***The Spiritual Maturity Structure

Colossians 1:3-8

COL-055***

Our subject is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians," number 33 in Colossians 1:3-8.

**The Grace System of Perception**

What we have been pursuing in the Word of God is how to get the mind of God into our human mentalities, and thereby to transform ourselves into the quality people that God intends us to be. We have called this a system of perceiving spiritual things which is based upon the grace of God. It is, therefore, called a grace system of perception for learning and using doctrinal principles within one's life. And we began by observing that there were certain steps to the mechanics of using the grace system.

**Instruction in Doctrine**

The first step was that somebody has to give you instruction in the grace truth of the Bible. And that somebody, basically, is within that local church organization that God has provided, and it is the job of the pastor-teacher using the HICEE Technique in order to prepare the Word of God so the people can be taught the Word of God. That is step number one.

This, of course, is where Satan has a great victory in frustrating the opportunity and the structure that God has designed. He does this, first of all, by having preachers who are not equipped to preach to begin with, or those who are the lazy type, who are not willing to do the intensive hours of study and preparation and constant reorientation to the deep things of the Word of God. Therefore, they are not prepared to teach people the Word of God. Therefore, God's people are robbed of that which is their spiritual heritage. And Satan is enormously successful. He will cause the pressures to come against even perhaps a sincere pastor-teacher when he is faced with being true to his calling, or going for the numbers. And if you don't go for the numbers, then you have an enormous opportunity to learn what it is to lean on the grace of God, or the operation doesn't have the money it needs. Therefore, that is the first line of attack – to simply get the preachers not to do the preaching.

The second way that Satan has frustrated this step number one in the mechanics of learning the mind of God is to discourage people from simply learning it. He discourages them in one way or another from attending a service which is an academic setting. And that means that it is someplace where you're not going to hear a lot of jokes, and you're not going to hear a lot of sweetness and light. You are going to have to concentrate for an extended period of time. And what you are going to be given is information that comes from the mind of God.

Now, Satan will do many things to keep people from attending a Sunday morning or Sunday evening church service even if they could. Constantly, there are excuses. Constantly, there are ways of evading that. That is especially true in a setting ling ours where we constantly go consistently step-by-step. There are great gaps in a person's knowledge of how to deal with a particular scriptural principle.

So, step number one is that somebody has to teach you the Word of God. You can do some of this on your own, but that is a limited access to doctrinal understanding.

**Understanding Doctrine**

Step number two, we have pointed out, was gaining an understanding of the truth that has been taught you. Under the filling of the Holy Spirit, you are able to understand what God is teaching you. That is called information that comes into the perceptive mind. And the Greek word for that is "gnosis," and that's just plain information. So, now you have that information up in your mind, and you are now capable of understanding something in the nature of spiritual phenomena that has been taught to you. This comes as the result of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. This comes when you are in fellowship with Him, and He will help you to understand what you have been taught.

Now, you may agree with that, or you may not agree with that. This becomes evident in various ways even though you're sitting there privately. Some people cannot restrain themselves from leaning over and commenting to somebody about what has just been said. And sometimes by the way that they do it, you can tell that they're giving a negative response. Others won't speak to the pastor after the service is over. He stands there at the intersection of the crimson rugs, and they don't go by and say, "Nice to be here this morning, your honor. Great sermon, your majesty." They just evaporate. And for some people, that is very crushing. But you get to see that sometimes somebody has been taught something that they wish you hadn't taught them. And the problem is that the Holy Spirit has made it has made it very clear.

So, here we are – responsible for our own lives as our own priests, and we are responsible for understanding the truth that has been taught to us. We have it in our perceptive mind. Now we understand it. We grasp it.

The unsaved person can't even get this far. He simply cannot understand spiritual things. He cannot understand things in depth. He may have a very high IQ, but he cannot understand spiritual things.

**The Storage of Doctrine in the Human Spirit**

So, you have received the instruction. And because you have the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, you have grasped that bit of information. Now, you say "amen" (truly) to it. That's an act of faith. And at that point, step number three kicks into operation, and that is the storage of doctrinal truth in the human spirit now as "epignosis" full knowledge. Here you have information from the Bible that now becomes a part of your soul. This becomes a part of your spiritual being. This is information that you can use. What is up here in the mind you cannot use. What is in your human spirit, because you have agreed to it, and you have accepted it, then it is stored there.

Now, that is not an easy thing. There are many things such that, when Christians hear, they have great reservation about, and when they have reservations, then that reservation is because it touches an area of sin in their lives. It touches an area where they're out of step with the mind of God for them, and where they're out of step with the Word of God. Then they do not say, "Hallelujah." They do not open their arms and welcome that truth as a very definite act. And all of you know, when you sit there, and you have mental reservations about something that is your negative response to the truth of God.

Now, if it is really the truth of God, you can see that that is a very dangerous thing to do. That is because you will, I guarantee you, account for every truth of God that you have rejected. But when you accept it, it becomes this word "epignosis." It becomes the full knowledge of the Word of God.

Now, you have put yourself in a position where James says, "You are not only a hearer of the Word, but you are also a doer."

**The Effects of Doctrine upon your Soul**

The fourth step is the effects of truth from Bible doctrine upon your soul. That effect is the result of the Spirit of God, as you are in touch with Him, giving, from this reservoir of truth that you have accumulated, direction to your mind. Your mind is given the inspiration (the information) that it needs to guide your life. Please remember that your mind must be superior to your emotions. Your mind must be superior to your will. You must not let your emotions go amuck with human viewpoint. You must not let your will go amuck through influences of the world system. These are the areas that are impacted by our society all the time: all of the advertising; all the things you hear; and, all of the things that prominent people are doing. They're hitting you here – against the emotions. They're hitting you here – against your volition. That's where the appeal is made. They don't so much go to your mind. But now if your mind is not under the control of the Word of God's doctrinal principles, and your mind is not controlling your emotions and your volition, then you'll get into a great deal of problems.

Also, as I tried to point out in the previous session, the deviation at first may be small. And when somebody tells you that your pastor-teacher has told you something that's not true (that's wrong), you want to be very careful to accept that, because that may be the first little deviation that's going to carry you far field, because you're going to follow a course of action then. You make sure for yourself that that person who's telling you that they have a better opinion is all that qualified, and is all that significant a person in their own lives such that you should follow them, and that they would really know better. It is amazing what kind of people other Christians will be subject to, and how they'll be influenced by somebody else who does not deserve (and does not merit) your loyalty and your devotion.

However, this is what happens when you are out of step with the Spirit of God. You do the things that are exactly the opposite. Instead of doing the thing that you should do, you do it exactly backwards. Everything comes out wrong.

So, here we are, in the fourth step. The effects of truth are tremendous. It gives you a frame of reference. Now you have a basis for learning advanced doctrine. It gives you a new conscience. It gives you content for what is right and wrong. It gives you a divine viewpoint to be able to face life in that way. And it clears up guilt hang-ups that you may have brooding back in your mind from something you've done before. And something happens in your life, and you say, "Oh, God is punishing me because I did this thing in the past." No, He's not. And yet when that hang-up manifests itself, you need something to flush that out. What's going to do it? It's this fourth step – that the Word of God flowing through the mentality and affecting the emotions and the will – it's going to clear that out. It's going to clear those things out, even the ones that you may not be aware of, down in the subconscious that you're brooding over. It gives you a great contact with God in prayer. It gives you content for your prayer. It gives you motivation for your Christian service. And, as I say, most of all, it keeps your emotions and your will under good judgment control of the mind of God.

**The Application of Doctrine**

Now the fifth step in this process is the application of truth in two directions. First of all is the application of that truth toward God. When you function on "epignosis" truth, it will remove the spiritual callouses that you have built up on your soul from negative attitudes toward the Word of God. And we'll look at that a little more in a moment. But you know can get hardened in your mind; in your emotions; and, in your will toward God. And when you are resistant to the Word of God, that's exactly what's going to happen. And the problem is that it happens so slowly. A callous does not just happen overnight. It develops a little bit at a time, because there's a constant pressure of a friction area that constantly presses against a certain point.

When I used to play the baritone regularly, when I was in high school, one of the things you have to do when you play a baritone, is that it has a ring that you put your thumb through. And that's your pressure point for handling the valves. And that metal ring is constantly up here on the inside of your thumb. And when I played the instrument, which I played a lot, I used to have a huge bulge there. It was a hard callous. And it built up gradually until I noticed one day that this huge hard callous was there.

I used to do a lot of standing on my head. It was relaxing. I practiced it. And then I developed a huge callous on my head, so I quit doing that, because it didn't look good – it came out in the form a point. I'm just kidding you about that, but the callous really will build up, and it's gradual.

Well, it does the same in spiritual things. So, what you do toward God is with "epignosis" – full knowledge truth. You are able to remove the hardenings that have developed. You will find that you are able to express a love for God. You're ready to sacrifice to please Him. You find that you have a frame of reference toward God's dealing with you when terrible things happen to you. If you have a grace system of perception that has built maturity in your soul, the worst of things will be taking in stride. You'll have the capacity to go with it.

As Mr. Short indicated, we showed our kids out on the campout "The Hiding Place." This was the movie about Corey Ten Boom and her family in Holland. She had a godly father who was a hundred years old, and a sister, and other relatives. And what happened when they found themselves overrun by the Nazis of Germany, and then, because this family was Christian, they could not find it in their heart to turn their back upon Jewish people who needed their protection. So, they got in the dangerous game of creating a hiding place up in their house through a wall where gradually more and more Jewish people were brought in and held, either as a way station, until they could be passed along or given sustenance and care. Well, eventually there was a slip up, and the Nazis discovered as to what they were doing, though they never found the people they were hiding. The Hiding Place was not discovered. But they had been betrayed, and the result was that both of those sisters and the father went to a concentration camp. The father died early on. And then the story continues of the agony and the heartache of the two sisters, and they were constantly reminding one another of what the principles of the Word of God had to say.

Here they were: starving; beaten; women out in the field working like horses in heavy-duty construction work; and, then dragging back and trying to lie down and sleep on a little small area allotted to them. And yet, always there was the joy bells of knowing God. And in this terrible moment, as Corey would say, "He is watching us. Our Father is watching us." And on one occasion, when she was being ridiculed by one of the Nazi administrators, she said, My God is watching me, Captain, and I think that he is watching you too."

Eventually, this carried them through. One of the sisters died, but Corey survived. And interestingly enough, suddenly, the order came down that she should be released from prison, and it was a mistake. They got her number instead of somebody else's. Was that an accident, or was that the God who was watching?

So, she survived to tell thousands of people what it meant to have a frame of reference that when terrible things were happening, God was in the midst of it, and they were not somehow thrown out to the wolves.

You are able to apply the word of truth. You'll be able to apply it in maintaining your temporal fellowship with God the Father. You're going to be very sensitive to that. And you'll find it very easy to pray. And you'll find powerful ability to express prayer. That's why it is so great to have a spiritual maturity structure in the soul.

**Mental Attitude Sins**

Also, toward human beings, the "epignosis" truth will remove the hardness of your soul, which may have been produced by sexual immorality; by drugs; by alcohol; or, by the mental attitude sins. One of the most terrible things I've discovered about mental attitude sins among Christians is that they get hopping mad when you mention it. They get really hopping mad. And I couldn't quite understand that at first, because I would think that it is so clear. Jesus says that mental attitude sins are what produce the overt sins. James makes it very clear that it all starts up in the mind: these attitudes of bitterness; vindictiveness; envy; hatred; and, so on. And then you express it outwardly. And I discovered that there are some people who are so self-righteous that they love to observe the overt terrible sin that other people are guilty of, and that you can see. But they don't like to be told that they're equally sinners in the mind.

However, this is what the apostle Paul was so proud of. He kept nine of the ten commandments, but there was one that, suddenly hit him, that he didn't keep, and that was the last one about covetousness. And then he realized that, while outwardly, he always did the right thing, in his mind, there was this sin of covetousness, and that's what broke him down. And he realized that he wasn't the perfect Jew, and he wasn't perfectly acceptable to God, because mental attitude sin, he understood, were just as bad as those that that you do outwardly.

So don't fall for that trap. Be receptive when God comes and touches your thinking; touches your mind; or, touches a sore spot that needs correcting in your lives. Don't push Him away.

This truth of "epignosis" in your human spirit will also provide you with the ability to treat people in grace – human relationships where you live and let live. That should be obvious that that's how it should be. But I'm telling you again. We have so many snooty (better than the general run) Christians who have that attitude such that they cannot exercise simple grace towards somebody who's hurting; who's in trouble; and, who has stumbled into the sin. But what you do is you rise, and you back up that person, and you help dust him off. And when you have doctrine in your human spirit, you have the capacity to do that.

It also releases you from the attitude of demanding your rights or wanting to get even, when people mistreat you. And they do. So, when you have this kind of spiritual maturity, you're not going to want to turn around and pay them back for what they've done. You're going to be quite happy to say, "I know the doctrinal principle for that. It's: 'Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. I will repay.'" And how nice to say, "God, so-and-so has treated me abominably, and I commit that person to you for Your judgment and Your care." That's the worst thing you can do for a person. You have now put him on the hot seat. And God's going to turn the flame up, I can assure you.

Toward people, the truth of "epignosis" stored in your human spirit will enable you to express genuine love for your friends and genuine love for your mates, just as you have love for God. But you'll be able to love people with that mental attitude goodwill. And people will know that you are a friend, because you are a person of God. Therefore, you will be someone to them, because you have that spiritual capacity, that they will trust. And they're going to be willing to come to you when they need some help. And they're going to be willing to accept your extension of your grace to them when you think that they need to have someone that they need to lean upon.

Finally, there's the basis for producing divine good among people. When you have this kind of doctrine in your human spirit, you won't be running around with do-goodism. The sin nature kicks out two things, and both of them are evil. One is sins. That's obvious. The other thing the sin nature is human good. And human good is revolting to God. It is called "filthy rags" in Scripture in Isaiah 64:6, and it is totally rejected by God. And yet, in our society, filthy rags (human good) is called compassion. And do not be deceived by the fact that you use semantics to make something seem better than it is. You cannot change what is wrong and ugly.

In one of our teacher prayer meetings, we were talking about some subject. I'm not even sure I remember. And I said, "You cannot change a pig's character by putting a beautiful silk ribbon upon him." And one of the teachers said, "No, but you can change the ribbon." And it really made me mad that she thought of that, and I did. What a perceptive point! You can't change the pig by putting silk ribbon on him. He's still going to head for that filthy hole that is his nature. And when he does, he's going to mess up the ribbon. And that's the do-goodism of our society. It never straightens out people. That's why we have the terrible conditions we have in our society today. And that's why, anytime on the political circle, of which we're hearing a great deal today, someone gets up and talks about righteousness, everybody jumps on him, and beats up on him, and calls him all kinds of dirty names, and says that he's an extremist.

For a while, I was listening to a debate this morning on the program called "Meet the Depressed." And they had our congressman Armey on there, and some prominent floor leader for the other party. And the floor leader on the other party kept using the phrase "these extremists" in Congress won't let us do this. And you people are going to have to control these extremists. Well, these extremists are all these freshman congressmen who came in, and they want to do what is right, and they understand the constitution, and they want to do it the constitutional way. And finally, Mr. Armey got upset with this man's pontifical use of calling these righteous people "extremists," such that he finally said, "Mr. So-and-so (he really used his name), if you use the word 'extremists' again, I'm going to gag." And I'm glad he didn't use the word again, because how does it look on public television to see a guy gagging? You know what that means. Okay.

But I thought, what an interesting observation. I'm just sick to the stomach. And that's how God does the same thing. And God not only says that He gags, but He says that he takes it to the next level. He just vomits out all this human viewpoint righteousness. So that's one of the great things – the guidance that you have in the mechanics of having learned spiritual principles.

**The Product of Truth**

Then there's really a sixth step, and that is the product of truth from the Bible, because something else develops when you build and store this kind of information in your human spirit. What you do is you build in your soul a spiritual maturity structure. Spiritual maturity is a direct result of developing the belt of truth through doctrine. And this spiritual maturity is described in the Bible as a building.

**The Spiritual Maturity Structure**

That's why we just use the phrase "the spiritual maturity structure." It's a way of trying to portray what God is doing. And also in Ephesians 6:14, this spiritual maturity structure is called the "breast breastplate of righteousness," because the spiritual maturity structure is what protects you against Satan, and the sin nature, and the world system. And it is also that which you take into battle to fight those things. The spiritual maturity structure is a direct result of this accumulation of the Word of God.

So, let's take a look at that. The spiritual maturity structure is the outcome of using the grace system of perception. It is the desire of God for e very Christian to go from childhood to adult maturity. 1 Peter 2:2 says, "Eat and drink the milk of the Word of God," and get along to spiritual maturity.

There are various stages of maturity and those are indicated to us in 1 John 2:12-14. John says, "I'm writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His namesake." He calls them "little children:" beginners in the Christian life. Verse 13, "I'm writing to you, fathers, because you know Him Who has been from the beginning." Now you have the other end of the scale – full-maturity, grown-up Christians. Then he hits in between: "And I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one:" "And I have written to you children because you know the Father. I have written to you fathers because you know Him Who has been from the beginning. And I've written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one." So, he goes through these various categories: child; youth; and, mature adult Christian. And that is exactly the direction of the Christian life.

That is also indicated Colossians 1:9-12.

So, here's what I want you to understand. I don't care what your age is. Anybody at any age can become a giant in spiritual matters. Have you got that – no matter how old or how young you are? The Lord Jesus Christ is an example of how you can be very young, and become a giant in spiritual matters. He was that at the age of 12. And it all comes from this knowledge of learning the Word of God. But we are called as Christians to erect in our souls a spiritual maturity structure.

Colossians 2:6-7: "As you, therefore, have received Christ Jesus, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted, and now built up in Him, and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude, having been built up." The spiritual maturity structure is viewed in the Bible as a structure that you build so that you may have a basis of moving through Satan's world. You take "gnosis" into the mind from the instruction you receive in church, and you convert it into "epignosis" (usable truth) in your human spirit. And out of that comes the development of the spiritual maturity structure of the soul. What God wants to do is to build something that will glorify Him.

Without going into too much extensive detail right now, I do want to remind you once more that when we look into the Word of God, and we see what a spiritual person should be like, there are really five basic facets that are described there. These actually are touched upon in 2 Corinthians 12:10, but we won't pursue that approach now. But you'll find that Paul says, "When I have these five things, I'm strong." He says, "I am weak, but when I have these five things, then I am very strong, and I'm ready to meet the world.

1. **Grace Orientation**

The first thing we simply call grace orientation. Here are a few scriptures. 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Grow in grace.

This is also to be found in Hebrews 13:9: "Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings. For it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited." Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings. One of the things I notice is that people who are negative to the Word of God (to the instruction of truth that they're receiving in church) is that they begin to drift off into various occult groups. They start finding books to read that begin to reinforce their negative attitudes in one way or another. And this is exactly what Peter is talking about. Don't be carried away by strange teachings just to satisfy your indignation of some point of view that you want to maintain, but which the Bible really does not justify.

So the first thing that you have to learn is grace orientation. There is a great deal to be said about that, but that is fundamental to the Christian life.

1. **The Mastery of the Details of life**

The second thing we call the mastery of the details of life. A mature Christian has the mastery of the details of life. For example, Luke 12:15: "And He said to them, 'Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed. For not even when one has an abundance does his life consists of his possessions." That's very interesting, isn't it? Don't ever be guilty of greed, because even if you fulfill your greed by having an abundance of things, you don't have a life. Life does not consist in the abundance of the things you possess.

1 Timothy 6:6 says, "But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment." It's not money. It's not possessions which are great gain, but godliness. That is what is great gain. So, the mastery of the details of life is knowing how to handle your money.

How many times have I seen, here at Berean Church, Christians who didn't have much? They were on the poor side. Very often they were starting off young in life, and they were so dedicated to the Lord that they could not do enough in the local ministry, and they could not be loyal enough to the Word of God, and to the person of the Lord. And then God began to prosper them, which is what inevitably happens. And pretty soon, we didn't see them in church anymore. Pretty soon, we didn't see them there on the line of service anymore. Pretty soon, they didn't have time for the things of God, because they could no longer control the great prosperity that they had. They had a mastery of the details (the material things in life) when they were on the poverty side. But when they got to be prosperous, they couldn't handle it. They had not built the spiritual maturity structure to have a strength at this point.

1. **A Relaxed Mental Attitude**

The next factor that comes in a spiritual maturity structure is a relaxed mental attitude. This is indicated in Ephesians 4:31-32: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and slander be put away from you, along with all malice, and be kind to one another; tenderhearted; and, forgiving each other just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." What a relaxed mental attitude has to deal with is love. The Greek word here is "phileo" (fil-eh'-o) love. It's that rapport – that emotional expression of affection toward people. And what it is saying is to have a relaxed mental attitude. It means no bitterness; no wrath; no anger; no clamor; no slander; and, being kind and being tenderhearted, forgiving, because God in Christ has forgiven us. It's a very simple statement.

Look at Colossians 3:15: "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful." So, a relaxed metal attitude is having a kindly affectionate attitude (an emotional attachment) toward the people of God.

1. **The Capacity to Love**

Then the next side of a spiritual maturity structure is called the capacity to love. Now, this has to do with "agape" love. This has to do to being free of mental attitude bitterness. John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you: that you love one another, even as I have loved you, so you love one another." And in that verse 34, the word for "love" is the "agape" (ag-ah'-pay) word. As Jesus said, I had a mental attitude goodwill toward you that took Me to the cross, that's the way you should treat one another.

Colossians 3:14 adds this: "And beyond all these things, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." If you have a genuine, mental-attitude, goodwill love toward fellow believers, you're going to treat them in a very different way than when you don't have it. And it is a terrible thing when you treat other Christians in an unkind way, even when you disagree with them, such that you have no sense of dignity; no sense of loyalty; and, no sense of concern to express the mercy that that Christian may need.

1. **Inner Happiness**

Finally, the last side of this pentagon . . . is inner happiness. John 15:11: "These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." This is a happiness that is not dependent on persons; on circumstances; nor, on things. It is a happiness that grows out of the Word of God.

Philippians 4:4 says this, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice." Now one of the oddities about this verse is that, in the Greek, it is a command. Now how in the world you walk up to somebody and say, "You will be happy. You will not be unhappy. I hereby command you to be happy. You see to it that you're happy." And you say, “That's an emotion. How can I be happy?" Well, this is an inner happiness that is detached from external things, and it's one that's produced by God the Holy Spirit. A Christian who is walking under the control of the Spirit of God, no matter what happens – there's happiness. And in our movie "The Hiding Place" that was so evident. These two sisters were happy. Horrible things were happening to them, and yet, they were happy. The happiness was something that was on the inside, and it was produced by God the Holy Spirit.

So this structure, the pentagon of the spiritual maturity structure, is what makes a mature Christian. And when you have this, you are ready to do combat against Satan; the world; and, the old sin nature within you. And it is also your defense. When you have solid grace orientation; when you have a mastery over material things; when you have a relaxed mental attitude of emotional rapport toward all people; when you have a capacity of love (the capacity to be free of bitterness); and, when you have an inner happiness that's not dependent upon some person; some thing; or, some circumstance, boy, you are invulnerable. Nobody can bring you down when this structure is at full maturity. Now, that is the other end of the line. That's why the first part of the mechanics of developing in the spiritual maturity is so important as we have stressed.

Now, in the Greek language (we don't want to get too detailed about this, but) there are three Greek words, and they're made of two other words. One is "oikos" (oy'-kos), which means "house." The other is "oikodomeo" (oy-kod-om-eh'-o), which means "to build." And these words are actually the words which are translated as "edification." "Edification" is "building something." And it goes like this. There's one word that's called "oikodome" (oy-kod-om-ay), O I K O D O M E. That's the act of building. And it's used in Ephesians 4:12, Ephesians 4:16, and Ephesians 4:29 as "building something." So, here's a word that's basically dealing with edification, and it's "building something." It's a structure.

Then there's another Greek word "oikodomia" (oy-kod-om-ay), again putting these two same words together. It's a noun, O I K O D O M I A. And this is the result of your building. First was the process of building. Secondly is the structure that you built. 1 Timothy 1:4 talks about that. It talks about the administration – the thing that you have developed.

Then there's a third Greek word for "edification:" "oikodomos" O I K O D O M O S. That's a noun and that refers to the builder. Acts 4:11 uses it in that way.

So when we get to Jude 20, we have all of this brought together in this sentence: "But you beloved, building yourselves up, on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit." You believers, building yourselves up ["epoikodomeo" (ep-oy-kod-om-eh'-o)]. You are a builder. You are in the process of building. And when you finish, you have a structure. What is that structure? The spiritual maturity structure of the soul. And it consists of these five basic elements.

Now, the purpose of this is very specific. Why should I worry about having this kind of a solid structure in my soul? First of all, it will enable you to become a mature Christian. All facets of the spiritual maturity structure will be solidly in place. The pattern for this kind of maturity is our Lord Himself. Ephesians 4:13 has this to say: "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of Man, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." Jesus Christ is the example of full spiritual maturity. And He is our pattern. And we read of the fact that this is something in which He had to grow in His humanity. He was not born with this kind of spiritual maturity. This is what you have to develop. You have to build this kind of structure.

That's why, when I don't see you sitting here in church, that's very bad business, because you have missed out on the feeding and the information to enable you not only to build this structure, but to keep it built. That's one of the great tragedies. It doesn't stay built without your maintaining it.

Luke 2:40, "And the child (that is, Jesus) continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him."

In Luke 2:52 it says, "And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom (intellectually); in stature (physically); and, in favor with God (spiritually) and men (socially)." He grew into maturity. Here it's described in a little different language, but it is the same concept of growing into spiritual maturity.

**We Glorify Christ**

So, why do we want to grow to spiritual maturity? Because this is the greatest honor that we can do to God. John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh and dwell among us, and we beheld His glory: glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." What is that speaking of? The Word. That's the term: the "logos." That's Jesus Christ. He became flesh. The pre-incarnate Christ now took on a human body. He dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory. We saw the glory of Christ. What did they see? Did they see the shining light around Jesus? No, they didn't. You know that. When you looked at Him, He looked like an ordinary human being. Well, what glory could they be speaking of here? We're told very clearly, except on the mount of transfiguration, His Glory was hidden inside His body. And yet they beheld the glory of one as the only begotten – the unique person. That's what "only begotten" means – the unique person of the Father. What glory was it? Grace and truth. They saw a spiritually mature man. And that is the objective of the Word of God – to bring glory to God by showing what a human being can be, who will subject himself to the learning of Scripture, and living by it in that spiritual maturity structure in his soul, and in the five facets of that structure.

So, the result was that we are to become a mature Christian.

This also has a second benefit. That is that we become a stable Christian. We are consistent, and we have control because we are spiritually mature. There are some people that you hate to meet, [jokingly] and I wish you would raise your hand and tell me about some of those. You hate to see them coming. No, I don't want you to tell me. But they are irritating people emotionally. You never know what they're going to be like when you meet them. Sometimes they're going to be very sweet and kind. And sometimes they're going to be hopping mad. They are spiritual and emotional yo-yos. That is not the characteristic of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ, under a variety of tremendous pressures, had great stability, and He had great inner happiness. The Bible tells us, in Hebrews 13:8, that: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday; today; and, forever." He is immutable.

Because Satan cannot hit the Lord Jesus, He has to hit His body, and that's what we are. Therefore, it is essential for us to have the stability to take what Satan is going to throw in our direction. And it's essential for the Lord's work to be done. Christians who are not stable are not Christians who are doing the Lord's work. They're the yo-yos. They can't handle the job. They can't inconsistently do the job. And those who are in church, and out of church, and in church, and out of church, they're the yo-yos. They kid themselves if they think that they have spiritual stability. They don't. And all you have to do is to put them under some pressure, or something really to cross them. And you'll see what screamers and yellers they'll become. Stable Christians are able to take the high points and the low points in stride.

Furthermore, with a spiritual maturity structure, you become a Christian who's reflecting the glory of God to the world. You are a light to the world. You are an image of the glory of God. You reflect the characteristics of Christ. You have the fullness of God. You are a new person in Him. And there are many descriptions that we can't take time to run through today that describe what you are in Christ.

As an ambassador of Jesus Christ, God wants to show that we have erected a spiritual maturity structure in our soul that reflects what God is. Then we can take the pressures and sufferings that the world brings us. With a spiritual maturity structure in our soul, we are stable people, and we are an honor to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, it is a wonderful thing to be able to look and say, "As I look at myself, I am pretty grace oriented. I do live and let live. I don't try to deal with God on anything but His grace method. And I do have a mastery of the details of life. I'm able to enjoy things, and I'm also able to let go of my money to the Lord's needs. And when I have needs, I'm able to wait upon Him. I don't get into a big frat. I wait upon Him to give me the details that I need to make my life go. And I have an emotional affection for fellow believers. And I treat them with that spirit of kindness reflecting that emotional attachment to the people of God. I also have a mental attitude goodwill for them, and I have the capacity to love them. I have the capacity to love God that way. I have the capacity to love the person I'm married to who, needs to have my mental goodwill. I have the capacity to love my Christian friends in that way. And I have an inner happiness.

Now, that's the one that very often breaks down. Christians should have an inner happiness – to be happy. And it's not because of a person. If somebody makes you happy, and that person goes, there goes your happiness. If your happiness is dependent upon the fact that you possess something, that thing is gone, and there goes your happiness. If it's because you are in some circumstance (some achievement) in life, and you lose that, there goes your happiness. Happiness is something that God puts into us, and that's why He can tell us, "I'm commanding you to be happy."

**Super Grace**

Now, when you have this kind of a spiritual maturity structure, as a result of the grace system of perceiving spiritual things, you have now reached the prime of life in the Christian life. And this is what James calls "super grace."

But if you leave your pen exposed to the air, it won't work. If you expose your life to Satan's system, it won't work. This is super grace. When you have this structure, and all sides are functioning, now you are a real prince, or you are a real princess. Why would you want to be a commoner when you could have this?

However, there is one hazard – an enormous hazard. And that is that this structure can be fractured. This structure can have breaks in it. This structure can deteriorate. And almost overnight, you can go zilch, to the bottom where your sniffling, whiny, whimpering piece of humanity, and you've lost all of your royal characteristics. And there's a very definitive pattern by which that happens. And that is our topic next time.

Dear God, we thank you for the Word of God. And we thank You for this system of spiritual capacity, which was provided for the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He field-tested it, and showed us that a person can live above sin with this kind of a life structure. And we ask, while we will never be sinlessly perfect, to help us to be like Him.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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