

DCF:

It's a scene I'm sure you've seen in a lot of movies. The heroes find themselves in a room with a bomb that is going to go off in minutes. They've got to save the world by defusing that bomb. One of them takes the cover off the timing mechanism and has to decide which wire to cut. There's a red wire, a green wire and a yellow wire. He looks at the so-called demolition expert on the team and asks "Which one do I cut?" "The red one" he replies. Just as he is about to cut the red wire, the demo expert says "Wait! Maybe it's the green one. No, I think it's the yellow one. No, it's the red one." His buddy says "Ok, which one is it? Is it the red wire?" "Yes," says the demo expert, "cut the red wire." With a questioning look, his buddy says "Are you sure? This is life and death, you know."

Are you sure? Ever ask yourself that question when it comes to your gift of heaven? Ever have that thought when you try and comprehend the events of this world? **“ARE YOU SURE?”** Come with me today to the Word of our living Lord. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit the apostle Paul reminds us that God has done it all for our salvation and that God is at peace with us. Let's go!

Part One: God has done it all

We like to think we are where we are because of our effort and skill. We put in the time to get that degree or certification. We worked hard to get that promotion. We scrimped and saved to buy our house, our car and our toys. We made sure we were honest and trustworthy, loving and kind. We worked hard at our marriages and raising our families. We see the results of all our efforts and instinctively think "I did this." We take pride in our accomplishments and want the credit. We want to be remembered as someone who got things done. Someone you can depend on. Someone who was a good person. We take pride in what we did, don't we?

Unfortunately, that prideful attitude so often leaks over into our spiritual side. Our natural sinful side likes to think "I did it" when it comes to our status as heaven bound believers. When we contemplate our gift of heaven, we often are tempted to take some credit for it. Kinda like our Christmas gifts when we were younger. "I was good this year, so I deserve this gift from mom and dad." We are tempted to mentally make a list of all the good stuff we did and all the bad stuff we avoided, and then total it up and say "I deserve this."

Let me ask you this. Can we take all the credit for anything we have in life? The truth is, no one is where they are in life simply because of their effort and strength. Your success is not yours alone. We are where we are because God gave us life and the skills and time we have. He gave us the drive to work hard. He also placed teachers, parents, government programs and fellow workers in our lives so that He might bless us with success in various areas of our lives. No one does anything all by themselves.

When it comes to our salvation, we can claim no credit for anything. God is the One who has done it all. Before God started working on us, we were dead in our transgressions. We didn't know God. We didn't want God. We were His enemies, actively working against Him in our hearts and lives. ***“We were God's enemies.”*** And there was nothing we could do about it. We were powerless to save ourselves.

We don't like to hear that, do we? It bruises our pride. We like to think of ourselves as independent, "I can do it" people. We want to stand on our own two feet. We don't want to be dependent on anyone. We don't want to owe anyone anything, especially credit for something wonderful. We all have a fierce independent streak in our souls, one that says "Don't tell me what to do" and "My success is all my doing." If I work hard, if I live right, I'll work myself into heaven. The truth is, when it comes to our entry into heaven, we were powerless, damaged goods, expired foodstuffs.

God took damaged, damned human beings and recrafted us. Oh, we didn't choose to be saved. He chose to save us from before the world began. He is the One who planned, implemented and executed your salvation. Even before you knew what was happening, even before you were born, He did it all. ***“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*** Christ's death washed away all our sins, those things we thought, said and did that offended our perfect heavenly Father. Then, God applied Christ's perfect life to ours, covering up all our imperfections. Kind of like

wrapping a present that was boxed up in an old Amazon shipping container with new wrapping paper. Then, to make this gift of heaven yours, He sent the Holy Spirit into your heart to believe in what Jesus did. Again, we didn't choose to believe. Even after we came to faith, God keeps us in the faith by moving us to hear and study God's Word. He builds us up as we do so. It is His power that enables us to live lives that glorify Him. Ultimately, anything that we do as believers that is good and right is a result of God's power and love. God did it all.

If our salvation is totally dependent on God's power alone, it can't be lost. God wants us to know, to the bottom of our hearts, that He is at peace with you.

Part Two: God is at peace with you

Paul wrote these words to reassure believers that they truly were loved by God. He wanted them to be absolutely, positively sure they were going to heaven. And oh, how we need this very same assurance. There are times... We sometimes wonder if God won't change His mind and punish us for our sins. We see our sins. The times we've slammed someone else with our words, or thought they were a waste of food. The times we thought this Bible stuff is a waste of time. The times we lost our temper. The times we lied to our parents or our boss. The times we wondered if God really knew what He was doing. We sometimes wonder if God will run out of patience with us. How often haven't we heard the phrase "What goes round comes round" and worried that it applies to God's love too?

Listen to these words, please. ***"For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"*** God tells us, again and again we're ok. He is at peace with us because of what Christ did. Nothing, and no one, can take that peace away from you. He no longer considers us as sinners because of Christ. He has washed us clean. In God's eyes, we are perfect, worthy of eternal life. God is at peace with you.

Are you sure? Well, not always. There are days our faith is as strong as an ox, and we thank God for that. Then, there are days when our faith is as weak as a lamb, and we struggle to even pray to ask for strength. We need to hear again and again that God is at peace with us. Our spiritual life is like a rollercoaster ride. Sometimes it's up. Sometimes it's down. But just remember this: no matter whether your faith is strong or weak today, you're still on the right track. And God comes to you today to reassure you that He is at peace with you. Believe it.

How amazing! And, how comforting! He comes to us through the power of His Word and makes us sure. He sends the Holy Spirit through the Word to wipe away our worries and doubts. He sends the Holy Spirit to build up our faith so that we can be sure. He opens our eyes to see the truth that God is at peace with us.

My friends, rejoice! Rejoice and be sure you have heaven as your permanent home! We rejoice with our voices in worship, don't we? Oh, there are different ways of rejoicing, aren't there? Some of us are exuberant people, so we rejoice by singing and responding loudly in our liturgy. Some of us rejoice with a smile and a soft "yes!" And some of us are introverted, and praise God with our thoughts and just a twinkle in our eyes.

We also rejoice in our prayers. We rejoice in how we plan our lives, choosing vacations and vocations that are pleasing to the Lord. We rejoice in how we interact with others, knowing that Jesus is by our side. We want them to see Jesus' love through our actions, so we are considerate of others feelings. We want them to know that God is at peace with them, so we live our lives knowing that God will use our actions to open doors for His Word.

Rejoice, my friends! Rejoice that God has disarmed the bomb of sin that threatened us with eternal death. He is the One who has done it all for us. He is now at peace with us. Be sure of that!

AMEN