***Fellowship and Church Attendance

Colossians 1:3-8

COL-059***

We are studying Colossians 1:3-8. Our subject is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians," number 37.

**The Grace of God**

In Colossians 1:6, the apostle Paul commends the Colossian believers for their grasp of the doctrine of the grace of God. That is no small commendation. It is one of the most difficult things that people struggle with today. It is a feature which often surprisingly is not emphasized to Christians in the instruction within the community of their local church assemblies. The grace of God, however, is where it's all at. The people in Colossae understood God's grace in two ways. They understood it in terms of the personal salvation that it had provided for them. And they understood it in terms of the spiritual maturity that it provided for them. They knew that it was the grace of God that had given them a salvation that was going to preserve them from the lake of fire. They knew that it was a salvation as a free gift apart from any payment in the form of human good works or commitments to do something for God. It was just a plain gift from God which they appropriated as a grace offer.

This offer of course was genuine because it was based upon the death of Christ, Who had paid for the sins of those to whom God was extending this offer of eternal life. Those who accepted the gospel (believed it) thereby made Christ their Savior. The Colossians also understood the grace of God in terms of personal growth into spiritual maturity, because God had provided for them a grace system by which they could perceive spiritual phenomenon. In this way, they could learn doctrine, and they could gain divine viewpoint truth. There is no other source for divine viewpoint truth except the grace of God. The knowledge of the Scriptures is the means for this grace.

**The Spiritual Maturity Structure**

The knowledge of doctrine enables the positive believer to build a spiritual maturity structure in the soul, which may then be carried on by his faithfulness to super-grace level blessings. That is the superior tremendous area of living. And it is interesting enough that one of the crowns (the medal of honors), that God will be giving in heaven to a certain few, is called the medal of the crown of righteousness. And this is the crown that is given to those who have logged maximum time of their lives as believers at the super-grace level. There'll not be too many of those given out. But for those who do, it'll be a crown worn with a great honor throughout the millennial kingdom. The spiritual maturity structure produced by doctrine learned through the grace system of perception is made up of five facets:

1. It enables a person to be oriented to the grace of God.
2. It gives a person a relaxed mental attitude which gives him a proper emotional rapport with others.
3. It gives him a mastery of the details of life, so that he is not overcome by material things.
4. It gives him the capacity to love, so that he has a mental attitude goodwill toward all.
5. And it gives him an inner happiness which is not stressed out by the things that surround him. Circumstances, people, and things do not shred him of his inner happiness.

Now, while this marvelous structure is built in the soul by the Holy Spirit for godly living and for divine blessing, it must be maintained, or it will go into reversion. While a believer maintains the temporal fellowship with the Father, then Christ is his Lord, and He governs the life of the believer. This maintenance is done through doctrine applied by the Holy Spirit. He is thereby a spiritual Christian.

The maintenance of the status of spirituality and temporal fellowship with the Father depends on maintaining Christ as one's Lord. If you want Christ to be your Lord, there are three things that are required: two negatives; and, one positive.

**Do not Quench the Spirit**

First, the Scripture says, "Do not quench the spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). This refers to an act of personal disobedience of the will of God. This refers to saying "No" to the leading of the Holy Spirit to perform some service for God. This is turning your back upon your mission. This is a very serious matter. There are many priorities in life. And, somewhere along the line, you must learn that priorities have to be prioritized. Some things are more important than other things. And at the top of your priority list is number one: your mission. Nothing must come ahead of the mission. And there were some folks in the Bible who, on one occasion met with Jesus, and said, "I've got my family. I've got to take care of them before I can follow the mission with you, Lord. And I have my relatives who have died now, and I have to take care of them. I must bury them. I have a piece of land. I must go and look it over. I have a new wife. I want to see if she's everything I think she is." And all of these are certainly priorities in life. But Jesus says, "No, anybody who puts his hand to the plow and looks back has lost his eye on the top priority: your mission. Therefore, in such an act, Jesus was saying, "You quench the Spirit of God." And that is a very grievous sin – turning your back on a request of the Holy Spirit which He has made clear to you by some means. Christ cannot be your Lord if you quench the Holy Spirit.

**Do not Grieve the Holy Spirit**

Secondly, it says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 4:30). This refers to causing some distress to the Spirit of God's holiness. It is the result of a violation on your part of God's moral laws. It is caused by the evil of sin and human works coming up from the old sin nature. Therefore, we are faced with the fact that there are some rights and some wrongs, and the Bible tells us what they are. There are absolutes for personal conduct. You must never do certain things as a Christian. And you must do certain other things as a Christian. They have positive and negative factors. But when you refuse to follow the dos and the don'ts of Scripture in your life as a believer, you are causing great grief to the Spirit of God because it distresses His holiness. You have become, before Him, an unholy thing. And when you are an unholy thing, then Christ cannot be your Lord.

**Walk by Means of the Holy Spirit**

The third is a positive: "Walk by means of the Holy Spirit" (Galatians 5:16). This means to live in the inner circle of temporal fellowship with God the Father, so that you, as a believer, are under the guidance and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is more terrible in life than for a Christian to be out of the guidance of the Spirit of God. It's a horrible condition. It's being as if you are unsaved. And that's what Paul said to the people in Corinth: "You're walking and living as the natural man. It didn't seem like you ever became a Christian at all. You're not even close to what some very moral and high-quality and cultured pagans are. And here you are, the prince and princesses of the royal family of God, not walking and living in the inner circle of temporal fellowship. What you are doing is walking in carnality. You're out of that circle, and once you're out of that circle, you're now under the guidance of the old sin nature and the power of Satan. And the longer you stay out, the more acclimated you become to that carnal position, until you've lost your way so far that you think you're a real up-to-date, top-of-the-line Christian – that you're a really powerful, significant person, and you've lost all sense of what you really are."

That's the terrible thing about being out of temporal fellowship, and walking in carnality, until it becomes an acceptable way of life. This is the condition of not depending on human wisdom and on your self willpower to live your life. Nobody can have Christ as his Lord who is not walking by means of the control of the Spirit of God.

Now that wonderful spiritual maturity structure, and that capacity to live a godly life that God has provided for us through doctrine and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is compared in the Bible to a building. So, we call it the spiritual maturity structure. But it is also important to understand that this is not a self-perpetuating structure. It can be torn down, and it can be destroyed. And in the Christian life, this is always the potential of going down as well as going up. And once you're on the slippery slope, things can very quickly get out of hand. So, it is important that you understand what the chain reaction is: the links; and, what the steps are – the downward steps that bring you into this disastrous position, and what gets you on the slippery slope to begin with. And then it's a wild Mr. Toad's ride.

It's somewhat like: yesterday, I was out on our playground, doing something in the yard, and I turned, and I saw a few kids that came onto our playground, and one had climbed the slide. And he was standing at the top, wearing roller blades. He envisioned himself as a great ski jumper, I could see immediately. He was going to come down that thing on roller blades, and see how far he could leap out. And I told him to stop immediately. He was going to go down backwards. I said, "Sit down; hold the edge; and, slide down. And I got him off of that. Had he gotten on that slide with those roller blades, that's the slippery slope of the Christian life that leads down from super-grace living into reversion, and maybe even the sin under death.

As I thought about it afterward, I was kind of sorry I stopped him. I would have liked to have seen how close to the fence he would have come after he flew off the end of the slide. But maybe he'll come back.

Please open your Bible to Ephesians 4. The dissent into total destruction of your spiritual maturity structure is to be found in Ephesians 4:17-19. This is a very important piece of instruction. What we're talking about here is the Spirit of God teaching us about developing spiritual hardness (spiritual callouses) on the facets of our soul toward God, relative to the mind; the emotions; and, the will. Whenever a Christian is not building a spiritual maturity structure and maintaining it, he is tearing it down. He is doing this by building calluses on his soul.

2 Corinthians 13:10: "For this reason, I am writing these things while absent, in order that, when present, I may not use severity in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down." Here's the concept of the Christian life as a structure. Here's the concept of being a Christian who has a building of maturity in his soul. The Corinthian Christians were so carnal, and they were so evil in so many ways, that the apostle Paul, who had great special authority as an apostle over them, such that he said that he was going to come to them, and deal with them with extreme severity. And he was going to tear down what they had built up. What had they built up? They had built up a carnal house instead of a spiritual house. But the analogy is clearly there.

The continued progress in building and maintaining the spiritual maturity structure is by functioning on the grace system of perception, which will take you up to the super-grace level of spiritual maturity living. This is taught us in James 4:6, where God says that those who are positively responsive to Him will have overflowing super-abundant grace given to them.

Our failure to take in doctrine daily through the Word of God immediately begins building calluses on the soul. When you are not moving in the Word of God, it starts right away. You know what it is not to eat, and to get hungry. And it doesn't take long to do that. It's the same with your spiritual life. And for this reason, Jesus pointed this out in Matthew 4:4, where he said, "It is written: man shall not live on bread alone, but on every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." You can go a long time living without food. And it'll do you a lot of good. It'll clarify your mind. It'll knock off some weight. It'll, enormously strengthen your immune system, and it will give you great physical capacity. And if you do it the right way, the fasting won't even bother you, relative to hunger. If you want to know how to do that, ask me, and I'll give you some pertinent information so that you can practice that biblical doctrine as well.

However, the point is that you cannot fast physically forever, and live. And you cannot fast spiritually forever, and survive in the devil's world. And in terms of the spiritual, it's a day-by-day eating, because that's what keeps you in that temporal fellowship circle. So, absence from the Sunday church services is a very serious matter. And I cannot stress to you enough that the Bible condemns it. Anytime you or your children are not in this room when we are teaching the Word of God, I can assure you that the record is being made in heaven. I can guarantee you that. The record is going to be there at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And you can go ahead and whistle in the dark, and hope that, by some means, I'm wrong about this, but don't count on it.

**Fellowship**

Acts 2:42, speaking of the early believers – here was the pattern: "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostle's teaching (or doctrine) to fellowship." And then in the Greek language, we know that the word "fellowship" here is explained. The breaking of bread, which included the Lord’s Supper, and social meals together as Christians, and to prayer – that was fellowship. So, we always say, when we use the word "fellowship," we're very careful here at Berean Churches to say "social fellowship" when we mean basketball; when we mean volleyball; or, when we mean a party. We're distinguishing this word "fellowship," which is clearly explained in the Greek. The construction indicates that fellowship is appositional. It is explained by the breaking of bread (the Lord's Supper), and, of course, what they did at the Lord’s Supper – the testimonies that they shared, and to the life of prayer.

So, the poundings that I get from some people, because I stress to you that you should be with us in prayer meeting unless God has not permitted that, due to your circumstances of one kind or another: where you live; and, so on. Or I also stress that you should be present at the Lord's Supper meeting, and prepared to give a word of testimony. That is what the Christian life is all about: doctrine; and, fellowship with other believers. Now, how are you going to do that if you're not here? This is something that you do at every service. You share the apostle's doctrine, which is now recorded in the Scripture.

**Church Attendance**

This is tied down a little more specifically when you look at Hebrews 10:25. It says, "Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day dawning near." Do not fail to be in church when the doors are open as a lot of Christians do. And one reason for it is because when you're here it encourages. You can probably suspect how encouraging it is for the pastor-teacher (PT) to see full chairs (chairs full of people) instead of chairs all sitting around empty, and knowing that there are people all around nearby, in our association as a church, who could be filling those chairs; encouraging one another; and, then to do this all the more as you see the day drawing near. The day of what? The day of the rapture, and thus the nearness of the day of the Second Coming. And when you finish with the service tonight, you're going to have a new awe for the nearness of the day of the rapture. And you're going to be blown out of the water by things that are taking place that are only peripherally reported on the news, because I catch what the news people are saying. The concern is out there.

Now, how can you fulfill this Scripture (a command from God) if you're not here? How can it be your habit to keep your kids out of this church auditorium when the instruction is being given? Where do you think they can be where it'll be better for them? Where do you think it would be that it'll be better for you? What could you possibly be doing, as you'll stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ when this subject is brought up? And you'll say, "Oh, well, he didn't understand, but Lord, you and I understood that it was better for us not to be there.

And then there's Colossians 3:16. We, in time, will get to this in more detail: "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Now, you tell me, is this a command of God, or is it not? Well it is. Can you do it at home? Can you do it if you're not here? No, you cannot.

Now, it is this that tears down the spiritual maturity structure of the believer. It is this kind of negligence on the part of the believer to live by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God. So, absence from the Sunday church services is a very, very serious sin. And make no mistake about it. Now, you are your own priest, and you do as you wish with you and your children. But just remember that you better look up to God and say, "This is why I'm doing this." And just be really sure that He has confirmed, and that He has agreed with you that you are acting according to His wisdom.

Now, in Ephesians 4:17, here's the path, and the way down the slippery slope into reversion, and who knows what? Verse 17: "This I say therefore." Now, he has been talking about what has happened to the believers in this context, in their transformation through their salvation and the fact that they are in Christ. And he has told them how he has provided for them a pastor-teacher communicator so that they may be equipped to do the battle of the spiritual life; that they may be able to become mature Christians; and, that they may be able to serve God with divine good production to build up the body of Christ. And he has gone on to say that, for this reason, they're not going to be yo-yos tossed back and forth by every kind of stupid doctrine that comes along, and by the trickery of men (by the craftiness of men) in their scheming deceitfulness. You're not going to be victims of the religious world.

Once more we have seen a prominent religious television evangelist in the charismatic circle in our community has now had to leave his million-dollar home for a while to spend a few months in jail. But never mind, he'll get everything he needs while he's in there. And when he gets out, the million-dollar house is still going to be there.

This is a man who plays great scheming trickery and moves people with every wind of doctrine he thinks of. This is a man who moves through the audience, that his wife has previously moved through, and has made notes about people and discussing things with them, asking personal questions of them. And then as he moves through the audience later after the hoopla and atmosphere has been created, with a receiving device in his ear, on a certain channel, and she in a control room, directs him to the people to speak to them. And he speaks to these people; asks them their names; and, and then begins telling them the things about themselves that she's telling him, and he's picking up through his receiver in his ear. And these people are awed. And when the television camera showed his church services, people were jumping and jiving, and having a wonderful time, and getting so excited. And do you know what they did after that? They just poured their money into the offering place. And he ended up with something like six or seven multimillion-dollar properties – the house he lives in.

Well, this it all came from people who did not understand the Word of God. And when they did come to church, they were conned. They were made fools of. But people will support that, but people won't support a place like this, where the Word of God is proclaimed, and the result is, when you go out, you have an opportunity to make your life count for something: for time; and, eternity. And you have the information to do it.

Now, these people are brought about under this condition because they have not understood the Word of God to begin with, and they have not understood the cleverness of Satan to destroy them, and to bring them down. Instead of being part of a strong Christian body of believers operating on God's truth, they have been treated to a circus, and they have enriched another religious conman.

Having put that into context, Paul then comes to Ephesians 4:17, and says, "I say therefore," as a result of all this, "and affirm together with the Lord," He wants to make it clear that he's not just giving you his opinion. He is telling them what God the Holy Spirit, Who dealt with him by direct revelation has told him: "That you walk no longer as the Gentiles also walk (as one stepping across, down to the slippery slope), in the futility of their mind." The Greek word for "futility" is "mataiotes" (mat-ah-yot'-ace), M A T A I O T E S. What this word connotes is an emptiness as to results or purpose. Here is the futility (the emptiness) of the results or purpose of something. Something is designed for a purpose, and it becomes futile when it can't execute that purpose. And what is it that becomes futile in us? This is always true of unbelievers. It can become true of the carnal Christian who doesn't play the game according to the rules. And what becomes futile (unable to execute its purpose) is the mind. The word for that in the Greek Bible is "nous" (nooce), N O U S – the futility, or the emptiness, of their mind.

**The Mind**

Now, this particular word refers to what we have called the perceptive function of the mind. This is the perceptive function. Here's where you get information. Here's where you get the knowledge. This refers to that faculty of perception and understanding that all of us have. It connotes the perceptive mentality function of the mind of the soul. It is the place where we learn something. And here we are, with this center of learning. Now, we're going to learn the natural things: reading; writing; and, arithmetic. And when we learn that, we use it. How does the mind act upon that? It kicks it right over to the directive, decision-making side of your mind, and you act on reading; writing; and, arithmetic.

But spiritual things follow a different course. The divine purpose, however, for the perceptive mind function is to learn doctrinal phenomena. It is to learn spiritual truth – the truth that God has revealed and recorded in the Bible to guide us in our conduct. You must know this. You cannot evolve to this on your own. You cannot discover this on your own. You will not grow into this. This is something that has to be taught, and the fundamental way of doing it is through the Word of God – through the pastor-teacher, local church structure.

The unsaved mind cannot learn spiritual principles of doctrine, because they are taught by the Holy Spirit to believers only. Now the world thinks that we doctrinal Christians are nuts, and it ridicules us. It thinks that we are engaged in foolishness. And those people have no hesitancy in making fun of us. Why? Because we think that the Bible gives us the truth from the mind of God. That's why a Sam Donaldson can be on national television before all the nation, and ridicule a candidate for presidency of the United States, Pat Buchanan, because Buchanan thinks that the Bible tells us the truth about where all life and the universe came from, as a creation of God. And he can ridicule him by saying, "Six days?" And Buchanan has to be insulted and demeaned, and yet he has to have the courage to say, "I believe that the Bible explains to us what we can't know any other way. And I believe that that is the truth.

Now, there was a time when a liberal like Donaldson would never have said such a thing publicly. That was the time when the liberals were riding high; they were in complete power; and, they didn't have to pay any attention (just like the religious liberals did) to these nuts, the fundamentalists Christians. They didn't have to pay any attention to these nuts, the strict interpretation constitutionalists. But suddenly, now there is a great threat to their domain. Suddenly, now they're alive and thinking and aware, and they know that their house of cards is about to come crashing down on their heads by the grace of God.

So, now they're in such panic that here a commentator of Donaldson's stature would publicly ridicule the Bible, because most people in this country, even if they don't care too much for the Bible, are very uncomfortable about ridiculing the Bible. They want to go very soft-pedaling on that. That is thin ice to walk on.

So, this man is not ignorant, but he is desperate. And that's what you should understand about that kind of ridicule. And when they make fun of us as Christians, and make us some kind of extremists, that's okay, because so too did they to the Lord. And they do that because they have a mind which is empty of divine viewpoint. That's the tragedy. That is the same kind of a mind that exists in the Christian who will not show up for the church services. It leads to that inevitably, sooner or later. And all of a sudden, the most outrageous things people will agree to do for their children and for themselves. The unsaved mind is thus futile in that it is empty of doctrine. So, it cannot perform its divine purpose of guiding the person with God's point of view. That's what this is saying – the futility of their mind. The unsaved person has nothing in his mind that can guide him in a way that brings blessing into his life. All of the guidance comes from the wrong source. It comes from the old sin nature, and therefore, it is Satan's point of view, and not God's.

This same word is used in Romans 8:20, in reference to creation. Let me read that for you: "For the creation was subject to futility (the same word), not of its own will." When God finished creation, what did he say? "It's very good." So, the creation didn't somehow do something to itself that caused it to become futile, and to become something that is void and empty. "It became futile not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;" that is, God brought a curse upon the earth because of sin, in the hope that Christ would resolve this, and the earth would have that curse removed from itself.

Now, what is he saying? He is saying that creation became futile because of the curse of God as the consequence of sin, which then emptied the earth of its true purpose of blessing man. The earth was supposed to produce magnificent flowers, fruits, vegetation, and animal life, all for man's blessing; enjoyment; and, sustenance. That's what it was all about. And at first, that's exactly what the earth did. There was not a weed; not a thorn; and, not a thistle – nothing to interfere with the most magnificent growing. And before the flood, there was a great demonstration, because of that canopy over the earth that held out the ultraviolet phrase of the sun in the degree to which they come now. And the atmospheric pressure was different. You scuba divers know that you can stay as long as you want in the water as long as you don't go below 33 feet. Then when you go below that, you're entering a second atmosphere pressure. You're doubling from 14.7 per square inch to double that number, to a second level of pressure. And then you cannot stay down as long before you have to come out, and so on. The deeper you go, the sooner you have to come out.

Well, the scientists now suspect that there was increased pressure upon the earth, probably doubled, just after creation. And they have experimented with plants which have been put in a chamber where the pressure is doubled, and grown in that way. And, lo and behold, what happens? They're huge. They grow enormously. They put people in there with wounds: a cut; and, what happens? It heals up miraculously almost before their very eyes. Everything was conducive to maximum care of the body. In fact, the people in the medical realm, who deal with infectious diseases, will tell you that some infections are so severe that they, on occasion, in order to break the back of that particular infection, take a person to places they have here in Dallas where they have (I think they call them) hyperbolic chambers, and they put these people into an environment of increased pressures, and it kills the infection. They can finally control it that way.

So, this was a marvelous world that God created. It was a great place to live in. Adam and Eve had an environment like you couldn't imagine. But once sin came in, and God's curse was upon it, it became futile in terms of fulfilling its purpose. It couldn't do it anymore. It worked against it.

Now, this is the same condition that arises in the mind of the carnal Christian. He's out of temporal fellowship. He's out of touch with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So, the condition of the slippery slope begins. The first problem is that his mind becomes empty of God's thinking. And this begins by being negative to Bible doctrine truth which he receives from the pastor-teacher, for some reason. He gets something that bends his neck out of shape because of something the pastor-teacher said, or did, or somebody said he did, or he thinks he did. There is something that he takes personally.

I find that it's amazing how often in a service people come up afterward. And one young woman did a couple of weeks ago and said, "Boy, do you have a listening device at our house? My husband and I have been going over everything you talked about this morning. These are the very problems that we're struggling with. And it was as if you had made notes, and now were preaching." Of course, I never preach to any individuals. But if I preach about people not attending church, is it too hard to figure out who am I'm talking about? It's the people who come to church. Even I can figure that out. But it's not somebody specific. And there's an old saying which I just made up: "If the shoe fits, wear it."

So, you have doctrine that you have taken in here. You've listened, and you've been instructed. Here it is. You've got the knowledge. This is the "nous" part of your mentality. This is where you're learning things, and you're grasping these truths. You have understood it, but you don't want to receive it. You don't like it. Very often, you become so much smarter than your pastor-teacher, and you become so much more competent, and especially, if you find some other preacher who will scratch your ear where you want it scratched, and you'd rather go that way. Or if it'll be some of your friends, your friends will scratch your ear too, to give you wrong direction and false concepts. As it is for children in school, the most dangerous thing they have to associate with is their peers. That is the corrupting influence. And today, in heaven's name, who could even question that in the secular system. And it's swimming upstream all the time for a Christian kid in the secular system. It's tough enough in a Christian surrounding academically, because all of them have sin natures to influence you with.

However, Hebrews 4:2 says, "For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also." He's referring here to the Hebrew Christians to whom this writer is speaking, of the Exodus generation: the good news of God working in their behalf: "But the Word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard it." This is one of the verses on which we base the principle of the doctrine of faith rest – where you do all you can in life, and then by faith, you leave the rest with God. You do everything that you can do within your human capacity, under the guidance of the Spirit of God and the knowledge of doctrine, and then you have to say, "I place it in the hands of God to go from there." This is because you'll have some tough problems that you cannot resolve, especially when they're human ones.

Consequently, this doctrinal truth that you have learned, because of your negative attitude (you have not used Hebrews 4:2 here and mixed it with faith), is not stored into your human spirit as full "epignosis" knowledge. Consequently, this truth is of no use to you, and you have nothing to guide the directive mentality of your soul (the decision-making factor). There's nothing to kick up there to give you God's guidance. The mind of the Christian, therefore, gradually becomes empty of divine doctrine guidance. His mind now has become futile in serving its purpose to guide him in his life. Ii is no more of value than it is for an unsaved mind. An emptiness develops.

This is the same thing that happens out in nature. Here a low-pressure area develops. Here's a high-pressure area. And what happens in the low-pressure area? Here's the low, and here's the high. The high kicks in. The low pressure will suck in the high pressure every time. And when that happens, there is a turmoil of winds and storms, and all kinds of things kicking around up there. The high pressure goes into the low-pressure. Nature (we learn in science class) abhors a vacuum, and therefore, it quickly fills it.

Now this is what happens in the mind of the believer. This is the meaning of this word "futility" of emptiness. There has been created a low-pressure condition in the mind of a believer who has become devoid of doctrinal functioning. A spiritual vacuum exists. And what do you think happens? The spiritual vacuum in the perceptive mind now sucks in the things of the world to fill itself, just as it does in nature, in the atmosphere.

What does it bring in? When your mind no longer is filled with the divine viewpoint of doctrine, false doctrine is accepted. Often it's very subtle: not really bad stuff; and, not under that nonsense of Mormonism that you're going to become a God, but real subtle doctrine, and you start bringing it in. This is the very thing that Paul says that you're not going to be swayed by, when you have a good spiritual maturity structure. Human viewpoint frame of reference is accepted. This is Satan's point of view instead of God's point of view. You pick up religion from Satan. You're honoring yourself as a deity, in effect. You have false values. There are now no absolutes for rights and wrongs. Every lifestyle is acceptable. You cannot condemn what anybody does. You move to immoral conduct. Total sexual degradation is drawn in. Rebellion against constituted authority, both spiritual and secular, comes flowing in. You develop anti-grace attitudes. You fall into a legalistic approach with God, and it makes you feel so self-righteous. What is that? That's the low-pressure area in your soul, sucking in all of this stuff from the world. You have mental attitude sins. You feel justified in your unseen ugliness. Human good compassion (the product of the old sin nature) is substituting for Holy Spirit compassion. You love the loss of freedom from government controls. You love a constitution that doesn't have to be interpreted as it was written, but it can be expanded as your wisdom tells you that it should be.

Anybody who says that is in this condition. I can tell you that his mind has become empty of the Word of God. He has lost his orientation. And the low-pressure spiritual system is bringing in all the stuff from the world. Economic socialism, a way to rob others of the fruits of their labors, has now become acceptable to you. Vile and degrading entertainment is no problem for you. Evil role models are out there.

Here's a great star that comes into your life, and you point your children to this athlete. Here is the person that should inspire you. Please notice that he is so manly looking. He wears a little ring in his ear. He's got a long ponytail. He is something really special.

I used to wear a ponytail, and I thought the girls would be impressed, but they hated me. I looked so much better than they did with theirs. So, I don't do that anymore. And I tried wearing the ring for a while. And when I came out with the girls, they just made a laughing stock of me. But that's not so for a great athlete; a famous person; a druggie; or, somebody that hangs around with women of the night while his wife is at home. Here you are children: athletics. This is it. This is where you'll find the people you should bow before. Here is somebody that you should honor. Madonna is having her baby. She doesn't have a husband, but she has her baby, and she's going to work it out. Oh, this is great. Madonna is so wonderful. Here's your role model, folks.

Now come on, let's not kid each other that when the low-pressure condition comes in, the disaster is going to be there. And this is the Word of God. Nothing good can come when there's a spiritual low-pressure area, and your mind becomes oriented to Satan's ideas and values. Christians are going along with the beliefs of the ignorant intellectuals of the world. These people who are Satan's opinion-makers, and we follow them. A person loses a sense of the significance of life. You begin to live with conflicts as a Christian. You begin to lack purpose. You're unhappy. You have a lot of bitterness. You're driven to accumulate money and things. There's a lack of peace and repose in your life. You have a lot of self-pity. You do a lot of whining. The physical structure starts breaking down. Everything is bad when your mind is empty of the Word of God. It's all on the slippery slope. Nothing of God in the mind fills itself with all of Satan and his world system. The end condition of this is a pointless mind and a mindless life.

That's step number one in the destruction of your spiritual maturity structure – to create a condition where your mind is not filled with God's thinking, and it creates a spiritual vacuum that brings in everything disgusting and contemptible from the world. And pretty soon that's the way we end up living.

However, there is for us a superior way. And that is the way of the Word of God, and a fellowship of the Spirit of God. That's the way of the winners. The losers are going to head for the slippery slope to their own destruction. May it not be so. Why should it be?

Dear God, we thank You for the Word of God. We thank You for this Your kindness to us and revelation to us.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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