**The Spiritual Maturity Structure – BD09-01**

Our subject this evening is the spiritual maturity structure. It is a fact of the spiritual life that God desires every believer to grow from spiritual childhood to spiritual adult maturity. In the book of 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 2, we read, “As newborn babes desire the pure milk of the Word that ye may grow by it.” Growth into spiritual maturity is structured upon feeding upon the doctrines of the Word of God—learning the principals of Scripture.

1 John 2:12-14 expand this concept in this way: John says, “I write unto you little children (those of you mature in the Christian faith) because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. I write unto you fathers (you who are adults in spiritual maturity) because you have known Him that is from the beginning. And I write unto you young men (you who are adolescents in the Christian life progress) because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you little children because you have known the Father. I write unto you fathers because you have known Him, that is, from the beginning. I write unto you young men because you are strong and the Word of God abideth in you and you have overcome the wicked one.”

There is progression in the Christian life from babyhood to adulthood. That is the plan and the objective of God for every believer. The apostle Paul adds to this idea in the book of Colossians chapter 1, beginning at verse 9 when he says, “For this cause we also since the day we heard it do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge (the Greek word there is “epignosis”—full knowledge) of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father who has made us fit to be partakers in the inheritance of the saints in light.”

So moving on to spiritual maturity is related to what we have been studying on Sunday mornings, the Christian’s inheritance, and our part in expanding that inheritance. So it is clear from the Word of God that any Christian at any age can proceed to make progress toward becoming a giant in the faith in terms of the grace and knowledge of the Word of God, and in functioning in the power of God.

The individual believer, for that reason, is called to erect in his soul a structure of spiritual maturity. The apostle Paul points this out in Colossians chapter 2, verses 6 and 7. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye; rooted and built up in Him; and established in the faith as ye have been taught abounding with Thanksgiving.” The concept of being built up there is to build a structure of maturity in the soul.

So the spiritual maturity structure is the believer’s means of defense in the angelic conflict. It is also the base of His attack in the angelic conflict. Without this spiritual maturity structure, you can neither defend yourself in the angelic warfare nor can you mount a successful attack upon the forces of darkness.

The foundation of the spiritual maturity structure, of course, is salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and then the intake of Bible doctrine which is stored in the human spirit. That is truths which you have learned toward which you have a positive acceptance.

Now the Bible calls the knowledge that you have there by the Greek word “gnosis,” and that simply means knowledge. It’s just spiritual phenomena which is just lying there waiting for you to do something with it. Now at that point when you as a Christian go positive to that under the filling of the Holy Spirit, then that information is transferred down here to your human spirit where it is stored in categories of doctrinal truth.

The knowledge here now the Bible calls “epignosis,” which means full knowledge. And “epignosis” is the foundation upon which the spiritual maturity structure is built in the soul. Without that foundation, you can never go anywhere spiritually. This is why most Christians are wimps in the spiritual life. They are within church context where they are never taught the Word of God beyond some of the stories of the Bible and some of the challenging and inspirational passages. They are never given the hardcore information which is necessary upon which to build the foundation of a structure of spiritual maturity.

There are plenty of people running around in churches who think they are mature Christians, who can talk to you about what is Christ-like and un-Christ-like, what is the mind of Christ, what is not the mind of Christ; and they don’t have a fig newton notion about those realities at all. Without the understanding (of) how God puts this together, you’re not going to get to base one. So here’s a tremendously important piece of information that you need to get solidly (and) clearly in your perception.

The goal of the Christian life then is to build a spiritual maturity structure in the soul via this system which we call the grace system for the perception of spiritual things—the grace system of perception. It is a grace system because it works for everybody. The dumb ones here and the smart ones here on equal ground when it comes to learning the Word of God and on developing spiritual IQ. It is not dependent upon your human capacity. If it were, it would not be grace. This is a non-meritorious system that God has provided through the local church ministry for every believer no matter what his age is, to become a spiritual giant.

What God wants of all of us is to build spiritual maturity in our souls because that glorifies Him. Ephesians 1:12 puts it this way: “That we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ.” That we should come to where God will be praised. His glory will be honored. His essence will be exalted. Because of what? Because of something that we have become. What God wants us to do then is to build spiritual maturity in our soul using the grace system of spiritual maturity.

We may envision that spiritual maturity structure in the form of a pentagon—a pentagon which becomes the basis of our defense against Satan in the angelic conflict; a pentagon which becomes the basis of our offense in our attacks against the citadel of Satan in the angelic conflict.

This five-sided concept comes from 2 Corinthians 12:10. … The context here is the apostle Paul talking about the fact that he personally has been suffering a physical ailment which he was told that God gave him. It was a source of sufficient irritation that Paul said, “I prayed three times that this should be removed from me,” and God said, “No” every time. Instead He said, “I’m going to give you a grace capacity to carry this, because,” the Lord says, “… while you have this infirmity, while you suffer from this particular weakness, it is under that condition that I can maximize my power through you. It is when you have backed off from all of your self-confidence, I will be able to make you a tremendous Christian with this weakness.”

Paul says, “In that case, I will gladly bear this infirmity. I’ll glory in my infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” So then in verse 10 he says, “Therefore I take pleasure in…” And here he names the five basic facets that compose the spiritual maturity structure of the soul.

**Grace Orientation**

First he says, “I glory in infirmities.” Now early in the Philippian series you may refer back to this particular subject, and it goes in detail. Now I’m just going to touch upon it now. I’m not going to go through all the analysis of the words. But here in 2 Corinthians he uses the word “infirmities.” The word “infirmities” in the Greek language is actually a word that basically is referring to the concept of grace orientation. Grace orientation is a basic factor, a base facet of being a spiritually mature Christian. So we find in the Word of God that we are called upon to develop this facet.

2 Peter 3, for example, verse 18 says, “But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Growing in grace is a requirement of the Christian life. Hebrews 13:9 says, “Being not carried about with various and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart (that is, the mind) be established with grace, not with foods which have not profit,” and so on. So the Word of God calls us first of all to be oriented to grace. Grace orientation is an element that we develop as spiritually mature Christians through the grace system of learning spiritual things.

**Relaxed Mental Attitude**

The second word that Paul uses in describing what he rejoices in is the word “reproaches.” Reproaches has to do with a relaxed mental attitude. A relaxed mental attitude has to do with the concept of love in the Greek sense of “agape” love. “Agape” love is non-emotional. “Phileo,” the other kind of live is emotional—personal emotional rapport. “Agape” love is all up here in the head. It’s a mental attitude free of antagonism or bitterness toward other people.

In Ephesians 4:31-32 we have this described. “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and bitter speaking be put away from you with all malice, and be kind one to another; tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” Now that’s an expression of a relaxed mental attitude toward other people.

In Colossians 3:15 we read, “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts to which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful.” That is, instead of antagonism, there should be peace toward other people. So when a person becomes a mature Christian, one of the things he discovers (is) that he will be developing a relaxed mental attitude—an “agape” capacity of being free of mental bitterness in the midst of the most outrageous personal treatment.

**Mastery of the Details of Life**

Then the apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:10 adds the word “necessities.” Necessities we would call mastery of the details of life. Yes, you do need money. Yes, you do need material things. But they must not dominate you. They must not be your love. That must not be where your treasure is, or your heart will be here on earth instead of where the real treasures are to be stored in heaven. But we do have to therefore have a capacity for dealing with material things without being enslaved to them.

In Luke 12:15 we have this statement: “And He said unto them, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness for man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” In 1 Timothy 6:6, we have this strong statement concerning material things: “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” Not material things is great gain, but godliness and being satisfied with what God legitimately has given you, that is enormous great gain.

What we’re talking about here is mastery of the details of life—a Christian who knows how to experience prosperity without letting it destroy him.

**Capacity to Love**

Then the next word that the apostle uses in 2 Corinthians 12:10 is “persecutions.” Persecutions is the capacity to love. That is, persecutions bring out from us bitterness, antagonisms, (and) hatreds. The Word of God says, “No, you develop the spiritual maturity that that is not the response you give. You do not respond with evil for evil.

John 13:34 says, “A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” Here the statement of the capacity to love, a capacity which you do not naturally possess, the capacity which only growth in spiritual maturity will give you. This capacity of course is capacity first of all to love God; secondly to love the person you’re married to; and, thirdly to love other people. Colossians 3:14 puts it this way: “And above all things put on love which is the bond of perfectness.”

So the capacity to love is something which is not natural to us but the person who develops a spiritual maturity structure based upon the intake of the Word of God is the person who develops the capacity to love. That’s why Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments. Don’t talk to me about loving me if you’re stupid, backward, and dumb about doctrine.” You can’t even begin to take the first step toward love. What you’re going to do is substitute a lot of emotional talk, a lot of rolling of your eyes heavenward, a lot of pie in the sky, a lot of sitting on the mountaintop in your white robe and meditating, but none of that is love for me, God says. “When you learn the Word of God and you are obedient to Me, that is love.”

**Inner Happiness**

And finally, the apostle Paul uses the last word in 2 Corinthians 12:10 of the things that he chooses to have, and that is “distresses.” “Distresses” is an expression of inner happiness. It is being able to be surrounded by turmoil. It is to have the world apart all around you, collapsing. Yet you have a millennium in your soul. John 15:11 says, “These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full.”

It is the purpose, it is the objective of God for each of us to develop the capacity of inner happiness. This is not happiness which is structured on people, circumstances, or things. That’s the kind of happiness that the world knows. When people, circumstances, and things come apart, then out the window goes happiness. This is an inner happiness that is based upon the Word of God. Philippians 4:4 puts it this way: “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.”

So this is what we mean by a spiritual maturity structure—a pentagon for attack; a pentagon for defense. Now spiritual maturity in the soul is called edification. The word “edification” comes from two Greek words. One of them is this word “oikos.” “oikos” means “house.” Then the other word is “domeo,” which means “to build.” So “edification” means “to build a structure, to build a house.” For that reason we talk about spiritual maturity as a structure. That is how the Bible describes it, as building a structure in your soul.

Now there are actually three basic Greek words for edification that give us the complete picture on this concept of building spiritual maturity—this concept of edification which is another word for spiritual maturity. First is this noun: “oikodome.” “oikodome” refers to the act of building. It is the process of building which is what you do to make yourself spiritually mature. Ephesians 4:12 puts it this way: “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying (the building up) of the body of Christ.” Verse 16 uses the word again: “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body and to the edifying of itself in love.”

You may add verse 29: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but that which is good to the use of edifying that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Don’t use bad language around people. It degrades them and it debases them. Use the kind of language that will build them up. You’re building. You’re putting the structure together. You’re putting the block together. That’s “oikodome.” And this word gives you the first concept of the process of becoming spiritually mature. It is something that you put together; something that you build.

There’s a second noun, and that is “oikodomia.” “oikodomia” is the result of your building. It refers to the structure which you have constructed. 1 Timothy 1:4 uses this word: “Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith so do.” “Which is godly edifying” or “godly administration,” or “the administration of God” is a better translation there. Don’t give heed to foolishness but give heed to a structure of maturity. That’s the building itself. This is the process—laying one brick upon another. This is the completed structure, all built.

Then there’s a third word, and that is “oikodomos.” This refers to the builder, the person who is doing it. We have this word used (illustrated) in Acts 4:11: “This is the stone which was setteth not of you builders (there is it) which has become the head of the corner.”

Now with these three words we have the basis of understanding of what is involved in going to spiritual maturity. Again, I remind you, that that is the requirement of the living God. In Jude 20 we have that specifically told us: “But ye, beloved, build thee up yourselves on your most holy faith praying in the Holy Spirit. Here we have another Greek word. This time it’s a verb: “epoikodomeo.” That means to build up yourself. So this procedure here of building spiritual maturity is a personal responsibility to execute. We’ve indicated that you do this with the grace system of spiritual perception by the study of the Word of God, the intake of doctrine. You do it by actually putting together, the structure of building. You do it by yourself. Here you are doing the building, the person who is the builder. And you end up with a structure that is the spiritual maturity structure in your soul. And God says this is what you are to do.

So this is the process of building resulting in the spiritual maturity structure in your soul, and it is built by means of the Word of God through the capacity of the Holy Spirit by you the individual believer. One, two, three.

Now the purpose of all of this: We begin with the nature of an edified soul. The purpose of this first of all is obviously to become a mature Christian; that is to have all the facets of the pentagon of spiritual maturity well-developed in your soul. The Lord Jesus himself was the pattern for this kind of maturity. In Ephesians 4:13 we’re told, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man and to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

When we pursue spiritual maturity, we want to pursue the character and the spiritual stability and the maturity of Jesus Christ. Incidentally, I want you to notice that verse 13 is preceded by verse 12. Verse 12 is the key to all of this. Verse 12 explains what the pastor-teacher and the spiritual communicative gifts mentioned in verse 11 are supposed to do. The result is that when this process is functioning in the local church then you will have verse 13 coming into reality. People will be transformed into the character of Christ.

Now the Lord Jesus himself followed this exact pattern in His humanity. In the gospel of Luke chapter 2, verse 40, we read, “And the child (Jesus) grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him.” He grew to physical maturity and He became physically strong. He was filled with wisdom because He had put doctrine into His human spirit. By the time he was twelve years old He could “wow” the doctors of the Law of Moses because of His knowledge, because of the doctrine He had stored in His human spirit; that is, summaries of doctrine.

And He was under divine grace because He had grown in edification to spiritual maturity. In verse 52 we’re told also that He not only developed physically. He not only developed mentally. He not only developed in favor with God spiritually, but He also developed favor with man. He developed godly social relationships.

And you may just count on it that (at) the teen age, the junior age, the primary age, the Lord Jesus was not the kind of a wimp that was subject to the opinions and the pressures of His peers. He stood head and shoulders above them. He developed social relationships that (were in line with) authority toward His elders. This was clearly demonstrated. But (He) also knew the lines of authority to God.

In John 1:14, we have another reference to the spiritual maturity example of Jesus Christ. “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. The glory that the disciples beheld here was not the essence of His deity. We know that that was hidden. It was revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration but the rest of the time it was hidden. What the disciples see here in glory that they said we saw is the spiritual maturity of His soul which is the reflection of the glory of God. That is the divine character.

**The Purpose of Edification**

So first of all, the purpose of edification in the soul is to become a mature Christian; and, secondly to become a stable Christian—to be consistent—to have a control system in your life. Most Christians are spiritual and emotional yoyos. They go up and down. They’re never sure. They’re always chasing someplace else, always trying to find something new, and they do not have controls in their lives. The Lord Jesus Christ, under a variety of tremendous pressures, demonstrated that He had stability in all of this. For that reason, Hebrews 13:8 says that He’s immutable. He’s the same, yesterday, today, and forever.

The Christian is the prime target for satanic attack—not the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s why the Christian must have stability if the Lord’s work is to be set before anything else in his life. With stability the Christian can enjoy even material things without it bringing him misery.

**Light**

The third thing that is the purpose of edification is to become a Christian who reflects the glory of God to the world. In the Bible we have as a synonym for spiritual maturity the word “light.” For this reason the Lord Jesus as a God-man was described in the terms of being light which meant He had spiritual maturity. John 8:12 says, “Then spoke Jesus again saying unto them, ‘I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.’”

Then in 1 John this same concept again: 1 John 1:5 says, “This then is the message which we have heard of Him and declare unto you that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

So a synonym for spiritual maturity is light. As such, Jesus Christ therefore is described in John 1:14 as the glory of God. We Christians, for the same reason then, are called to glorify God with a spiritual maturity structure built into our souls. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says, “For we are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God’s.” Now how do you glorify God in your body? How do you glorify God in your human spirit? By putting the Word of God in that human spirit so that your body can function according to the guidance of those doctrinal principals. Then you glorify God.

Furthermore, Matthew 5:14 and 16 call upon us to be lights in the world, not to hide our light under a bushel. The completed spiritual maturity structure is the image and the glory of God in the Christian. 1 Corinthians 11:7 says, “For a man indeed ought not to cover his head inasmuch as he is the image and the glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man.” It is the spiritual maturity structure that is the divine quality within us that is being reflected as light, and that’s the glory of God. The edified soul is reflecting the glory of God.

There are other synonyms for spiritual maturity in the soul which we will not touch upon tonight. I’ll just mention them as we go by. One of the synonyms as we have indicated is light (Psalm 119:130, Ephesians 5:8). Another one is the glory of God that we find for example in Romans 3:23. There is “Christ formed in you” (Galatians 4:19). “Christ may dwell in your hearts (Ephesians 3:17). “The fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19), that is, all the facets of the maturity structure. “The new man” (Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10); that is, the man in Christ as over against the old man in Adam. “The perfect work” (James 1:4). “Followers (or imitators) of God” (Ephesians 5:1). All those are varying expressions for talking about spiritual maturity structure built to maximum level in the soul.

So our testimony as believers, as ambassadors, is to have a basis that we have built within our souls by which we can speak to God, by which the pressures and the sufferings of the world will only show forth the magnificence of the glory of God that is functioning through us. With spiritual maturity in our soul, we have stability, and we reflect indeed the glory of God.

Now if this has been built into your soul, it is also necessary that at this point we warn you that you can tear it back down. That’s why the Bible uses, I think, in part this image of spiritual maturity as a building you can put together. You can build a structure, and you can tear the thing right back down. Whenever the Christian is not building the spiritual maturity structure in his soul, he is tearing it down. And when he is tearing it down, he is building hardness on the facets of his soul toward God; that is, hardness in his thinking, in his emotions, and in his will, toward the will of God. We refer to that as callouses upon the facets of the soul.

In 2 Corinthians 13:10 we read, “Therefore I write these things being absent, less being present I should use sharpness according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification and not to destruction.” The apostle Paul is rebuking these people, and he is rebuking them because they have begun to tear down their spiritual maturity structures. And he is indicating that he is using sharpness in what he has said to them in these letters because he wants to keep them from destroying their spiritual maturity.

The pressures of the world about us will very quickly tear that down, but if you keep going, if you keep on a daily basis working on that structure, feeding upon the Word of God, you will find that you will grow to the point where you are described in James 4:6 as moving to the more grace, or what the Greek says (is) a “super grace” level. “But He giveth more grace (super grace) wherefore He hath said, ‘God resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble.’”

So that you actually bring that spiritual maturity structure where you really do come to a mountaintop. You really are walking with God. You really have the fantastic capacity to stop being a dumbbell in your thinking. Your thoughts are following the mind of God. You stop being an emotional yoyo that’s a sucker bait for anybody that comes along that can manipulate those emotions. You will not find that your will is making all those decisions that you regret, so that you look back and say, “Why didn’t I do it this way?” Because you didn’t have divine information in the first place, and you could have had it. That is super grace status.

But there are so many arrogant Christians among us who think that they have come to this automatically that they never really on the daily basis grab the Word of God and feed upon its great realities. So they’re little puny Christians. They all think that Matthew 4:4 applies to everyone else except them. “But He answered and said, ‘It is written (speaking to Satan), man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” As you live on bread on a daily basis to sustain your life, you live on the Word of God on a daily basis to sustain your life.

Please turn to Ephesians chapter 4:17 through 21. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 17: “This I say therefore and testify in the Lord that ye henceforth walk not as other gentiles in the vanity of their minds.” The first thing we are warned of in verse 17 is that we do not walk in the vanity, that is the emptiness, of the minds that characterizes the gentile. This is the word “mataiotes.” “Mataiotes” refers to the lack of Bible doctrine understanding in that perceptive side of the mind. Just zero empty nothing in the perceptive mind. The “mataiotes” means that you have been negative toward the Word of God. What information you could have learned and could have been stored in your human spirit is gone. It just sits there. It’s worthless. There is an emptiness, and you know that when an emptiness is created, it’s a low pressure area. When a low pressure area exists in the atmosphere, there is only one thing that’s going to happen, and that is that a high pressure is going to come and kill it. A low pressure sucks in a high pressure. In science, the phrase is that nature abhors a vacuum. If there is a vacuum, it’s going to be filled.

Now what you’ve created here in that perceptive side of your mind, Paul says, is a spiritual vacuum. Into this vacuum you will suck in false doctrine, human viewpoint, religion, mental attitude sins, guilt complexes, and negative disposition toward what is right. You’ll have false values. You’ll come to false conclusions. And you’ll become rebellious against authority. This condition eventually leads to building up hardness in your soul. Callouses begin to build up here on the mind. Callouses begin to build up here on the emotions. Callouses begin to build up here on the will. Gradually you become hard toward God.

So here is an emptiness in the soul that brings destructive effects. Verse 18 says, “…having the understanding darkened.” This is the Greek word “skotizo.” “skotizo” means a blackout of the mentality toward spiritual thinking because of the stuff that you’ve drawn into it from the world—no vision of God and no leading from God. This is perfect in its tense which means it happened to you in the past when you have gone negative to the Word of God and you’ve been careless about the Word of God. And the perfect tense then means that the condition continues on. And it’s passive which means it happens to you. You cannot keep this from happening to you when you ignore feeding from the Word of God.

Furthermore, the thing that is darkened, he says, is your understanding: your “dianoia” which means your capacity to think through; your thinking through ability; that is, the perceptive side of your mind—this whole side of your mentality is blanked out and hardened. You have no capacity for being able to understand spiritual things, and furthermore, it says, we are then alienated (“apallotrioo”), which again is perfect—it happened in the past and the effects continue. It is passive. It happens to you. You can’t keep it from being done to you once you get off on this ignoring of the Word. It’s a participle, a spiritual principal, and what it means is you are separated. You are estranged because of the callouses from the light of God. That is, you are estranged from walking by means of the Holy Spirit’s control which Galatians 5:16 commands us that we walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Why is this condition existing? Our understanding has been darkened because of the vacuum we created, the things we drew into the mind from the world. We have now become alienated from everything that has to do with the life of God and God’s thinking. We are devoid of spiritual guidance through the ignorance (the “agnoia”), which expresses the cause of our spiritual alienation. We’re in this condition because of the ignorance of blindness of the heart. Having your understanding darkened; being alienated from the life of God, the leading of God, through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of the heart.

This is a bad translation. It is not “blindness of the heart.” This word is “porosis.” The word “porosis” means hardening or callous. Because of the callouses of the heart, and you know the word “heart” means the “mind.” Callouses on the mind. When you have callouses of the mind then it affects and produces callouses on the emotions and callouses on the will.

So here’s the summary: How do you get from being a spiritually mature Christian to where you tear the whole thing down, to where you are back to zero in reversionism? It begins with negative volition of the soul to the doctrine which is available to you. You don’t come to church. You come in late. You come in indifferently. You don’t listen. You don’t pay attention. And day by day you don’t feed upon the Word of God. Negative volition creates and emptiness in the soul which acts as a spiritual vacuum. This spiritual vacuum sucks in all the false doctrine and human viewpoint into the mentality of your soul so that the perceptive side or your mind is completely blanked out from reality. That’s what the whole world of liberalism is all about. It’s a blanked out mentality from reality. These false concepts then cause a blackout of godly expression from the facets of your soul. Your mind cannot think God’s thoughts. Your emotions cannot follow God’s lead. Your will cannot follow God’s decisions. The soul becomes alienated from God’s way of life because of spiritual ignorance and the buildup of callouses of the soul.

And then what happens? Here’s the expression: In verse 19 this is what you become. Under that condition a terrible thing—and this is what you as a Christian once were, and what you as a child Christian can again become. “Who being past feeling…” Past feeling means you’re spiritually insensitive toward God in His word. “… and given themselves over” means that you have betrayed yourself over to lasciviousness—illicit sensuality, illicit sex—neutralizing true love toward the right person. “… to work all uncleanness…” All uncleanness means making a business of perverted sexuality. “… to work all uncleanness (and to do it) with greediness.” This means that you are driven by an insatiable lust to try more and more evil things for satisfaction.

Now sensuality is more than sex. Sensuality is all of the things that are destructive to us physically, emotionally, and mentally. I’m not going to get into that tonight but it is a grievous sin to fall into—this kind of sensuality, and it very quickly begins to show on us in one way or another.

But we can’t close this evening without telling you what to do when the callouses have been built up on the soul. The first thing I’ll tell you is that the callouses on the soul, like the callouses on your hand or some part of your body, are not something you can go down to the local drugstore to get some solution to rub on them and they’re gone. You do not remove spiritual callouses overnight any more than you can remove physical callouses. That is a very important thing for you to realize, and give second thought when you’re ready to be careless about these things that produce the callouses on the soul and destroy this spiritual maturity structure.

Ephesians 4:20 says, “But ye have no so learned Christ.” He says, “You people in Ephesus are not characterized by this kind of negative attitude toward the Word of God.” “… if so be…” And the word “if” here is first class condition. It means “since.” It really is, “… since you have heard him.” That is, you listened. You went positive when you were taught the Word of God. “… and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus. That ye put off the former manner of life.” This is “the old man.” You have been taught. You have learned the Word of God. You have taken “gnosis” knowledge and transformed it into “epignosis” knowledge. You have established yourself on the basis of truth.

Then you begin peeling off the callouses in this way: “You put off concerning the former manner of life,” the old man. This is everything that was represented in Adam, the place of death. You begin that by repenting and confessing of your known sin. Confessing all that carelessness, all that indifference, all that violation of the Word of God—all that sloppiness in your Christian service. Boy do we have that to account for. You have put off that old man “which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”

You have confessed the sin. Now you forget the sin. You put it aside. It has been neutralized. You take in the Word of God. As you return to the study of doctrine day by day, the callouses on your soul begin to peel off bit by bit, just as Romans 12:2 tells you the same thing—to renew your mind. You renew it with the Word of God. The result is that positive volition to doctrine prevents that vacuum from developing in your perceptive mind so that it keeps the mind from sucking in the things of the world.

Finally verse 24 says, “And that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” That new man which is in Christ functioning on the spiritual maturity structure from “righteousness and holiness of the truth” is the translation that should be there. “… is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” It all begins and ends with the intake of doctrine into your soul.

With that you have the basis for not only building maturity. You have the basis for maintaining it. Why be a loser in the Christian life now, and pay for it at the Judgment Seat of Christ?

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971