

False Assurance

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion and rapacity." Matthew 23:25

During the days in which Jesus lived, the Jews had assurance of their salvation. They understood that they related to God on the basis of their being the progeny of their father Abraham.¹ For this reason, when John the Baptist began his ministry, he warned "...when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham to our father:' for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."²

In Matthew 23:15-39, Jesus gives the same warning to this same generation. In essence, He said that their assurance was false and would end condemning them to hell. James, our Lord's brother reiterated this truth when he said, "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"³

The statement "once saved, always saved" is true, but assurance of salvation is not the same as being saved. Paul reminded Timothy that people often have "a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof."⁴ You cannot disobey God and be saved. Never forget: keeping the commandments of God cannot save you, but you cannot be saved if you fail to keep His commandments.

¹ Cf., e.g., Genesis 15:6 ² Matthew 3:7-9 ³ James 2:20 ⁴ II Timothy 3:5