

## The Close of Probation

Presented 26<sup>th</sup> December 2020 by Colin Nicolson

PRAYER: Our Father in heaven it's with both thankful and grateful hearts that we're here this morning bowing before You in this worship place. Father, I give You thanks for our family that's joined us online. I give You thanks for this wonderful Sabbath day You've given us. And particularly, Father, we know that there is a double portion of Your Spirit available today and we reach out in faith to receive that double portion, to be refreshed on this day. This appointed time, this special appointment which You've given us on a weekly basis. Father, I pray that as we spend this time this morning that Your spirit to be with each of us. I pray that our hearts and our eyes and our minds will be open to these things. And that we'll be blessed, Father, as we study through this together, this important issue that of probation that is so easily misunderstood and so readily misunderstood. And I just pray that as we go through it together that Your Spirit will lead us into truth. This I pray in the precious Name of Your dear Son. Amen.

The reason I guess the close probation is never far from my mind, and I pray you might be the same, because for a long time I've understood that all of humanity, individually and corporately, is on probation. That individual probation closes at death and that probation for the world will close without notice, at some time in the future. These are teachings that I grew up with. A number of you here with your heads nodding are very familiar with this idea. It used to frighten me a little. Probably a lot, because it is linked with another thing which also frightened me called the Investigative Judgement.

A search of the King James Version of the Bible on the word "probation" you will find it does not appear at least in the KJV and I think probably no other bible either.. Neither does "investigative judgment" appear in the Bible. There are several other theological terms that also don't appear in the Bible. However, the concept of probation is definitely found throughout the Bible.

Now to understand what probation is, how probation closes, and who brings or closes it, we need to understand the meaning of this word "probation", because it has come to us from English. Not from Hebrew, not from Greek.

So firstly, then, what is the meaning of this word, "probation"?

I went to the Collins online Dictionary ... not because it's mine. The spelling of that name is my wife's maiden name ... so it's in the family!

So this is what the Collin's online Dictionary says:

"Probation is a period of time during which a person who has committed a crime has to obey the law and be supervised by a probation officer, rather than being sent to prison."

So, the criminal justice system is in this meaning.

"Probation is a period of time during which someone is judging your character and ability while you work, in order to see if you are suitable for that type of work."

We are very familiar with this in which most organizations have a probation concept. Some would argue that they are always on probation in their job. I know I have had probationary reports done on me. Some are 3 monthly, some 6 monthly, some are 12 monthly just depending on the arrangements made. So it's not an uncommon term.

So where did this word come from? I went to etymology on line: etymology.com to have a look at the ancestry of this word "probation". So this is what I learned.

Probation (n.)

Appeared in the early 15c., *probacioun*, "trial, experiment, test, act of examining with a probe,"

Hmm doesn't seem comfortable. If you think about it, who might have been using a probe in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries to determine if someone is a heretic or not! It sort of makes sense. It comes from Old French *probacion* "proof, evidence" (14c., Modern French *probation*) and directly from Latin *probationem* (nominative *probatio*) "approval, assent; a proving, trial, inspection, examination," It's a noun of action from the past-participle stem of *probare* ... remember this ... "to test". It says see **prove** and we will look at that in a moment.

The meaning is "testing of a person's conduct" (especially as a trial period of a candidate for membership) is from early 15c., originally especially a testing or trial by adversity. The theological sense is recorded by 1520s; the criminal justice sense is recorded by 1866. We just looked at that meaning in Collin's Dictionary. What was its first meaning? Criminal justice sense. No theological sense appeared. As a verb from 1640s. Related: *Probationer*; *probationary*. (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/probation>)

Now this word "prove" is part of its ancestry.

Prove (v.)

Late 12c., *pruven*, *proven* means to "to try, test; evaluate; demonstrate," from Old French *prover*, *pruver* "show; convince; put to the test" (11c., Modern French *prouver*), from Latin *probare* [there's that word!] "to make good; esteem, represent as good; make credible, show, demonstrate; test, inspect; judge by trial". (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/prove>)

So you can see very much in the history of this word is the idea of test and trial. Notice that in the etymology or history of this word you don't find it time based. By the time you get to the English dictionaries you will find it is time based. I looked on the online Collin's Dictionary, the Cambridge English Dictionary and the Merriam-Webster Dictionary and I got my 'real' dictionary on paper, my old The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary all of them bring the idea of a defined time element into the meaning of probation. Putting all this together, the meaning is a period of time. So this is the history of this word. The embedded meaning of this word we have taken to apply to a concept in the Bible which is definitely there. But the meaning of the word is how we understand this. If that meaning is not consistent with our understanding of God's character, then we are going to come to a wrong conclusion. It is interesting that the word was used in a theological sense well before it was used by the criminal justice system.

Many Christians, although they do not necessarily use the word probation, believe this life is the opportunity to do good and secure eternal life in heaven after you die or when Jesus returns in order to avoid going to hell forever. The Seventh-day Adventist belief is different to the common view because our belief links the close of probation with the end of the investigative judgment, and that's a position not accepted by other denominations.

So let's have a look at what our Church teaches about probation.

This is the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia (Revised Edition) [showing power point slide] which gives this description of probation on page 1151,1152:

PROBATION. "The opportunity provided man in which to accept divine grace and to prepare for eternal life" ... Are you happy with that idea? "...and the time allotted for this purpose." Time allotted by who?

Adrian: God

“SDA’s believe that an individual’s probation closes at death.” Do you agree with that? Absolutely! “In addition, they hold that prior to the second coming of Christ, a decree terminating probation for all still living, will then go forth:

*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still....: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: And, behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be* (Rev 22:11, 12).

This decree marks the close of probation.

So this is the understanding of probation I was taught. God has a time period in mind and He would cause all of the end-time events to line up to close this time period which He has in His mind.

Liam: Arbitrary

On an arbitrary basis. Yes exactly, arbitrarily. What is very clear in this understanding in the message I had was that it is God who terminates probation once He is satisfied that everyone has heard the gospel and has either accepted it or rejected it. And it was put to me, I recall, that not accepting it was the same as rejecting it. Too bad if you’re on the fence and haven’t made up your mind... which was frightening at the time ... because I hadn’t made up my mind!

Adrian: Had or had not?

Colin: Had not. Because there was way too much living to get on to do and I wasn’t going to let an inconvenient doctrine get in the way! There was a bit of rebellion around very strongly, I must admit.

Adrian: Colin, Paula is saying in Spanish we call probation a time of grace ... it talks about when the time of grace will be over.

Colin: Wow...Yeah. It is linked to time! ... But not originally.

Now, on page 1152, this description of probation goes on to quote Uriah Smith. It is from an answer he gave in the Review and Herald, May 20, 1875 to a question about the timing of the close of probation. The SDA Encyclopaedia only quoted a few sentences of it but we will go to all of Smith’s answer because it reveals something of Uriah Smith’s understanding of the character of God... And it is something that is imprinted in the Adventist psyche. I know because I had to unwire this!

So the question is:

QUESTION. Will probation close after or before the seven last plagues of Revelation, please explain Rev 16:9. (Which is about the cup of His indignation poured without mercy). Can sinners repent at that time and be saved? Yours, H. H. P.

So this is Smith’s answer:

ANSWER. We think probation closes before the plagues are poured out, for the following reasons: - 1. So long as Christ acts as mediator between God and men, mercy is offered. No judgments therefore can be inflicted without mercy till Christ's work as priest has ended. But the seven last plagues are poured out without

mixture of mercy, hence they are poured out after Christ has ceased his pleading, and probation has ended.  
2. The angels with the plagues come out of the temple. Rev. 15:6, and when they come out, the temple is filled with smoke from the glory of God, and no one is able to enter, or to officiate, therein. But the ministration now going forward in the sanctuary will continue till the work of salvation is ended. Therefore the plagues are poured out after mercy has ceased.

So Uriah Smith is saying here that a point is reached when God no longer offers mercy to mankind. You can't interpret that any other way, can you? That's clearly what he is saying. Certainly that's how I got it. Sadly I believed this for most of my life. However, the challenge came when we started studying the character of God. I did a search in the KJV on the words "mercy for ever". Don't link 'for ever' together in the KJV as you won't find it. Three words ..."mercy for ever" ... do it sometime. It reveals that there are 46 verses in the Bible, all in the Old Testament, that tell us God's mercy is for ever.

Adrian: 'Olam"

"Endureth" is provided. . It adds the words "endureth for ever" ... "mercy endureth for ever". "Endureth" is provided. It is not there in the original. HIS MERCY IS FOR EVER! So how can the mercy of God cease when God says His mercy is forever? How do we reconcile this? We'll come back to this point.

In the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe – A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, we read this on page 327:

Christ's work as high priest is nearing its completion. The years of human probation<sup>53</sup> are slipping away. No one knows just when God's voice will proclaim, "It is finished." "Take heed, " Christ said, "watch and pray, for you do not know when the time is" (Mark 13:33). {Page 327}

There you notice there is a footnote 53 with the word 'probation'. Let's have a look what it says:

<sup>53</sup> "The end of human probation is the time when repentance is no longer possible. A person's probation can close in any one of three ways: (1) at death;" Do you agree with that?

Adrian: Yes

(2) "When the unpardonable sin has been committed (Matt. 12:31, 32; Luke 12:10);' Do you agree with that?

Adrian: Yes

Colin: Yes ... absolutely.

(3) When probation is closed for all just before the Second Advent. Are you OK with that?

Adrian: Depends

Colin: I'll put a question mark to that... we'll see why as we go along.

"As long as Christ functions as high priest and mediator between God and man, mercy is available. "No judgments therefore can be inflicted without mercy till Christ's work as priest has ended." (Quoting here Uriah Smith) But the seven last plagues are poured out without mixture of mercy [Rev. 14:10; 15:1], hence

they are poured out after Christ has ceased His pleading, and probation has ended" (U.Smith, in SDA Encyclopaedia, rev. ed., p. 1152). {Page 331}

This idea of Uriah Smith is in our 27 fundamentals. We believed this. Most of us were raised on this. So Adventism links the close of probation with the end of the investigative judgment, and rightly so. However, if the investigative judgment is seen out of its true context – i.e. it is not viewed through the lens of the life of Jesus Christ – then the close of probation must also be seen out of its true context because the two are linked and one view guarantees the other view.

This study is not about the investigative judgment. For that, I refer you to the book "As You Judge". My boys got a copy of this for Christmas. We encourage them to read it. This study is about probation – what it is and how it closes. Given that the close of probation is linked to the end of the investigative judgment, our new understanding of investigative judgment is guaranteed to give us a new understanding of how probation closes and who closes it. In the short time we have left we'll have a look at this.

Where in the Bible do we first encounter the concept of probation? You are very familiar with these verses.

Genesis 2:15-17

15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

So what tells us that Adam was placed on probation here? Is there a trial, a testing of character or conduct? Yes – *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it ...* There's the trial ... there's the test. Notice here that God did not set a time period for Adam's probation. You can read that verse any way you want, you'll not find a time period in there. But it is linked to time. ... *for in the day that thou eatest thereof*. But who determines when that day is? Now probation must have two outcomes. One is fail and the other is pass isn't it? Two outcomes' So Adam may not have eaten of the tree! What then would be the time period of his probation?

Fiona: It would keep going

Colin: It would keep going. That's it.

In this case Adam determined the duration of his probation. And closed his probation by eating of the tree. So here we have a model for how probation works don't we?

Now we'll go to the Spirit of Prophecy. We will spend a lot of time in the Spirit of Prophecy this morning. There is a lot of Bible we could use but I don't have a week to spend this study with you.

So the question is why did God place Adam on probation?

The Lord placed man upon probation, that he might form a character of steadfast integrity for his own happiness and for the glory of his Creator. {RH February 24, 1874, par. 9}

So here we are told that probation is for character development which is proved by trial. God placed man on probation for the good of man we are told. It was so man could *form a character of steadfast integrity*. For what reasons? Firstly, for man's *own happiness* and secondly *for the glory of his Creator*. So the only way man could be truly happy was to develop a character of *steadfast integrity* which would glorify his Creator. This character of steadfast integrity is God's own character for the only way to glorify God in character is to reflect God's own character because the glory of God is His character.

So if Adam had not disobeyed and had not closed his own probation, what would have happened? This again is from the Review and Herald:

Angels on probation (That's interesting!) had been deceived by Satan, and had been led on by him in the great rebellion in Heaven against Christ. They failed to endure the test brought to bear upon them, and they fell. Adam was then created in the image of God and placed upon probation. He had a perfectly developed organism. All his faculties were harmonious. In all his emotions, words, and actions, there was a perfect conformity to the will of his Maker. After God had made every provision for the happiness of man, and had supplied his every want, he tested his loyalty. If the holy pair should be obedient, the race would, after a time, be made equal to the angels. As Adam and Eve failed to bear this test, Christ proposed to become a voluntary offering for man. {RH February 24, 1874, par. 26}

So there are a few things in this. We can see that Adam and Eve's probation had two possible outcomes. They could choose to distrust God and eat of the tree thereby closing their own probation or they could choose to love God and trust Him and *after a time, be made equal to the angels*. It was the choices they made that revealed their characters and determined their destiny. This was not the work of God. This was the work of man. It was God's intention for man to *form a character of steadfast integrity and be made equal to the angels*. That was the intention.

Now notice here angels were also on probation. This appears in Patriarchs and Prophets.

Like the angels, the dwellers in Eden had been placed upon probation; their happy estate could be retained only on condition of fidelity to the Creator's law. {PP 53.1}

So for the same reason that God placed the tree of knowledge in Eden, He allowed Lucifer to undertake his work of deception in heaven. He values freedom of choice so highly that He is willing to take the risk that His created beings could choose to not love Him and to distrust Him. There is a very good expose on that in the book "Acts of our Gentle God". You have probably read it and I encourage you to go and re-read that chapter. It's one of the early chapters.

Who else was placed on probation?

The temptations to which Christ was subjected were a terrible reality. As a free agent He was placed on probation, with liberty to yield to Satan's temptations and work at cross-purposes with God. If this were not so, if it had not been possible for Him to fall, He could not have been tempted in all points as the human family is tempted. {3SM 131.3}

So in this life from birth Jesus Christ was on probation. Also:

For a period of time Christ was on probation. (You can't exclude time that it is a factor but not the driver. It's not about here is a time, you get there or you are in big trouble! It's not that concept.) For a period of time Christ was on probation. He took humanity on Himself, to stand the test and trial which the first Adam failed to endure. Had He failed in His test and trial, He would have been disobedient to the voice of God, and the world would have been lost. {ST May 10, 1899, par. 6}

How much was riding on the life of Christ on this earth?

Liam: Everything

Colin: Absolutely everything! The merchant sold everything he had to buy this one pearl. Everything!

So Christ was on probation for a period of time. How long?

Ruben: The life of a mortal body.

Colin: Well said. The life of a mortal body Ruben said.

In every possible way Satan sought to prevent Jesus from developing a perfect childhood, a faultless manhood, a holy ministry, and an unblemished sacrifice. (Was there any part of Christ's life where Satan was not trying to tempt Him into failure? So from cradle to the grave...the Cross, He was on probation.) But he was defeated. He could not lead Jesus into sin. He could not discourage Him or drive Him from the work He had come to this earth to do. From the desert to Calvary the storm of Satan's wrath beat upon Him, but the more mercilessly it fell, the more firmly did the Son of God cling to the hand of His Father and press on in the blood-stained path. {Ms140-1903.29}

Congregation: Amen

Colin: Amen ...

Christ's heart was pierced by a far sharper pain than that caused by the nails driven into his hands and feet. He was bearing the sins of the whole world, enduring our punishment, – the wrath of God against transgression. His trial involved the fierce temptation of thinking that he was forsaken by God. (But He wasn't! Right at the end there was a fierce temptation) His soul was tortured by the pressure of great darkness, lest he should swerve from his uprightness during the terrible ordeal. Unless there is a possibility of yielding, temptation is no temptation. {YI July 20, 1899, par. 10}

So this is telling us that right up until His death, Christ was still being tempted. On the cross, it says, He was fiercely tempted to think that He was forsaken by God when His Father's presence was hidden from Him. So, we would have to conclude that Christ's probation ended when He died and He died triumphant *that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil* (Heb 2:14).

Adrian: He even uttered the words "why have You forsaken ...

Colin: Why have You forsaken Me?

Adrian: It was a temptation.

Colin: It was ... it was. I think I will deal with that a little bit. I looked at the book "Agape" for a little bit of help on that.

Let us look at some more Spirit of Prophecy comments on probation.

Every one is accountable to God according to the ability and talent which he has received. Those who are on probation to see whether or not they are to be subjects of the kingdom of God, must be tried and proved now. Those who love God in spirit and in truth, will be pronounced fit subjects of the heavenly kingdom. The law of God, which is perfect holiness, is the only true standard of character. Love is expressed in obedience, and perfect love casteth out all fear. Those who love God, have the seal of God in their foreheads, and work the works of God. {YI July 26, 1894, par. 7}

Here again we see that probation is for character development with trial and testing along the way as proofs and measures. This is how we develop. If we say yes to a temptation, we fail. We need the grace and strength of Jesus Christ to resist that. And this is why there is co-operation with heavenly agencies. All the angels of Heaven are here to help us. But we have got to make that choice ... and God will give us the strength. At least that's my understanding.

Ruth: It's the truth

Colin: It's the truth

Ruth: Definitely!

Colin: It is.

Now this one comes from the Review and Herald:

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye." {RH August 16, 1892, par. 1}

This she continues on from the lesson contained in Matthew:

The lesson contained in these words is of solemn import, and it is to be carefully considered. The law of the divine government is that each one has the power of being the arbiter of his own destiny. (MARK THOSE WORDS WELL BECAUSE THEY ARE VERY IMPORTANT) Repeat, The law of the divine government is that each one has the power of being the arbiter of his own destiny. (This is telling us we aren't helpless pawns in a big game. We might feel that way. We might think it's that way. But it's not that way.) What we do to others shall be done unto us again. Therefore we should be careful how we treat one another. We ever reap as we have sown, receiving back to ourselves what we have done to God and to our fellow-beings. In this life we are on probation, placed under test and trial to form characters for the future, immortal life. (Test and trials are good things. Are you getting that idea? We are not here [for God] to hurt us!)

Ruben: It's God's workman

Colin: It is! It's God's workman



Through the provision of the grace of Christ, fallen man, debased and corrupted, may be transformed into the divine likeness. {RH August 16, 1892, par. 2}

So who has the power of being the arbiter of our own destinies? We have... we have that power. The choice is ours and the choices we make under test and trial *form characters for the future, immortal life*. Notice how our human tendency to judge others is brought to bear here but transformation into the divine likeness is available which means the grace to overcome is available to us. I must confess my great failing is a whole thing about judging others. Oh dear! It is so hard wired! You can never do this but here it says I can do this!

Adrian: There's the faith of Jesus

Colin: There's the faith of Jesus. That's right. The faith of Colin is insufficient!

Ruth: And he promises He will finish this work.

Colin: That's right. We have to cling to these promises. Satan will do everything he can to discourage us... "See it's not working" ...

So another one:

Each soul in every family is on probation. We are to regard our probationary time as belonging to Christ. (It's not our time, it's His). Our time, our opportunities are to be regarded as exceedingly valuable.

Why are they exceedingly valuable? They are actually priceless, because we have got this extra time, because the Son of God came down from Heaven, to show us His Father and to offer Himself as a sacrifice for us. That's why. He risked His eternal life. That's why this time is so valuable!

Our thoughts are to dwell on the things written in the Scriptures. Unless we, as Christ's blood bought subjects, show in our characters the virtues of his life, we cannot be saved. The only way in which we can gain salvation is through accepting Christ as the Redeemer of the world, and the only hope of the sinner. {NUReaper April 16, 1907, par. 9}

So probation is of vital importance to us as it is a gift from Christ for it is He who stood in our stead to give us this chance. Again, it is us who must make the choice to accept *Christ as the Redeemer of the world, and the only hope of the sinner*. It's our choice. We can choose He is that or we can choose to reject it. There is nowhere else to go. Humanity is the arbiter of its own probation.

So let's now go to the Great Controversy:

When the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death. Probation is ended a short time before the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven. Christ in the Revelation, looking forward to that time, declares: *"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be."* Revelation 22:11,12. {GC 490.2}

So the close of probation follows the end of the investigative judgment when all cases have been decided for life or for death. Have a look at this book and read it. [holding up the book "As You Judge"] You will see a new understanding of the investigative judgement. Who decides? Who decides life or death?

Congregation: We do.

Colin: It's in there ... every man is arbiter of his own probation. So who decides life or death?

Congregation: We do.

Of course we do! It took me years to understand this!

Adrian: The scriptures say "my life is continually in my hands"

Yeah. That's it. It's all there. With the wrong ideas of the investigative judgement, with the wrong ideas of probation and close of probation, it veils us. We can't see it. So given that man is the arbiter of his own probation, it must be that it is man who decides life or death and that it is a logical outcome of the choices he has made. Isn't it? There is nowhere else to go. It's life or death.

Jesus said in Luke 17:26,

*"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man."*

Right. What was it like in the days of Noe?

Well in Job 22:17, tells us, speaking of the attitude of the antediluvians. It says,

*"Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?"*

So what was their attitude to God? Depart from us ... depart from us.

So as it was in the days of Noah then all of humanity except for 8 souls, had decided their own destiny by rejecting mercy offered in the form of the ark. Remember God's MERCY IS FOREVER. And what mercy did He offer? It was the Ark wasn't it? Everyone had the invitation to go into the Ark. That was God's mercy. His mercy was not cut off by the flood. His mercy continued!

Adrian: Mm ... It's only mercy if He's not the one pulling the trigger if they don't get in.

Yeah ... So likewise, in the days of the Son of Man, which means the last days of earth's history, the overwhelming majority of humanity will have decided their destiny by rejecting mercy. Because like it was in the days of Noe, so it will be with the Son of Man. So the majority will reject mercy and a minority accept it ... as in the days of Noe. They reject mercy offered through the third angel's message given in the light of the character of God message. That's what they reject. But a small minority, of 144,000, will have chosen life through the merits of Jesus Christ.

So to bring more clarity on this point, let's consider this, again quoting Ellen White:

Unless there is a possibility of yielding, temptation is no temptation. (as we read before, but now I am adding a little bit more) Temptation is resisted when man is powerfully influenced to do a wrong action; and,

knowing that he can do it, resists, by faith, with a firm hold upon divine power. This was the ordeal through which Christ passed. {YI July 20, 1899, par. 10}

This is the process of forming character like unto the character of God. This is what the trials and temptations are all about. And Christ went through this ordeal. So there are ultimately only two outcomes from temptation. In dealing with my understanding in how probation will close which I am getting to here. There is ultimately only two outcomes from temptation. In one case, as we have just read, *Temptation is resisted when man is powerfully influenced to do a wrong action; and, knowing that he can do it, resists ...so choosing not to do it ... resists by faith, with a firm hold upon divine power*. So it is a continual resistance to temptation *by faith, with a firm hold upon divine power* is the process of forming the character of God in a person. It must be. So the person who has the character of God formed in them is a righteous person. Is that correct?

Adrian: Yeah

Colin: Thank you. I thought I was alone there for a moment!

Adrian: Now it's you and me.

Di: It's interesting that temptation is resisted when a man is influenced by wrong action and thought.

Colin: Yeah. Not just action.

Di: Not just action.

Colin: Oh yes. The greatest battle in my life ... the greatest battles go on in here [indicating his head] ...I can tell you!

Di; It's where we start!

Colin: It is ... It is.

Now turn to 1John 3:9 and 10. So we are pursuing this where we have just got to now. This is someone who has resisted temptation over and over again by faith with a firm hold onto Divine power. So this is the person we are talking about... I believe 1John 3:9 and 10 is talking about. And it says, "*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed ...*" Whose seed is that? God's seed, Christ. ..."*for his seed (Christ) remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."*

So those who are born of God and have the seed of God, Christ, dwelling in them tells me, do not commit sin. That's what John is saying isn't it? So if you go through this process over and over again ... resisting and resisting ... choosing to resist, by faith with a firm hold upon Divine power, John says that person ... dwelling in Jesus Christ, submitted to Jesus Christ in our life, then you don't sin. That's what it says. There's arguments, discussion and debate ... but that's what it says!

Adrian: That's what the Bible says. If we don't believe it, we're not even in the game!

Yes, that's right. So it tells me they are able to live a sinless life on this earth. And they must, because we've just read in Revelation 22, "*He that is righteous let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*" This is at the close of probation. This is before the second coming. So they must be righteous and holy on this earth, in this life. Mustn't they?

Adrian: Hallelujah!

Colin: Absolutely!

Fiona: Colin, how do we become sons of God? Galatians 4, becoming adopted?

Colin: Yes ... yes. And "*the Spirit of His Son crying Abba Father*"

Do we believe this?

Colin: Yes we believe this but many don't! But this is an important component and doctrine of the teaching of righteousness by faith! If you say you have accepted righteousness by faith and you reject what John is saying here ... you do not believe righteousness by faith doctrine! You cannot! So you reject it at your peril I would suggest.

So in the second case, those who continually and habitually give in to temptation, eventually no longer see temptation as temptation – because it's the way they live their lives. It's not temptation anymore! So we now have two classes of people, the second, who are no longer impacted by temptation because they will either be living this life and when tempted, they are going to do it anyway or they have got to the point it where it has no bearing on them is simply what they want to do. Probation must close.

Adrian: Their hearts fully hardened.

Colin: Fully hardened! Or fully saved! Probation must close. Who has closed it? Not God!

Fiona: It's the individual.

Colin: That's right! It's the individual ...the individual. If they are unjust and filthy and don't want to change and therefore they will not change. If they are righteous and holy and that is all they want to be. They also will not change. So probation is closed.

When this position has been reached with all humanity in one group or the other, probation has closed and it is closed because characters have been fully formed and temptation is no longer temptation to either group. It is closed because each person has closed their own probation for life or for death by the free choices they have made. There is no arbitrary act of God in this. The words of Revelation 22:11,12 are simply stating the condition of each person on earth. If they are unjust and filthy, they do not want to change and therefore they will not change. If they are righteous and holy, that is all they want to be and they also will not change.

What does everyone then have to look forward to?

Revelation 22:12 "*And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*" Every man according to his work ... to his works!

Gavin: His works based on his thoughts.

Colin: His works based on his thoughts and choices ... the decisions that he has made.

So I pray that the work that is worked in us is the work of Jesus Christ changing our hearts, forming His character in us and preparing us for heaven.

Gavin: Amen

Let's pray: Father in heaven, Father, we just ... we just thank You for probation, the second probation. The probation extended to us Father through grace. Through the giving of Your only begotten Son, Your dearly beloved Son in whom You are well pleased. And through Him, Father, through Him, by holding onto divine power as He held on to divine power, as He overcame through faith in You, Father, we plead for that faith, for faith of Jesus in us. That we may overcome in the same way. For He is our pattern. He is the perfect pattern. Father, I pray that we will take these words to heart, that we will understand and think all the time, that every moment we have is just a precious gift from you bought by the blood of Jesus Christ. And we won't waste these precious moments, Father. We will spend this time in allowing your dear Son to develop His character in us and when it's perfectly developed in us and perfectly developed in His people. Father, we know we are promised He will come back and take us home. Our Father I pray that we will have opportunities to share this message with others, that they also will have the opportunity to do the same thing because you You're not willing that any should perish. So Father, I just thank You for these things that You've given us, these amazing insights. And I pray Father that we consider these things and we'll be blessed as we think on them. I ask this in precious Name of Jesus. Amen