**Mastery of the Details of Life, No. 2 – BD11-01**

We come this morning to the subject of the facet of the mastery of the details of life. This is the second in this series. Now we have been learning about what the objective is of the Christian way of life. We have indicated that this objective is a spiritual maturity structure in the soul. This spiritual maturity structure consists of divine viewpoint to the believer which makes him a lighthouse in Satan’s world.

This spiritual maturity structure has several facets to it. We’re dealing with it in terms of five specific facets. You may discover other areas but these five pretty well cover what the Word of God presents as constituting a mature Christian. It is in effect a pentagon-shaped building. The pentagon becomes the headquarters of the Christian’s defense for it is this structure that enables the believer to meet the attacks of Satan upon him in this age of grace.

Each of the facets in fact expresses a certain mental attitude which we draw from the Word of God. The foundation of this building is doctrine in our human spirits which we have received because of our positive volition toward the Word that we were taught. The spiritual maturity structure is actually the reflected glory of God and it is, as we say, the shield against satanic attack.

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.” The way we glorify Him is through (the) erecting of this pentagon of defense within our souls.

Now the facet that we’re looking at, the mastery of the details of life, means the control (you will remember) over the things that are of lesser important in life, so that you’re not dominated by things that are secondary in your life, in terms of both this life and of eternity. It’s a matter of always giving doctrine the central place, making it the centrality of your life—giving doctrine top priority. That … has expression in a variety of ways.

It means in part to be in church where you can hear the Word of God. A person who is erratic in church attendance and is sometimes here Sunday mornings, sometimes here Sunday nights, and most of the time not: one of the things you may see about yourself from that is that you have a weakness relative to this area of spiritual maturity in your life. If the Word is available, you have the option of being here and you refuse, then you are rejecting the opportunity of drawing on the materials that you need for developing a spiritual maturity. You have not made doctrine top priority in your life. You made the TV program that night, or you made the fact that you were tired, or you made the fact that you just got home from someplace, or any number of other things top priority in your life.

We may illustrate what we have said thus far with these two circles. Here’s a scale of values. In one circle the details of life form the center of your life. So you have the detail of family that preoccupies you; of money; of success; of popularity; of pleasure; of your health; of your variety of material things; your social life and your friends; and, your status symbols. And doctrine is out here on the periphery of the orbit your life. Doctrine is forever coming up against conflict with the details which dominate your life, and the result is you have misery as the pattern of your life.

But, if instead you follow the pattern of the Word of God, and doctrine here is at the center of your life, then your life has a totally different result. The details are out here on the fringe of your life. They’re in the outer orbit. You will remember that last week we tried very carefully to make it clear that we were not saying that the details were not important. Obviously you do have to eat, and you do have to have shelter, and you do have to have a car to get around, and you do have to have vacations, and you do have to take care of your family, and you do have to be in good health, and you probably ought to be smart enough to take vitamins and do a few things to keep that good health, and exercise. And those of you who don’t, we can see it on your right here: decrepit; weak; fallen; some of you are propped up here this morning just to be able to make it. The details are important but you keep them in their place. Priority is doctrine.

So what is your life then? Well you have the spiritual maturity structure. That’s a big thing in your life. You have divine viewpoint. That’s what’s guiding your thinking. You have occupation consequently with Jesus Christ, not with people. You have a grace system of perception that’s functioning in your life and you’re taking in the Word. You have prevailing prayer. Your prayers are being answered. You’re functioning in prayer. You are a witnessing agent of the Lord. Every place you go there’s an ambassador of Jesus Christ who’s up on his homework and who knows what to say and is saying it at the right time and in the right place. Every place you go you sweep through with the impact of a person who knows God, the God who is really out there, and you know how to tell people how to get in touch with Him. And the result is that the details then cause contentment in your life rather than misery.

Now that’s the option that you have, one or the other, and this morning you sit in one or the other. To the degree that you are in this condition, in this lower circle, you have entered and developed the facet of a mastery of the details in your life. You have developed this facet of the pentagon structure.

Now no one wants to be a slave to these major areas of our lives. The sin in reference to these details, we said, was not that you possess these things, but your mental attitude toward them—the fact that they are given priority in your thinking. No one wants to be a slave but freedom begins with an attitude of mind, and then it has outward expression.

Satan gained control of the world in the first place because he enslaved humanity by conquering the woman’s mind. He gave the subtle suggestion to Eve that God is not fair; that God didn’t want man to be as wise as God was. So Eve at the moment failed to apply doctrine, and she entered into the mental attitude sin of pride. She wanted to be like god so she lusted for that specific detail above everything else about her. She got to lusting for that specific detail and it became the central factor at that moment in her life. Negative response to the Word of God that you were taught will create the same low pressure condition in your soul, and it will draw in human viewpoint and satanic viewpoint.

This morning we look at some illustrations, following now on what we said last Sunday. We’re looking at some illustrations of enslavement—the pattern of enslavement, first of all, by the details of life. It starts, as we have said, when a Christian goes negative toward doctrine. He rejects what he has learned from a pastor-teacher for one reason or another. Or maybe he’s in such a carnal state with unconfessed sin that he’s sitting there not learning at all, or he’s home and not even being around where he can hear the Word. But the results are a deficiency in his soul which lead to frustration so that nothing satisfies.

**Sublimation**

Then he turns to what the psychiatrist calls sublimation. Another word for sublimation is substitution. And he proceeds, because of his frustration. Because of his rejection of doctrine, he proceeds to find substitutes through a frantic search for fulfillment and happiness in these details of life. And you and I have all experienced times in our lives when we’ve been negative toward something, toward God, or ignorant of something about God. And we’re running around like crazy, preoccupied with these details of life, and they consume us. Doctrine is not the motivating factor of what we do, but these details become the motivating factor, and we never get satisfied. We never come to contentment. We’re constantly reaching out.

The result is we build spiritual callouses on our soul (Ephesians 4:17-18). The lust patterns of our old sin nature take over. Pretty soon we are dominated by these desire. Psalm 81:12 says, “So I gave them up to their own heart’s desire and they walked in their own counsels.” Now this is a grievous thing when God says, and He is a gentleman, and if you insist on pushing, He’ll let you have your way. He will give you the permission to pursue your will (his permissive will), and he will let you go into your own heart’s desire and walk into your own counsel. There are a lot of Christians that think they’re pretty smart and that their counsel is pretty good to follow.

James 1: 14 tells us that every man is tempted when he’s drawn away of his own lusts and enticements. Verse 15 says, “Then when lust hast conceived (the old sin nature has been permitted to express its lusts), it brings forth sin (outwardly), and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death,” which in the case of a Christian, he experiences immediately the break of fellowship, the separation from the Lord in fellowship. And he experiences that kind of death immediately, until confession is made. Where does it come from? From the lusts of the old sin nature.

Now that thing is going to take over. It’s going to pursue with a frenzy theses details of life until you come to the point where you control it through a maturity that enables you to find contentment. You now become guilty of mental attitude sins, and the result is misery on the inside and details dominating us on the outside. So a Christian thus becomes enslaved. Nobody wants to be a slave, and yet there are Christians and Christians who are totally enslaved. Titus 3:3 says, “For we ourselves once also were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures.” And the “lusts,” by the way, is the Greek word “epikomion” which means an intense desire. It could be for something that’s good. It could be a desire for what’s bad. In the case of the old sin nature, it’s an intense desire for what’s bad.

Living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. 2 Peter 2:19-20 say, “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption. For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage, for if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in it, and overcome. The latter end is worse with them than the beginning.”

It is a great tragedy when a Christian who has come to a knowledge of what it is to have true freedom permits himself to be enslaved all over again by these details of life.

Now here’s the nature of the lust patterns so we can get some idea and understanding of what it is we’re talking about, what it is we should be on guard on, what it is we want to develop a strength in reference to. Every old sin nature has a tendency toward some kind of lust.

**Lust for Praise**

Your old sin nature, for example, may have the tendency toward the lust of praise. Jude 16 says, “These are murmurers (walking complainers, walking after their own lusts) and with their mouths speaking great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage.” Wanting praise.

Do you find that there is something within you that really likes to be complimented? Do you get a big kick out of people saying complimentary commendable things to you? The quality of your old sin nature may lust for praise. It may be a big thing with you.

**Lust for Sex**

In 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 your old sin nature may have a lust for sex. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification (you’re setting apart) that you should abstain for an occasion, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the lust of sensuality even as the Gentiles who know not God. It is perfectly possible for a Christian to be absorbed with the lust of sensuality. It’s a detail of life.

**Lust for Covetousness**

You may be preoccupied with the lust of covetousness. James 4:1-3 says, “From whence come wars and fighting among you? Can they not hear even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust and ye have not. Ye kill and the desire to have and cannot obtain. Ye fight in war, and yet ye have not because ye ask not. Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” And unless you understand how to be related to God by the Word of God, you’ll foul up your whole prayer life, because you’ll be asking in the wrong way. What you’ll be asking for is not what God the Holy Spirit is impelling you to ask. Your old sin nature is impelling you.

Now we’re going to get more deeply into this business of Satan and his demon world. I think you’re going to find some very very fascinating areas of how Satan comes in and manipulates your thought life in such a way that you wouldn’t believe it. And that you are operating and functioning on things that come right out of hell itself. And you think very often that you are right on top there with the best kind of thinking and godly motivations. And you are just sure that you know that something is wrong, that something is off-beat, and you’re just as wrong as you can be.

It is fantastic how Satan can take a very sincere Christian and make him an opponent of the very thing that God wants to do. He always does it by misrepresenting the facts. He twists the picture, and unless you’re a real real real smart Christian and you ask a few questions and you confirm a few things, you’re going to put yourself in a big pickle. This is how Satan twists Christians—by giving them information that’s twisted and they’re not bright enough to say, “Just a minute. I have to confirm this bit of scuttlebutt that has come to me and see whether it is true or whether I’m flying off the end of my brain cells again, and what I’ve been told is not true at all.” This is how Satan works.

Covetousness is a prime tool of the devil because we all want things. And how—we want things. And we want what everybody else has and we want all the things we envision we should have. Maybe covetousness is a big thing with your old sin nature.

**Lust for Money**

Maybe your lust is for money. 1 Timothy 6:9 says, “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare.” I’m glad I didn’t say that. You’d be mad as a wet hen if I got up and told you this. I’m really glad God said it. You can get as mad as you want at Him for it. But God is right and I agree with Him. I suggest that you join us in your attitude toward this lust factor of our old sin nature. “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.”

2 Peter 2:16 says, “But was rebuked for his iniquity, the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet.” The context here is telling about Balaam who was a religious leader, and his willingness to sell out his services for money as a religious leader. So the donkey that he rode had better sense than he did. The real fool was not the animal but the one who rode him.

**Lust for Power**

Maybe you have a lust for power. That may be the factor of your old sin nature. James 4:5 says, “Do you think that the Scriptures saith in vain, ‘the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?’” That “envy” is of authority over others.

**Lust for Status**

Perhaps you have a lust for status. Mark 12:38, “And He said unto them (in his doctrine), ‘Beware of the scribes who love to go in long clothing and love salutations in the marketplaces and the chief seats in the synagogues and the uppermost places at the feast.” Do you like to be in a status position?

Alright now the enslavement to the lust factor in your old sin nature is a gradual thing. This does not happen overnight. It goes something like this: You know that you’re toying around with something that is hazardous. You know something about yourself and you know you’re indulging a little bit and you’re playing a little loose with a factor that is strong in your own character. Consequently you play around because you intend to drop it before you get hooked.

Now right away you have fallen because of the spirit of pride. You are so proud of your spiritual strength. It really gives me the creeps sometimes when I hear Christians talking on how they have progressed in spiritual strength. I only hope that they understand, that they have that in a balance, that God has indeed given them progress in spiritual strength, but they are totally exposed to spiritual defeat just the same. They have the techniques and the opportunities to be conquerors but they have just as much opportunity to fall. You think you can play around before you get hooked, but the lust pattern that you slowly indulge and toy with begins to demand more and more response from you. The details of life that you have to use to satisfy this lust pattern become increasingly greater until suddenly you realize that you’re enslaved to the details of life and you’re no longer free. You started indulging one of these qualities in your old sin nature.

Now we have some very frightful examples in the Old Testament. You have the example of Samson in Judges 14 through 16. Samson was a man who was very deeply enslaved by these details of life. His values and the standards in his conscience which he did have when God picked him were all short-circuited by his lust patterns that he indulged. He played loose with the spider Delilah and she trapped him into a slavery physically for the rest of his life. He was never a free man again.

Are you a spiritually strong Christian? Well you’re the one who is primarily in danger of spiritual enslavement to your own lust patterns. Never forget 1 Corinthians 10:12 because God the Holy Spirit was sympathetic to our problem and to our hazard in this respect of our confidence. So He gave us this doctrinal warning. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall.” It is the strong Samson-like Christian who is frequently the one who falls. You have the hazard of being proud of your stability. Samson was so strong that he was proud of his stability. It didn’t seem possible that he could fall.

You have the example of Ananias and Sapphira. Ananias and Sapphira went and sold a piece of property in the New Testament church and gave the money, and told them that they had given them all the that they had received for that particular sale of real estate , and they were lying to God the Holy Spirit. First the husband died and then the wife came along and she made the same lie to the spirit of God and she died. And it was a very awesome and impressive event in the church, of people who were caught up in the lust of the details of life.

Now these people were caught up in the lust for praise and for money. They saw Barnabas. Acts 5:1-10 gives you the story. It says they saw that Barnabas apparently had given a gift. Acts 4:37 tells about the gift Barnabas gave to the church. Apparently they saw Barnabas give this gift for the Lord’s work. So they wanted praise like Barnabas, or they were jealous of what Barnabas did, or they just wanted a place in the sun in the local assembly. So they sold this property but because of the lust for the details of life to which they were enslaved, they just couldn’t part with so much.

You know the story of the woman who met the stranger who came in. She was baking cakes at her fireplace. He was hungry and she made him a cake. Then she looked at it and said, “Oh that’s too big.” So she made him another one a little smaller and started to give him that one again said, “That’s too big.” And she got down to where there was practically nothing and even that was too big.

Well that was Ananias and Sapphira. They just could not give up all of this money so they gave a part of it. They kept part of it and said they gave it all. After all, who would know the difference? And they looked just as good and just as impressive as Barnabas. All the Christians get up and say, “Oh you dear brother and sister. That was such a good thing, such a wonderful thing that you did.”

And it wasn’t wrong for them to sell the property and (the money) was still theirs after they sold it, and they were free to do with it as they wished. But their mental attitude toward this detail, their real estate, caused them to sin. So it led to such a deceit that God the Holy Spirit took them directly to heaven because god wanted to prevent this hypocrisy from being destructive to the local church so He removed them. They would have had a guilt complex anyhow over the matter, but this is an example of sin unto death. It was their lack of mastery of the details of life that led to the sin unto death. It could do that for you.

What they were doing was really trying to make a deal with God. They said to God, “We’ll give you money if you’ll give us prominence and praise. That’s why it is wrong in the local church when you have people, and sometimes people who have access to finances, when they rise up and do something, to get up and make a big public issue over it—to make much commendation and much praise. Many Christian works, organizations fall into the pattern of people who are in the business world and who have money, and they’re Christians. It’s equated with some kind of insight, spiritual insight and discernment, and that doesn’t follow at all.

Most of the people who have the greatest discernment are those that don’t have too much money because they’ve been preoccupied with the things of God. The people who have the most money have it simply because they were preoccupied pursuing the money. If that’s what God has called them to do, well and good. But it doesn’t say anything about necessarily that they have great discernment. Yet Christian organizations are breaking their fool necks to get Christian businessmen on their board and committees because somehow they’re supposed to have some kind of a knack and contact with God, instead of pursuing people who have demonstrated a spiritual maturity and to whom they are drawn because of the impact of their spiritual lives as they are put on the line. It is wrong to put people who do good things for the Lord in the uncomfortable position of making a scene over them. It opens the door for others to want to follow for wrong motivations.

If they are doing this as unto the Lord, they won’t care whether you thank them or not. It’s not going to make one bit of difference whether I get up and have words of commendation and praise. And I’ll deeply appreciate it. There isn’t a thing that any good Christian around here does for the Lord with his money that I don’t have great respect and great honor for him in my own heart. But I’m not going to throw a stumbling block in his way because if he’s doing it unto the Lord, that’s all the thanks he needs.

I don’t have any say-so about the distribution of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Many times in my relationships with many of you, I wish I did. Fortunately for you, I don’t. So I just have to leave it with the Lord. But you use your money and you use your details of life in a way that God will honor, and He will keep supplying and he will keep on honoring, and you’ll have all the blessing and prominence that you’ll need. Poor Ananias and Sapphira, they could have had a ball. They could have given this money and God would have more than supplied their needs. He’s already told them He would do that. He would have used them spiritually. He would have made great sections of the Word of God go.

I had a Christian man say to me the other day, “The Lord lay it on my heart to give $1,200, and all I did with it was one little speck. I couldn’t even call the little speck of what I did with that $1,200 anything more than a seed. But that’s what God wanted me to do and that’s what needed to be done. A seed needed to be planted and it cost me $1,200 to plant it. I planted it, and boy did it grow.” Now that’s how God uses you to master the details of your life, and you thoroughly enjoy everything that you have, which is what He intended you to do.

So don’t try to make deals with God. Don’t go around and say, “God, if you’ll just make this fellow smile at me after church, I’ll come to prayer meeting.” I wish we could do that. Boy would we increase prayer meeting attendance. We’d get a lot of signers up for deals like that. You have all kinds of things you’d like. Here’s the only deal, brethren, that God’s going to make with you, so get your doctrine straight please: Hebrews 13:5 says, “Let your manner of life be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, ‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.’” If you have a mastery of the details in your life, then you’ll be glad to accept God’s deal on God’s basis. He will never leave thee nor will He forsake thee. If you have this mastery, then you have everything. Philippians 4:19 says, “But my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

You have the example of the widow. Jesus was sitting by the temple one day. In Luke 21:1-4, you have the story as He watched this widow and as He watched religious leaders coming up and putting their offering into the box. The religious leaders were filled with lust for praise and for things. In Luke 20;46-47 we have this warning against the scribes who desired to walk in long robes and love salutations in the marketplaces and the highest seats in the synagogues and the chief places at the feast. Verse 47 says, “who devour widows’ houses,” they foreclosed on a poor widow, “and for show make long prayers.”

They foreclosed on a widow’s house, and then they go and they make long prayers at prayer meeting thanking God for how He’s prospering them in business. “The same shall receive greater condemnation.” The Lord watched these people, these religious leaders who were themselves slaves to these details of life. And the clergy were dropping in great sums of money. They were spiritual guys but they lusted for praise. They wanted the approval of people, and they certainly wanted money.

This is a plague of the professional ministry today. There are many many ministers who stand in the pulpit Sunday by Sunday, and they are cranking out, they are robbing the widows in effect, because they are conning the people of God with stereotypes. They are projecting certain images that they know is what people look for in a minister so he can con them into manipulation for personal advantage and gain. They’re looking for approval. They’re looking for status in their profession. And they’re looking for that financial security.

You don’t know what’s going on in the professional ministry if you think that that isn’t the case. But if you’ve got a little discernment, you can sense that motivation. You can spot it. You can see that security and happiness for some men is based on presenting calculated images and on what they can receive of the details of life.

Now this widow dropped in what amounted to less than a penny. But it was everything she had. Obviously she was not leaning on the details of life, but she was trusting in the Word of God and in doctrine. The religious leaders gave very little by comparison. They gave much more than she did, but they kept so much more too. Their money was their security so they wanted plenty of it.

When you and I give, here’s a doctrinal principal. And I’m glad that God has said it and I didn’t because you’d be mad at me for this. When you and I give, God says, “I don’t look at your gift. I look at what you left at home in the bank. That’s my basis of judging and evaluating the legitimacy and the propriety of your gift.” That’s why Jesus said that this woman has given more than all these notorious famous religious leaders that we have here, because of what was kept in comparison to what was given.

Now the principal of God’s truth that we draw from this is that the less the details of life mean to you, the more you’re going to give to God’s work. There’s no way around that. I don’t know what else the Scripture means. The more you have mastery over the details of life, the more you will give to the Lord’s work.

Now we Americans are a discontented lot though we have everything in life, because we are slaves to the details of life. There is no lasting pleasure in our present possessions so we always want new ones. This is a characteristic of the old sin nature. Thus God says to avoid this trap that Americans are led into, to be content with such things as we have (Hebrews 13:5). This is the thing toward which we’re striving. God will give and God will take. As we saw last week, that magnificent man Job said, “The Lord has given. The Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” And he even closed the mouth of an aggravating wife who was way off base in her doctrine, suggesting to him that he should commit suicide.

Hebrews 13:5 says, “Let your manner of life once more be without covetousness and be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said ‘I will never leave thee or forsake thee.’” And please don’t go home now and say, “There he is telling us again that it’s bad to have things in life,” because I didn’t say that. I hope that every one of you ends up being a fantastically wealthy person. That’ll make things easier for all of us around here if you are. I just don’t want you to be a slave to your fantastic wealth. I want you to enjoy it. That’s what God says. When you are on the right beam of spiritual maturity, not only you enjoy it, but everybody else enjoys it with you. Your prosperity doesn’t become a hindrance and a stumbling block and a strained relationship with other believers.

Our advertising in this country is motivated by Satan so it has as its prime thrust to make you discontented and lustful for details. We are forever being bombarded that we parents should have what other parents have and that our kids should have what other kids have. I’ll give you a little tip on child rearing. Most of you people here can give your kids most of anything that they want. You would follow the course of wisdom to have regular calculated elements that you deny your children though you are well able to supply them. Just so they learn that they can do without the details of life and can survive.

Some troubles that have arisen with young people within this congregation are because parents never sealed it to their understanding that they could be told, “No,” and that they could be denied anything, and were actually denied something. So the kid learned that, “Sure enough, I can survive without this thing that I just think I’m dying to have and I must have.” You do them a disservice if you do not by calculated effort plan things that you keep from your children so the learn to be masters of the details. Instead you’re going to worry yourself sick over cultivating the right people, getting into the right social groups, accumulating your social symbols, and competing for honors. So you go from misery to misery to suicide.

Alright, this is the facet of the pentagon of our security—the mastery of the details of life. The problem is how are we to avoid or escape from the mental attitude of enslavement to the details? We’ve been trained like this all of our lives. How are you going to enjoy the details but not depend on them for your happiness and for your personal stability? How can you live in a great home, drive a great car, enjoy great vacations, have great clothes and great possessions, and great entertainment, and yet your happiness to do with that? Your stability as a person has nothing to do with that. If it all stopped tomorrow, it would still be nothing in reference to your real happiness and to your real stability. “The Lord hath given. The Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Now that’s mastery. That’s conquering. That’s staying on top as God’s man or God’s woman.

Well how are you going to be completely relaxed and content without these details? Well Paul has given us an answer. The apostle Paul was in prison and he received help from the Philippian church. It was brought to him from a very dear Christian brother Epaphroditus. In Philippians chapter 4 beginning in verse 10, the apostle Paul says, “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again.” Here he is in prison in Rome. “… of which ye were also mindful but ye lacked opportunity.” They were always concerned for whether Paul had enough money for functioning in the Lord’s work. Many times they didn’t have opportunity to be able to convey the money to him, particularly here in prison. “… Not that I speak…” Paul says, “Now I don’t want you to misunderstand me.” “… Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, in this to be content.”

Now you notice that he’s not saying that he didn’t have needs or that there were not times when he was really strapped to the wall. But he says, “When those times came, I took it in stride in the providence of God in my life. If I could do something about it, I’d go out and I’d work in my employment as a tentmaker and I’d take the financial pressure off. But when God didn’t let me work or when God didn’t let me supply it in some other way, I didn’t get all torn up about it. I didn’t foam at the mouth. I just waited.”

Then verse 12 says, “I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.” He says there were times when he was hungry. There were times when he suffered need, but he knew how to take it in stride. He was master of even the details of food, clothing, shelter, and basic necessities.

Now I want you to notice some words. Here is what is important. Verses 11 and 12 give us some secrets as to how Paul had this mastery. The strategic words are: learn, know, and instructed. Now what does this amount to? These are all explanatory of the source of Paul’s mental attitude toward the details. How did he get such a mental attitude of mastery? Because he learned something and he knew something and he’d been instructed in something. You don’t get it by hoping. You don’t get this mastery by psyching yourself into the idea that you don’t care.

Some Christians try to do this. They say, “Well, I don’t care. I don’t care.” And they really do care. No, Paul said it comes from learning. He had learned. He had taken his mind and he had received doctrine into it. He had gone to positive volition. It had gone into his human spirit where God says He stores His contact with us. And it had come back up here to his conscience, his frame of reference, his divine viewpoint. It directed the directive side of his mind that guided then his actions.

He didn’t sit around and psych himself into saying, “I don’t have anything and I’m happy.” He learned doctrine and then he came to know. Down here is where he came to know. This word for full knowledge. And then he was instructed. Having learned he came to know, and now he could act as an instructed man because the directive side of his mind was giving him right information to the perceptive side of his mind, and this perceptive side of his mind gave direction to his actions then.

Now that’s a great thing to know. Paul knew because he was instructed. Thus the details don’t bring satisfaction no matter how many or how magnificent, but your right mental attitude toward them does. But it takes your functioning under your grace system for perceiving spiritual things which means confession of sin and learning the Word under a pastor teacher to give you the information of the doctrine so that you’ll have a right mental attitude as a result of your positive response to the Word. And so that you as a believer can be preoccupied with Christ and His viewpoint, and you will not be a slave to the details.