *Philippians 3:12*

Paul had not yet attained the resurrection from the dead, and he says he had not become perfect, yet notice down three verses, the same word is used, but here it is a noun and not a verb:

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect [noun form here], be thus minded: and if in any thing you be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.”

• *Philippians 3:15*

Though he uses the verb “**were ... perfect**” in one place and the noun in another, they are the same words. Within verses he effectively says “I am not perfect and I know I am not”; three verses later all of us who are perfect answer this quandary. Look at the context. Paul is talking about the resurrection from the dead in verse 12. Had he been resurrected from the dead actually? No.

But I ask this question: through the death and resurrection of Christ — on the tree of crucifixion, His death, and coming forth from the grave — had Paul been resurrected from the dead spiritually? Was Paul perfect from the point of view of having Christ’s life appropriated to him? The answer is yes. He was spiritually perfect legally, but he was not perfect in his humanity.

Within three verses of one another you seem to have a contradiction. They are not contradictions, because it was the figure of speech “antinomy” being used. You find them time and again in other literature, besides the New Testament.

Judgment in the Corinthian Ekklesia

Go to 1 Corinthians chapter 4. Again it shows you must take context into account:

“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I JUDGE NOT mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judges me is the Lord.

Therefore JUDGE NOTHING before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”

• *1 Corinthians 4:3–5*

“Judge nothing before the time.” That is a command. Paul said, I do not even judge myself (verse 4). He said I will not judge anyone. Clearly, he says **“judge nothing before the time.”**

Now look at 1 Corinthians chapter 5. He is talking about the fornicator where a man was living with his father’s wife, not his own mother obviously. What does Paul say, using exactly the same word that he used formally, though in a slightly different tense:

“For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that has so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

• 1 Corinthians 5:3–5

That is a judgment! Who made the judgment? The apostle Paul did. He even said regarding the man: **“For I ... have judged already.”** Eighteen verses earlier in chapter 4 Paul said, I do not judge myself and whatever you do, do not judge. This is an antinomy. It seems to be an utter contradiction. But it is not at all.

Checking the Context in Corinthians

What is the context in chapter 4 of First Corinthians where Paul talks about judgment? He talks about the time when God will judge all the secrets of man’s life. When a man is brought before the Divine dais, there he is given a judgment. At that time you and I might be able to judge regarding a man’s salvation or his reward or something of that nature. Paul in that context said, whatever you do, do not judge **“before the time”** (1 Corinthians 4:5) because you do not have the ability to know whether a man is right or wrong. That is the context there. Do not judge in a situation where you are going to condemn someone to hell fire on matters that belong to God on the day of judgment.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 5, the man was living in open fornication, clearly wrong from every principle that you could imagine in the Scripture. The Corinthian *ekklesia* knew it. Paul knew it. The community around them knew it. It was a blot on the *ekklesia*. He looked over the situation. It did not involve a final judgment of this man’s character or where he was going to be for all eternity (that belongs only to God), or when we are glorified into God’s Kingdom. That is true. But it did involve a judgment here on this earth. Paul invoked that judgment.

You and I judge all the time, don’t we, on things that are local, things that are mundane, things that pertain to us, things that are within our responsibility? But things outside of our responsibility, we have no right to judge on. This is one of the reasons we should never curse a person and say such a curse as, “go to hell.” Some people say it with such a feeling of rancor when they get angry with someone. Actually they do not mean what they say. But they are blaspheming not only God but also the person they are talking to, someone made in the image and likeness of God. This is because no one on this earth has the power to consign another human being to hell (*hades* or *gehenna*). They do not have that power.²

I will tell you this, if you were glorified and in God’s Kingdom and you had the power to judge then, you might be able, with all the power that God can give you, to render a proper judgment. But you have no power whatsoever to take the prerogatives of the Almighty God at the present time and consign someone to hell. I know when some people use those curse words, they do not realize what they are doing, but they are taking over the responsibility of God Almighty. In that case, no one should ever judge another person.

But if you see someone doing something you consider wrong, you can judge, can you not? You can judge either to not associate with him or her, or not to allow that person to be in the assembly, the *ekklesia*, if he or she is an outward fornicator of some kind, or whatever the improper situation might be. This is an antinomy all right, and it is an explainable one.

² Judgments properly rendered are wonderful to study. God appeared to Solomon in a dream and told him to ask for a gift from Him. Read what Solomon requested from God, and why in 1 Kings 3:9:

“Give therefore your servant an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this your so great a people?”

God fulfilled Solomon’s request, and gave him more besides. Consider the judgments of Solomon (read all 1 Kings 3:5–28). God gave Solomon authority as the King of Israel, and God gave Solomon extra wisdom to judge his subjects wisely. As a result Solomon’s fame for his wise judgments was renown around the world.

We are more than kings and God loves to give gifts to His children, which we are. Gifts such as wisdom will help us both to learn quicker, as well as to judge properly those things within our responsibility. Ask for such things freely and often. DWS

Antinomy Involving Righteousness

Look at Galatians chapter 6: “**Bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ**” (Galatians 6:2). That means, we ought to share the burdens of others. Three verses later (though a different Greek word is used) Paul seems to say the opposite: “**For every man shall bear his own burden**” (Galatians 6:5). He said previously you are to bear one another’s burdens. Here it says every man bears his own.

Paul, make up your mind, you might say. Yet he has made up his mind. It is a different Greek word used in the two places. However, that makes little difference in this instance. The concept is still there. One is you share the load of other people, but really when it comes to salvation, every man will need to walk on his own walk. It depends on what is being talked of here. Unless you understand what he is talking about, you are going to get into some real difficulty.

You can carry on with many other antinomies. For example, here are antinomies that are remote from each other. One statement is made in one book of the Bible, another seemingly opposite statement is made in another. In Philippians chapter 6 there is an interesting statement made by the apostle Paul concerning himself. He talks about his ancestry:

“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinks that he has whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more [then he lists his qualifications]:

- **Circumcised the eighth day,**
- **of the stock of Israel,**
- **of the tribe of Benjamin,**
- **an Hebrew of the Hebrews;**
- **as touching the law, a Pharisee;**
- **Concerning zeal, persecuting the church;**
- **touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”**

• **Philippians 3:4–6**

The apostle Paul said as clear as crystal that he was blameless “**in the law.**” You will also find Luke 1:6 talking about the parents of John the Baptist, Elizabeth and Zacharias, that they were “blameless.” I thought that only Christ was righteous. But here is Paul calling himself blameless, while the parents of John the Baptist were also blameless.

Now I want to show you another antinomy. It is a little remote, but it is still in Paul’s writings. Take a look at Titus chapter 3. Remember that Paul said he was blameless. “**For we ...**” (Titus 3:3), meaning Titus and himself:

“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ...”

• **Titus 3:3–4**

He says that we are in better shape than we were before, not because Paul and Titus were worthy, but because Christ was worthy. It is interesting that in Titus 3:3, he says that they were foolish, disobedient, serving diverse lusts, and all of that, yet back in Philippians Paul said he was blameless. Now is that an antinomy, not technically, but it is in reality. It is one that is easily explained, or perhaps it is not easily explained.

Blameless in the Law

Back in Philippians 3:6 notice what he said just before he used the word “**blameless**”: he says “**touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”** Only as touching the law was he blameless. Do you know why he was blameless, even though he was going around with “**diverse lusts and pleasures,**” and he was

envious having hatred, having all of those things of the flesh, yet he was one of the finest law keepers that you could possibly imagine. How in the world could it be if he was doing all those things?

I will tell you, there was a provision for being blameless. Consider the parents of John the Baptist, Elisabeth, and Zacharias. They are labeled, under God's Holy Spirit, as blameless. Why were they blameless? It was because they walked in the Law blameless. The provision in the Law for you to become blameless was this: if any of you ever sinned, do you know what you had to do?

- Go and obtain an animal sacrifice,
- take it to the Temple,
- confess your sins on that animal,
- slay that animal near the altar,
- sprinkle the blood on the altar,
- dispose of the remains as God says to do,

then you could walk out of that Temple and you would be blameless.

Blameless on the Day of Atonement

Besides that, there was something even better. Every year on the Day of Atonement, whether you ever sacrificed an animal or not, it made no difference really, the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies, representing the whole nation of Israel. His actions made the entire people of Israel blameless.

He chose two live goats. One he allows to stay alive, sending it out into the wilderness after confessing all the sins of Israel on that goat. The other he confesses on the head of that goat, kills the goat with great ritual and sprinkles the blood on the Mercy Seat in the Temple. When he comes out of the Temple, do you know who he has atoned back to a perfection? It is every single Israelite in that nation that he represents.

That means that Paul can say, though I am wicked, though I have done all these things wrong, though (like he said in Titus 3:3), yes I have done all these things wrong, yet according to the righteousness that is of the Law, I, Paul was blameless according to the Law.

Do you see why in so many places in the Scripture Paul says it is not through the Law that you can be saved? You cannot be righteous through the Law, but you can be blameless through the Law, technically you can. What was the Law? It was a system whereby you can be technically blameless because of the sacrificial system and be continually wicked by nature — not that you want to be, but you can still be blameless.

Blameless Today

There is one sacrifice that is possible for making you blameless today. It is not an animal sacrifice. It is a sacrifice performed by our Lord some 1900+ years ago. It is true that some of us still are not perfect, are we? Paul said, we are not perfect, yet he also said we are perfect. We are perfect not through the sacrifice of an animal, but through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

With God's Holy Spirit guiding us, we ought to strive for perfection. We ought to be better Christians, better citizens. We never will be perfect, yet we are perfect. These are antinomies. They are the difference between discussing things on a human level and discussing things on a spiritual level. Both are being discussed in the Bible.

There are other antinomies but I will just refer to them. In Matthew 6:34 it says, **“Take therefore no thought for the morrow”** (Matthew 6:34), yet consider Proverbs 6:6–11. In verse 6:6 it says: **“Go to the ant, you sluggard”**; go save like the ant does for the winter, but in the Matthew passage it says to take no thought for tomorrow at all. When you study Matthew 6:34 in the Greek it says **“take no anxious thought,”** worrying yourself sick about what will happen tomorrow. Yet you should be prudent like the ant and save up a little for the immediate future. This is an antinomy, but it is an easily explainable one.

I have more examples to show regarding antinomies. Then I want to focus quickly on one that is very important from a doctrinal point of view. Look at these general antinomies which I will refer to, and you are well aware of them.

- God says that we are both sons of God **and** slaves of God at the same time (compare Acts 2:18; Galatians 4:1–7 with Ephesians 6:6; Hebrews 12:7–8; 1 John 3:1–2 and Revelation 1:1). That is almost an antinomy. How can you be a slave and how can you be a son? — but you are.
- He also says that we can be, and some Christians are, priests **and** slaves at the same time (compare 1 Peter 2:5, 9; with 1 Peter 2:16; 2 Peter 1:1; most all of Paul’s epistles, first verses; and Revelation 1:1).
- He says in certain places that you are kings. How can you be a king **and** a slave at the same time (compare James 2:5; Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 1:6 with Ephesians 6:6; Revelation 1:1 and others mentioned above)?

You can understand these things if you follow the context of each pair in your mind. We are worthy and we are unworthy at the same time. I have already pointed out how that is done. We are sinners and we are not sinners. You can show places in the epistle of First John where you are not a sinner at all, and you cannot sin (1 John 3:1–9, 5:16–20), yet you do sin (1 John 1:8–10, 3:8). **“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”** (1 John 1:8).

We are Abraham’s seed even if you are not Abraham’s seed. If you are not a Jew or an Israelite, you can still be Abraham’s seed. It seems like an antinomy and that is what it is. One is accepted spiritually and the other physically. You are here on earth at this time, but Paul says we are now living in the heavenlies, at the throne of God at this time (Ephesians chapter 1). How can we be in both places at the same time? One spiritually, and one physically.

How many of you are circumcised? All of you are circumcised whether you are a man or a woman, yet you may not be circumcised at all physically. According to the Scripture, Christian believers are all circumcised. That seems to be an antinomy. It is indeed, but how do you interpret that? We should not have any difficulty at all understanding this.

Works and Paul

I want to show you an example in First Corinthians chapter 15 and you will see a close antinomy, not separated by three verses, not two, or even one, but within the same verse. It is an antinomy that is explained. This is very important. These are more important than some others. Paul says:

“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: ...”

• 1 Corinthians 15:10

Paul says **“I labored more abundantly than they all,”** meaning all the other apostles, all the other people, he **“labored more abundantly.”** Who did the laboring? Paul says he did. I want you to notice the last part of the verse because he explains it here. He says, **“... yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”** God did the work through Paul, though Paul did the physical work. He gives all the glory to God. There is where the work comes in.

Why is this important? This verse in itself is not important, but the next verse is very important doctrinally. It involves the same type of antinomy that you have in verse 10, which gives us no difficulty. But I want you to remember this one, because the next one has given people all types of trouble.

If people will just pay attention in 1 Corinthians 15:10 where it is easily explained, they should have no trouble with the one in Philippians 2:12–13 where an antinomy is being given. This antinomy is also

explained, but how many people avoid the explanation! They do not want Paul explaining what he means.³ He explained it very well in 1 Corinthians 15:10, “... **I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me,**” and in me in my laboring. No one has any problem on that because it does not involve a doctrine.

Works and You

Philippians 2:12–13 involves a doctrine. Let me tell you it is one of the most major doctrines that you can possibly imagine. One of the reasons for rehearsing these antinomies is to bring you to this one antinomy, because it is the most important. If you can understand how the apostle Paul and others were using antinomies elsewhere like in 1 Corinthians 15:10, you should not have any trouble with verses like Philippians 2:12–13. But oh, how people have trouble with that passage. Read it and believe what Paul says:

“Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

• **Philippians 2:12**

As clear as crystal he says “**work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.**” Work it out. Works are absolutely essential for your salvation. That is what he says, and he says for you to do the working. I thought in almost every statement in the Book of Romans and Corinthians, and every place else you ever read in Paul’s writings, he says salvation is of grace and not of works? He makes it as strong as he can possibly can make it. Works have nothing to do with salvation.

Brethren, I want to add something here that causes the eyebrows of certain people to go up, but those works of yours have nothing to do with salvation, whether those works are good or whether those works are bad. It is the last point that gets to people. This is because people cannot believe at all that if you do bad works, you can still be saved.

I ask you, how many of you have not done bad works? How many of you today have not done bad works? How many of you tomorrow will not do any bad works? How many of you feel you will do good works tomorrow? I do not think you have it in your mind to do bad works. I hope you do not, but how many of you will do bad works tomorrow?

Some of you are going to do them, probably. You cannot help doing them, because you are a human being. If your salvation was dependent upon your good works, none of you would make it, because none of you do good enough. If your salvation was dependent upon you not doing bad works, you would be in even worse trouble, because we do bad works. We do them not because we want to, but we do them. Let us be honest with ourselves. Sometimes we deliberately do bad works. I do not want to, but I do them. I confess to it. I hope they are not too bad. I am a good guy. Most people look on me as a good fellow, but you do not want to be like me whatsoever.

I do not want to be like anybody except Jesus Christ. What you need to do is not to follow man. It is proper to a certain extent, but the apostle Paul said, “**Be you followers of me, even as I also am of Christ**” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Do not follow Doc Martin. I will lead you astray on some points. I hope I will not at all, if I can help it. Nevertheless I do bad works. That is a confession. I do good works also. The trouble is, we do good and bad, do we not? If your salvation were dependent upon your good works, you would all fail. Bad works we all do anyway. So, how in the world can we be saved? It is through works, but the works performed by somebody else and not by you.

They are the works done by Jesus Christ and they were done perfectly. God reckons you as being perfect in His eyes. It is not because you are perfect, as I pointed out earlier, but because Christ is worthy and He has given that worthiness to you. “**Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.**” Many people have

³ They would rather insert their own meaning into the text rather than allowing the text to inform them what God wants them to know. After all, it is God’s Word! DWS

done this. I, myself, in the past pointed out this verse to people and said, works are necessary for salvation, in contradiction to Paul's clear statements in verse after verse in other areas. Yes, I taught that error.

At a recent Christian conference they talked about getting people "qualified" for salvation for God's Kingdom. Listen, salvation was worked out 1900+ years ago. The qualifications were worked out back then. All of us have good points about us and we have bad points. Yes, we should try to be better every day, trying to be a better citizen, a better Christian. That is fine. But every one of us is bad when you get down to it. You cannot work up enough qualifications to be saved. That is why the whole concept is wrong.

In times past, I was in a former denomination where they (and I) believed works were necessary for salvation — only a little bit of work, of course — but works nonetheless. The illustration was this: Salvation comes by grace, not by works. Grace means "give." So, here is my watch. I will give this watch to Ken. The watch represents salvation, and I represent Christ in this case. I am offering "salvation" to Ken. To get that watch (salvation) he needs to reach out and take it. That is where the works supposedly come in. You must reach and take the watch to yourself, or it is not yours. I have heard this example time and again, and I have given the illustration in the past.

That illustration is absolutely wrong. I will tell you what grace is, amply demonstrated with this watch. Here is the watch. I take it off my hand. I put it down here or there or anyplace. All of a sudden I make a statement. The statement is, Ken, this watch is yours. No contingency whatsoever. The watch is his. He can leave it there. He can come and pick it up. He can throw it away. He can smash it or whatever he wants to do with it. That watch is his, without contingency, without any condition. That is grace!

When it comes to salvation with God, Ken is my enemy, say, he is ungodly, he is wretched, he has all the demerits against me that you can possibly imagine. Do you know what I do? I give him the watch without contingency. I do not tell him to come and pick it up. I do not tell him what to do. It is his watch. That is grace!

The concept of doing that little work of having to pick up the watch is wrong. There is no work, even raising the little finger, for salvation. Yes, there is work, but the work came through Jesus Christ. When it says, "... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," I believe what those words say. But notice the next verse where Paul explains where the work that leads to salvation comes from:

"For it is God which works in you both [1] to will and [2] to do of his good pleasure."

• *Philippians 2:13*

Note this: "Both to will and to do His good pleasure." The will that you had in your mind to accept Jesus Christ came from God the Father. The ability and performance that you had to do "**His good pleasure**" also was motivated by the work of God. It is not your work, though it seems like you do it. And you should get out and work as best you possibly can for salvation. But do you know something? Your work on its own cannot get you one inch closer to the Kingdom of God. It is God working in you to will and to perform His good pleasure. There is where salvation comes.

That is why this antinomy is so important. The others are not so important. This one is the only verse in the New Testament that seems to say there are works involved with salvation. And there are, but even those works are God's. That means salvation is of grace, and all of the apostle Paul's epistles are consistent one with another.

Are antinomies a means of conveying truth? Yes they are. They convey both spiritual truth and physical, and you have to understand how both are used. In doctrine they are very important as in this particular case of Philippians chapter 2. There we see how a proper understanding of this antinomy makes Paul's epistles clear and consistent all the way through.

Salvation is of grace with no works on your part at all. It is of grace. Everything comes from God, especially our salvation. We ought to be thankful that it does.

Ernest L. Martin, 1975
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