**The Facet of Grace Orientation – BD09-02**

We now begin a very exciting passage of Scripture and course of study as we look over a series as we look at what the Word of God has to say about basic Bible doctrine. We are now looking particularly at the subject of Christian maturity. The Bible describes certain spiritual qualities which it puts together as constituting being a spiritually mature Christian. We’re called upon to build this structure of maturity within our souls. This is erected, as we saw last week, upon the basis of positive Bible doctrine in our human spirits.

Now the basic facet of being a mature Christian as to do with orientation to the grace of God. So we are going to spend two or three Sundays first of all on learning what it is to be oriented to grace. I would think that all of you sitting here are oriented to the grace of God. In all likelihood there are some Christians here, there are some people here, who are disoriented to the grace of God. You’ve got some real legal hang-ups in your spiritual life. You have something in your background that has given you guilt complexes. You have something in your background that started you off on the wrong course so that you have sought to please God by things you do and things you don’t do. If so, you are a very fortunate person because you’re going to have a chance to get a relaxed mental attitude by learning what it is to be oriented to the way God thinks, which is grace.

**2 Corinthians 5:17**

So we begin with looking at the product of this thing we call the grace of God. If you’ll turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians to a very familiar verse in the 5th chapter. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold all things are become new.”

Now in the previous 16 verses of this 5th chapter of 2 Corinthians, you have a list of some of the fantastic provisions of the grace of God. For example, in verse 1 we’re told that if we die, we enter an eternal residence in heaven. If you leave your human body through death you will enter a place of eternal residence in heaven which God has prepared for you. That’s the product of grace.

We’re told in verse 5 that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer as a toke on God’s promise to take us to heaven upon our acceptance of His provision of salvation. That’s an act of the grace of God. Verse 6 thus indicates to us that God Himself makes it certain that if we leave our bodies we go immediately to be with the Lord. If you know anybody who has died who is a believer, you know right now that the provisions of the grace of God, the plan of God which is a grace plan, has made it certain that that person is now in the Lord’s presence. When He left his body, you know without any shadow of a doubt that he immediately went to heaven.

Verse 10 tells us there will be rewards for Christian service. Service which has produced divine good as the result of the workings of God the Holy Spirit through us. Not a lot of rinky-dink Christian activity which produces merely human good—and God rejects that.

Verse 15 tells us that it is the grace of God that has given us the provision of spiritual death on the part of Jesus Christ in order to pay for our sins. We were spiritually dead. We needed somebody to pay the wages of sin which is spiritual death, and He did it for us.

Now these 16 verses list these tremendous provisions of the grace of God. When you get to verse 17 you reach a conclusion. The Greek word here is “hoste” which is translated “therefore” in verse 17, or “so that.” It simply indicates that a conclusion has been reached. Then we come to that Greek “if.” It looks like this in the Greek: “ei.” This is the word “if” that is in the Greek what we call a first class condition. We have mentioned this before and you perhaps will remember that the Greek language uses the word “if” in four different ways. It always uses it in such a way that when you read it in Greek it is telling you something more than there’s a condition, an uncertainty. This “if” in first class means: If, and it is true, that this is the case. “If any man be in Christ, and you are in Christ—you are born again, you are saved.” It’s an established fact. You may translate it by the word “since.” “Therefore, since any man by in Christ …” And the word “any man” is the Greek word “tis” which means “anyone.” It’s a generic term. It means men, women, boys, and girls. So that if any person is a Christian… Then it uses a term here: “In Christ,” which is a term for the believer.

In the Greek language there is no verb. You will notice in your English version that the word “be” is in italics. Now that’s kind of important that whenever the Greek language leaves out a verb—If God the Holy Spirit wanted to punch something across to us very hard, then this is the way they do it in Greek. So God is saying that “I want to impress you very deeply that if anybody (and you are—you Christians to whom I’m writing at Corinth—you are) in Christ, you are a new creature.”

Now this being “in Christ” is a term for a position that we Christians hold. It’s the basis of what we call positional truth. Galatians 3:28 speaks to us of this position that we hold in Christ. “There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Now all Christians have been bound up into one body and they have been placed in Christ. They have been set aside to all the merits that belong to the Lord Jesus.

Now the result of being in Christ, and this is the point here: To be in Christ means to be joined in union with Jesus Christ equals something very tremendous, and that is “new creature.” You are a new creature. And again the Greek leaves out the verb to emphasize that “in Christ” is to be a new creature.

Now I know that some of you are sitting here this morning and you are thinking that you are a new creature because you’ve knocked off your smoking; because you knocked off your boozing around; or, because you knocked off your running around and playing around. And so you’re a new creature. And I know that some of you who are on the new side of your Christianity or on the immature side of your Christianity are prone to get up in a testimony meeting and tell about you have become a new creature in Christ because you quit smoking and chewing and going with girls that do, and so on.

This verse has been tremendously distorted in the minds of Christians because they’re always associating it with what I’ve quit doing and what I don’t do any more in the way of living. As a matter of fact, it seems that for the new Christians this is one of the biggest fun-killing verses in the Bible because to be a new creature means all the things that you don’t do anymore, and that’s not true.

But somehow along the line, new believers and immature and untaught Christians pick up this idea that a new creature is that because he gives up something or someone in his way of living. There are meetings of the professional church ministry and (that) the professional church preacher deliberately creates. Oh, camp is a beautiful place to do this. Meetings where you get everybody around the campfire and you get a guy there with a guitar strumming away (the Gilmore Holt type). Then you begin to sing a few of these inspirational little songs. You start out with something jazzy first of all so that everybody is kind of moving around. Then you smooth it down and you let the fire get to a certain point. Then somebody gives a few emotional testimonies, and somebody gives you a little devotional about calling upon you now to sacrifice your life for the Lord, and to put aside the things that you should put aside. Then maybe just to put a good touch to it, they give you a little stick...

And they say, “Now when you have made a decision as to what you’re going to put out of your life, throw it on the fire and let it burn like that stick.” Pretty soon you’ve got this conflagration that’s rising to the heavens and everybody charges out of that camp… And they go home and they say, “Boy, have I had an experience. I’ve just been on the mountaintop. I’m going to go with God like I’ve never gone before. I’ve just really cleaned up my life.” Bologna!

You haven’t done anything but had a great big emotional high, and you’re not going anywhere. You haven’t even started. You’ve been conned. You’ve experienced the biggest con game in the religious profession. And you’re not going to get to be a new creature by that game. The Word of God says if any of you (and you are) in Christ, you have a position of salvation, you are a new creature.

Now we have all kinds here at Berean Memorial Church. We have the worst kind of slobs you could imagine. We have the nicest people you could ask for. We have all the stinkers and we have all the devious ones and we have all the clean-cut ones—the all-American type. There’s one thing that’s great about all of them. They’re all new creatures in Jesus Christ. They have a variety of backgrounds and a variety of past and a variety of present sins. But they’re all new creatures in Jesus Christ. And because this place is so positive toward the Word of God, God uses it and uses you in a fantastic way.

If you want a closer walk, even unsaved unsaved people (you remember) are giving up things to go to heaven: You will not get a closer walk with the Lord because of something you give up. Now God the Holy Spirit, as a result of doctrinal instruction may lay it upon your heart to get rid of something or to discontinue something, and that’s OK. That’s going to be a deepening expression of the fact that you are already a new creature. But we all have an old sin nature that loves to make sacrifices for us to achieve a status of spirituality, and then we’re very proud of what we achieved. This verse has to do with what God in His grace has done for us—not what we do for Him.

I want you to take a look at this word “new.” In the Greek language we again have two very interesting words. One is the word “neos.” That stands for “new.” But it means “new” in terms of time. We might say, “It’s recent.” But there is another word called “kainos” that also means new. But this is new in reference to “kind” or we might say “species” or “breed.” And guess which word is used here in 2 Corinthians 5:17. That’s right, this one right here: The “kainos” is what is used. It’s the word for “new breed” or “new species.” A great and dramatic thing has come on the scene of human history which was never true before. In the church age God has added a new creature to His panoply of creation. This new species was begun on the day of Pentecost with the baptism of God the Holy Spirit when He joined all believers in union with Jesus Christ to form the body of Christ.

Now the baptism of the Holy Spirit was delayed until the Lord was ascended to heaven (John 7:39, Acts 1:5). This baptism was never found in the Old Testament. People in the Old Testament were never joined to God. But in the New Testament the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the experience of the believer in being placed in Christ. The Old Testament saints were born again but they did not experience union as a new breed, as a new species with Jesus Christ. They were not part of the body of Christ.

Now the Christian becomes this new species at the point of salvation when he is joined by God the Holy Spirit automatically to Christ. Now he’s not joined because he has changed any of his behavior patterns. He’s not made a new creature because he has promised to do something better and therefore he’s joined in. He is joined because he says, “Yes” to the offer of eternal life, and he becomes a new creature, and this word is “ktisis” in the Greek which means “creation.” So that what he has become is a new species in God’s created order—not because he has achieved some level of victorious living. What I’m trying to get across to you, if you are going to be oriented to God’s grace, the first thing you have to learn is that you and I are nothing and that we provide nothing and God asks nothing. But God has a great plan and you’re already in it. You can step outside of that plan and you can botch up and scour up your life fantastically, or you can get into the swing of things, and you can get into the plan of God and ride along to the most fantastic human experience you could have imagined. We a new kind entirely because of what God did for us who didn’t deserve it, and that’s grace.

However, because you are God’s unique creation, you also come under the unique position of being the prime target of Satan’s attack. Our Lord is now in heaven beyond the reach of Satan. You have become the target of Satan’s attack, and that’s why we are going to go over these weeks explaining to you how to build up a defense against Satan and it is entirely dependent upon having this spiritual maturity structure in your soul. And if you don’t get grace orientation, it’s not going to do any good for us to talk to you about how to have a relaxed mental attitude and about mastering the details of your life or being able to express love or having an inner happiness because you’re not going to get any of those things until you are oriented to the grace of God. (Until) you’ve gotten over your legalisms, you’re not going to ever get off the ground.

Now you will notice that he says that this position in Christ, which is the basis for our orientation to the grace of God, has established the fact that we who are a new breed, for us old things have passed away. Not our old experiences, not our old ways. This world “old” here refers to what is archaic. As a matter of fact the word means a thing that existed from the beginning, and your sins did not exist from the beginning. The thing that is the oldest thing in you that did exist from the beginning is that old sin nature. God says it is that old sin nature’s expression in spiritual death that has passed away. What has passed away from us is spiritual death. You will never again be able to die spiritually once you have become a Christian. Spiritual death has abruptly been neutralized.

Now there are people all over this city who are going day by day in the agony of wondering whether they are going to make heaven or not; who are going through their little legalistic procedures in order to stay on the good side of God. And yet the Word of God says that for us who are in Christ we have been made a new breed and all this spiritual death has passed away, “… behold all things have become new.” And again it is this word for new: It is a new thing. We have the eternal spiritual life of the Lord Jesus Christ. And grace has permanently secured this for you.

Now there is no way you can make yourself a new creation. It’s all the work of God. And grace always finds a way for our need. We’re going to go more deeply into this next Sunday morning about how grace meets our needs. It has never failed. It is what God Himself is free and able to do in our behalf.

**The Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

Now it would be well for us to pause and just spend a couple of minutes reviewing this subject of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Very briefly:

1) It did not occur in the Old Testament or in any previous dispensation (Colossians 1:25-26). The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a unique experience of Christians in this age.

2) The Lord Jesus Christ predicted the baptism of the Holy Spirit (John 14:20, Acts 1:5).

3) The technique of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is that a believer at the moment of salvation is entered into permanent union with Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

4) The unity is established among believers by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:5).

5) Baptism of the Holy Spirit implies all social distinctions are destroyed. This is the only place where true equality exists (Galatians 3:26-28).

6) The baptism of the Spirit identifies believers retroactively with Christ on the cross (Romans 6:3-4, Colossians 2:12).

7) The baptism of the Holy Spirit began the dispensation of the church (Matthew 16:18, Acts 1:5, 2:3, 11:15-17).

8) The baptism of the Spirit is the basis of our current positional truth—our position in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-6).

9) Finally, and very importantly, the baptism of the Spirit is not an experience, including speaking in tongues or the ecstatics. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 it’s that aorist tense in the Greek which means we have all, once for all, and it says, “… we all have been baptized …” including all the variety of people that exist within the Christian community who are born again. The tongues crowd are way off on the baptism of the Holy Spirit when they try to make it an experience.

The history of grace begins in the Garden of Eden. This was provided for Adam and Eve. Man, you remember, was created perfect, but he used his will to choose to sin. God didn’t make him sin. It wasn’t necessary for him to sin, but he elected to sin. It’s sometimes hard for us to take a look at the beautiful situation in which they existed with everything provided for them; no cares; no worry; a perfect relationship between the perfect right man and his particular right woman. And yet they said, “We’ll step out of all this and we’ll go the road of sin.” And people are inclined today to take up what is great and to mess it up.

I don’t know how many times it has been my experience to have to listen to people as they related their marital problems and to sense that these people had a good marriage but one of the people in it didn’t have enough sense to know it was good so they beat it to pieces because of some inane ideas and goals and fixations that were created, and they kicked to pieces a perfectly good relationship. We’re doing this all the time in one way or another. That’s exactly what Adam and Eve good. They kicked to pieces a perfectly good relationship and a perfectly good setup.

**The Essence of God**

Now Satan’s temptations to them proceeded by attacking the essence of God. So it’s necessary for us to pause for a moment this morning and, as you think about the grace of God, to review the essence of God. Remember that first of all God is sovereign. Now the sovereignty of God could have decided to wipe Adam and Eve, and consequently all of us, right out of existence. He had the right to do it. But the sovereign God did not exercise this right.

You remember that God is righteousness. His righteousness was revolted by what had taken place in the Garden of Eden. Yet He did not destroy them. Though His justice demanded that a price be paid for the sin that was committed. But all the righteousness and justice of God was tempered by His love. He had the right to do it. His nature demanded it. But His love sought a way out for Adam and Eve. The result was that He provided the quality of eternal life for them by a plan which God Himself devised—that plan of which we want to speak this morning.

In His omniscience, God knew the doom that would come upon all of us who would be descended from them, but He didn’t destroy them. In His omnipresence, He was right there to see what happened. In all the steps He was witness to man’s depraved act. And in His omnipotence, He was able to come up with a plan that He could effectively enforce to destroy the power of sin over us. And because God is immutable (He never changes), His character will not tolerate sin, and His promises, because He is veracity (which is truth) will be kept.

So here God in His grace has been perfectly true to His own character and He came up with a plan. Now we’re a sorry lot but God’s grace has given us a way out. We deserve nothing and yet Titus 2:11 says, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.”

Now it is an important thing to be positive toward doctrine. It is important that you don’t try to impose your changes on people’s personalities; on their way of dressing, on their habits. It’s relaxing to remember that God does all this for us. And we need to learn how to be oriented to grace and to start people in grace—to thank God for who and what He is that makes all this possible. Yet we are forever having Christians who are running around, and because they’re not oriented to grace, God who can be oriented to grace in spite of being this kind of a perfect personality, we can’t be oriented to grace. We are forever going around being disturbed on what people do, the disposition of their personality, and how they dress.

Did you ever complain about how somebody dressed? I have two college sons and they are beside themselves with the way some of the older generation at Berean dresses. They come home and they can’ believe how these old cats are going around. I mean they come home from college and try to put on a little style and class and they walk in here. How are you going to compete with white pants, white tie, and a red shirt? And they go down the line and they tell me what all the classy gentlemen around here have been wearing last Sunday morning. And they just can’t believe it. They dress in what they call conglomerates. Nothing matches. It’s just a conglomerate. But it’s style. It’s just distressing to them because they walk in and they’re just out of their class right away.

Now maybe that disturbs you, how people dress. Well that’s between them and the Lord if they want to dress in conglomerates. And you don’t put any screws on them in trying to change their dealings with themselves. Now you can get pretty serious about this all the way down the line. Some people, you would be surprised how they get up in arms about what some people wear.

Now we’re a sorry lot. God in His essence knows how to deal in grace. One of the first signs of not being oriented to grace is that you can’t mind your own business. The provisions of the grace of God are something terrific. God and His plans are perfect. He has come up with a provision for every one of our failures and every one of our weaknesses.

**Romans 8:28**

Will you turn to that grand passage in Romans 8:28-30? The plan of God is perfect, and if you are oriented to grace, you’re not going to try to be improving on God’s plan either for your salvation or for your life. Satan is constantly challenging the plan of God in trying to bring us into substitutes of human good. A believer who is ignorant or negative to doctrine begins emphasizing his experience and he looks for some kind of an emotional good feeling.

Now there are five satanic challenges to the plan of God. Romans 8:28 says, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Then he goes on and tells us about the things that God has provided, bringing us right up to the state of glorification at the end of verse 30.

Now in verse 31 we have one of the first challenges of Satan, and that is opposition. Verse 31 says, “What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” God’s plan for the believer functions by means of Bible doctrine which is cycled in the soul and spirit. Satan doesn’t fool around with believers who are minus doctrine. There are all kinds of Christians who are play church and Satan doesn’t bug you at all. But when he finds a believer, and when he finds a church which is cranking out doctrinal instruction so people are getting hold of life principals and getting hold of the mentality of God into their mentality, that’s a church where all hell is going to break loose. Because Satan is going to move in on that kind of a group and on that kind of an individual believer.

This is the kind of a believer that Satan will egg on into pseudo spirituality: into tongues, into self-crucifixion living, and into legalisms. Now no sin is too great for the plan of God. And your salvation is not lost if you sin, even if you have a flagrant sin. Most of you are probably too nice to know what a flagrant sin is anyhow.

I want to tell you something else. Your flagrant sin doesn’t eliminate you from Christian service either. Every now and then I come into contact with Christians who explain to me that they have limited area of service in their church because they were guilty in their past of something called a flagrant sin. So they’re eliminated from certain areas of services, certain areas of office-holding. This is legalism. This is blasphemous. It is an insult to the grace of God. Any church that operates on that basis is the most disoriented operation to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that you can imagine.

It is blasphemous because the grace of God never permits anything to come into our lives that He cannot cover. I’m telling you, Christian, you’re covered. Now God will discipline you and me for our flagrant sins, but you are covered as to your salvation and as to your service. When you’re ready to pick yourself (up) out of the dust and say, “OK, I’ve had enough groveling down here and eating the dirt, and I’m going to stand upright again as the son of God, as the daughter of God that I am, and I’m going to move on again.” You make your confession and you’re back in operation.

Now you know your own thinking. You know whether you’re hung up on the idea that there’s something in your background, in your experience that puts some brakes and limitations upon your being all-out gung-ho in the service that God opens to you. If you have any reservations, any mental or emotional reservations, you’re out of line. You are not oriented to the grace of God. And Satan is going to constantly egg that on you. Now you can believe him or you can believe the Word of God. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. There is not sin that is too great for the plan of God.

This verse here says, “What shall we say to these things? If God be for us…” And you’ve got the word “if.” And again you have the first class condition here: “If God is, and He is for us, who can be against us?” Now you will notice something if you look closely at your English (version). Again you notice that when God the Holy Spirit wants to say something very dramatic, He chopped the verbs out again. There’s no “be” and there’s no “can.” He just puts it in Greek.

Now I love this verse. I used to have it written out in Greek and for years had it tacked to the lamp in front of me on my study desk because it looked nice to look up there and see in those pungent Greek words, “If God for us, who against us?” And that’s how it puts it: “If God for us, who against us?” Nobody. Now a preacher has to remember this but you have to remember this just as well in your experience. You people who are going around singing the blues, saying, “I just can’t understand why nobody likes me.” Most of us can understand why. Because you’re so hung up on yourself and you’re so disoriented to the relaxed and gracious way of life to which God has called you that no wonder you’re offensive.

You people who run around and say, “Oh why did God do this to me?” Do you know what you’re saying? You’d better stop and think what you’re saying: “God, why could you have been so disoriented? Why could you have been so foolish? Why could you have been so dumb as to do this to me?” Are you ready to say that to God? Then don’t run around saying, “Oh why did He do this to me?” as if He made some kind of a mixed up mistake. He knows what He’s doing. His plan is perfect. He is perfect, and everything (that includes you) is perfect along with it. That’s the great thing about grace.

Now it’s a matter of whether you’re willing to get with it or whether you’re willing to say, “Well I’m going to operate on the basis of good judgment, my capacities, and what I learn from the world,” and then you’re just another worldling. “Who against us?” No one can oppose us in God’s plan. No one is greater.

Now the second challenge from Satan to the grace of God with opposition is in verse 32, and that’s provision. “He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Has God provided for you? Can He keep His Word and His promises to you? “I just can’t understand why God is doing this to me” suggests that God can’t keep His word. “I just can’t understand why God doesn’t take this problem away from me. I just can’t understand why God doesn’t help me. I’ve asked Him so much. Why doesn’t He help me with this?” Are you going around whining like that? Like God is not keeping up on His work?

We fail God, but He never fails us because it’s against His essence to do so. God has provided the greatest thing for us. This verse should remind us of another verse. “He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things?” Right away your mind clicks back to Romans 5:8 here that says, “But God commendeth His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” He gives us all things, not because we were nice and good people, but grace says that He did this, and He works (Romans 8:28) “all things together for good when we were His enemies.” When we were not people who loved Him, He gave us the most. The biggest thing was salvation, to solve that. Now God has given us the most, and He has freely given us all things subsequent to the most.

Now after God gives you the most, how can He give you more than that? That’s what He does. The most that He could give you was eternal life, but now He freely gives you beyond that. No challenge is too great therefore to meet these “all things” of Romans 8:28. You already have the most. He follows through in addition to that. He takes our sorrows, He takes our spiritual failures, He takes our sinfulness, and he takes the disasters and He weaves them all together and makes them good. The plan of God is greater than all our needs.

Do you know when you lack? When you step out of the plan of God. It’s when you go negative toward doctrine. It’s when you are ignorant of doctrine. It’s when you’re in your carnality. That’s when things go bad for you. That’s when things begin to creep up on you because you’re out of the plan of God. You are not benefiting by what He has proposed for you. And God will let you work it out. You bet. You go ahead and keep working on your own plan. You’re going to work all this out by yourself just like the world does. What you’re going to end up is a massive catastrophe.

In verse 33 Satan challenges with criticism, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Shall God that justifieth?” Who dares to challenge an individual believer within the plan of God, as to salvation or to that believer’s life? Satan does all the time. Satan has his little demons running around all the time and these demons are creating files on every one of us. Then when the file gets big enough, Satan walks into heaven and slaps it on the desk before God as the judge and says, “I want to show you what one of your little sweet patooties down there at Berean church has been doing. Now here in the first of the month this guy had three great big monstrous sins. I mean not one of your little run-of-the-mill sins. I mean these were three biggies, all in one day. Over here on the fifth of the month he did this. Then on the tenth I want you to notice this. And there it is.” And God says, “Is my sweet patootie in Christ?” Satan says, “Well, yeah.” And God says, “OK” and He throws it out of court. Now do you get the feel for grace orientation? Satan’s got the goods on us and we deserve to be hauled in, but God says, “No case. I’ve covered it. I’ve covered it.”

So you’re going to come along here. Satan can’t criticize us, and yet we have Christians who think that they have a right to go around judging other believers. You know that the Bible forbids this (Matthew 7:1-2). Romans 14:4 says, “Who art thou that judges another man’s servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.”

Verse 10 of that 14th chapter says, “But why dost thou judge thy brother?” Or, “Why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.” Now here’s another thing that we are prone to be inclined to do. God says He reserves judgment of other Christians for Himself. I don’t care how flagrant you think their sin is that you know about. It is none of your business. I don’t care what you think you need to do about it. It is God’s business to deal with that believer and to do something about it.

Now if you are a parent, it is your business to judge and to discipline the shortcomings of your children. If you are a civil authority of the state, it is your business to judge and to discipline the lawlessness of the citizen. If you are a spiritual leader of a local assembly, it is your business to evaluate and to judge and to discipline what the Bible calls sin—not what you don’t like or what you don’t think is good, but what the Bible credits as sin, and that’s all. But outside of that, you have no business particularly as the Scripture indicates the judging of motives. God reserves the right to deal with the Christian’s failures and with his carnality, and it is not yours to help yourself.

It’s only God because of His omniscience who knows all the circumstances. I’m all the time having people coming to say things to me, and they’re saying it to me, you know, in a way that they think they’re just coyly talking to me, but they’re trying to get a message over to me. They’re pretending to give me an evaluation that they think they’re qualified to give on some other believer, and they’re not, and they have to be cut down if necessary sometimes. Because only God has the omniscience to know. Only He was there to see it. He has the omnipresence. You don’t. Only God has the omnipotence to make an effective discipline. Only He has the love and the justice to be fair and exercise it in propriety. Only He can express righteousness in the way it should be expressed—not you and I. We don’t have the right to be pursuing this. You don’t have the right to be judging the believers.

And so Matthew 7:1-2, you might want to read it, in effect tells you that the way you’re going to deal with other peoples’ sin is the way it will be dealt to you. What that is saying is that the judgment that you’re going to mete out is going to be given to you for someone else’s sin as well as your own.

Another thing that Satan challenges on in verse 34 is sinfulness. “Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ that died, yea rather, that who is risen again, who is at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us.” The challenge to the reality of our salvation or the challenge to yourself as a believer. There are always some misinformed people that think there was some sin that was outside of the plan of God that didn’t get covered. There are always some self-righteous believers who go around with their legalistic taboos who are agonizing in their closets who look down their noses at Christians who go out and live it up. It is not your place to be dealing with what you think is the sinfulness of other Christians.

We have these oddballs who are forever running down the aisles to reaffirm their faith or to rededicate their lives. That’s a monstrosity if there ever was one. And all the professional preachers use it to prove that something big has happened. And these people who rededicate walk out and because they don’t have doctrine, because they haven’t been oriented to techniques of divine operation, they’re just as bad off as they were before. We don’t do a thing in the plan of God, and that’s grace. Christ died. That’s His spiritual death. He’s seated at the right hand of God the Father. He makes permanent intercession.

There is one thing more, and that is in verses 35-39 Satan challenges us with suffering. If God loves you, if God is really for you, if you’re in His plan, why is He doing this to you? Verse 35 gives us the answer to the question, what shall separate us from the love of Christ? Nothing. He gives seven types of suffering: tribulation, or pressures of mind and body; distress, or troubles that come in; persecutions, or attacks from the world; famine, or lack of things; nakedness; peril, or hazard; or, sword, or war. None of these things can separate us from the plan and love of God. How grace will preserve us through all of them.

In verse 36 Satan seeks to destroy the Christian with his constant pressure. In verse 37 we have victory because God’s plan works by grace. Verses 38-39 say that there’s no situation too great for the plan of God. We are in the plan of God and anything that challenges it is going to fail.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971