***Be an Outcast with Jesus

Colossians 1:3-8

COL-063***

Our subject is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians, segment number 41 in Colossians 1:3-8.

**Made in the Image of God**

That one long Greek sentence in Colossians – we are making our way now through to the very end. People are always interested in equality in the human race. Well, there's one great inequality which is above all other inequalities that exists among people, and that is in their knowledge of what the Bible teaches. People go from knowing nothing about the Word of God to having the most bizarre kinds of ideas. Mostly what people know about the Word of God comes from someone's ignorant hearsay. This is a great difference between human beings – those who know something of the Word of God, and those who know nothing. And there are those who know something of truth of the Word of God, and those who know a great deal of character and misconception. Those who do have a knowledge of doctrine are able to rise to their full potential as beings who have been created in the image of God.

That is a doctrine that you should never forget. Every time you stand and look at yourself in the mirror, you should remind yourself that you have been made in the image of God. You're not just one of those dogs. You're not just one of those animals out there. You're not just one of the pigs who has no future. Do you have an eternal destiny by virtue of the fact that you are made in the image of God. You are a creature of great nobility beyond anything you could possibly imagine. Those who have a knowledge of the Word of God are able to rise to the fact that they are created in the image of the magnificent almighty creator Himself. Those with a positive response to the knowledge of doctrine are born-again spiritually and they are therefore capable of applying the divine viewpoint of doctrine to their lives.

They are capable of rising to what they are in the image of Christ. Such born-again positive volition to doctrinal types of believers are going to move on to the spiritual maturity level of super-grace. They will have godly lives and they will have a life, a production of great good works in Christian service. These are the only normal people in the human race. People who have been born-against spiritually therefore, they are complete in spirit, soul, and body. People who have received the Word of God and gone from grace salvation to grace spiritual maturity, and now are living the super-grace life. That's normal humanity. Everything else is short of that normality. Such born-again people are the salt and the light of the earth. On the other hand, those who lack of knowledge of God's word and have no concept of what's really inside the Bible, for whatever reason, they remain simply at the animal level of existence in violation of the image of God in which they were created. And that is a very sad picture.

The human being made in the image of God who lives only at the animal level. These people remain spiritually dead and thus their enslaved to the human viewpoint of their sin natures to the world of Satan and to the lies of the devil. Ignorance of God's word and the lack of spiritual regeneration produces a life of very evil degradation of shame and of death. That is abnormal for a human being. But you'll immediately see that most people in the human race fall into the abnormal category. Only a limited number ever come to normalcy in the human race. spiritually born-again believers who are denied instruction in doctrine or who rejected it, never rise to spiritual maturity with any kind of daily victory over the world, the sin, nature and the devil. Yes, they're born-again. Yes, they're going to heaven. Yes, they're going to be saved. They will live in the new Jerusalem. There's an apartment waiting for them. But because they are denied instruction in doctrine, they are described by the apostle Paul as being saved by the skin of their teeth. That means you're just slipping in, and you slip in at the poverty level and that's it. Believers without a knowledge of doctrine or a positive volition in applying it when they do know it live like the unsaved who are ignorant of doctrine. These people are out of temporal fellowship and therefore they have no access to biblical instruction from the Holy Spirit. Those who are unsaved do not have the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they simply can't learn it. You have a human communicator, which is God's fundamental provision for you to learn doctrine and that's within the setting of the local church. But after the communicator has delivered the information, the learning takes place within the mind on the basis of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. And we have shown you before that diagram and how it has been specially created by God to enable you to learn spiritual phenomena.

You do not learn Bible doctrine in its intensive meaning the way you learn, reading, writing, arithmetic, and other secular subjects, other academic subjects, you don't need the Holy Spirit to learn. These are a normal learning process, but you cannot learn spiritual things without being born-again spiritually, having a living human spirit and having the Holy Spirit as your instructor. So believers without the knowledge of doctrine are no better off than those who are unsaved without their knowledge of doctrine. Believers without strong doctrine orientation therefore are easily misguided by Satan. They suffer temporal and eternal misery as spiritual casualties of the angelic warfare. Without doctrine you're a sitting duck out there for the devil. Ephesians 4:14, points out, as a result, "We are no longer to be children." What's he talking about as a result of what? Well, up in Ephesians 4:11-12, he's just pointed out a series of communicator gifts, which he has given to the human race to convey the mind of God to the mind of man.

Ephesians 4:11 points out that those were those gifts included the apostles of which we don't have any anymore. Prophets which we don't have any more. And then two communicators, which we do have. Evangelists who deal with the gospel of the grace of God and a combined gift in the Greek pastor-teacher. That person is the one who is responsible once a person is saved to carry him from spiritual babyhood to super-grace living. For what? Ephesians 4:12, his ministry is "For the equipping of the saints," preparing them for spiritual military warfare, preparing, "equipping the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ." Preparing Christians with doctrine so they're capable of serving God with divine good reduction to build up the body of Christ the church. And then because that's been done, we will attain to a unity of faith to the image of Jesus Christ himself and fullness of maturity. Then comes Ephesians 4:14, as a result of which, "We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness and deceitful scheming." Now that's the religious world today. Christians tossed here and there by every wind of doctrine that comes against them, the trickery of men by craftiness and deceitful scheming.

I've heard about a minister here in town that has taught one of the most outrageous things. He has a very large church and it's a Bible based church, most outrageous thing and people believe it and then used himself as an example that any decent knowledgeable Christian in doctrine would never have come back. And yet because people are so ignorant of the Word of God, he can get away with that kind of a misleading, I'd even hate to describe it to you here, and yet people come pouring back and among them some of our former Bereans. Now, how can you go from great knowledge of the Word of God to great reversion, to great loss, to where you are nothing once more in the spiritual life? That is what Paul has been talking about to the Colossians. Here's a church in a strategic place in the ancient world and the only thing that's going to save the society of the Roman Empire of that day are Christians who are oriented to the Word of God and who will not compromise that knowledge of grace and who are out there sounding it forth to the people of God. To the people of society through the people of God. But the people of the Lord cannot sound what they don't know. And that is where Epaphras has come into the Colossian church as a great exemplary man that Paul is holding up and to whom he throws his support because Epaphras is doing the job of teaching the Word of God.

Believers without strong doctrine orientation can believe the most ridiculous fool things. They can be easily let away from where their real spiritual life is to where they are simply feeding on air. The tragedy, however, of a carnal Christian, an untaught believer, is greatly compounded when his spiritual condition is due to the failure of his pastor-teacher to instruct him in God's truth to give him doctrine. This is a Christian who attends church. Usually he makes the mistake of believing that the place to go are where the numbers are. This is the inevitable sucker routine of the sin nature to say where the gang is, where the numbers are, that's where the truth is. So, go for the gang; go for the majority; and, go for where people are piled up on one another. That's where it's at. But knowledgeable and experienced people have longed since learned that the truth of the matter is that the majority is usually wrong.

The majority is easily swayed by mob mentality. We have seen whole nations as Germany for example before World War II. Of all things, the cradle of Reformation Christianity, and yet the German people because they finally drifted away from that deep knowledge of document they once had found, their nation deteriorating and a rapidly gravitated towards socialism. Toward government dominance in their lives towards someone in power to solve their problems rather than a trained Christian knowledgeable in doctrine walking hand in hand with his God solving his problems by the grace of God. So here's this poor Christian, he attends church, he gets no instruction. He is very sincere because he believes this must be where it's at. He gets inspiration, he gets challenged and he goes home without anything. His soul is starving for spiritual food.

That's the result of the pastor-teacher who fails in his mission. It is the spirit of our times to seek religious entertainment in a church service rather than instruction and doctrine. People treat the local church with a great deal of contempt. The same people who would not dare walk in late to their employment because they're going to meet their God, their employer, have no compunction about sashaying in no matter how late to meeting their real God. Sometimes it's unavoidable, sometimes it's one of those things that happens, but very often it's just by deliberate choice. Because what's happening here in this room is not as important as what's happening down there in your place of business.

Now a person who is oriented the doctrine, who is a spiritual Christian will never think like that. They've got that problem solved and they know they've got their priorities right. They know that there's where their sense of values lie. And they know how to influence their lives and the lives of those near and around them to a right perception of the Word of God and the meaning of believers for that word. That is never treated with secondary contempt. So because people want entertainment or rather than instruction, it is very tempting for preachers to prostitute their calling and their duty to please people and to keep their support. To be very careful that they don't say things that someone's going to start vibrating in the congregation when they hear it because it hits that person's little point of evil that they're engaged in. While this temptation for the pastor-teachers understandable to go with the popularity, it is inexcusable for him to yield to it. He can never justify it. He can never be defended for it. He can only be condemned, and I guarantee you when he stands before the JSC (the Judgment Seat of Christ), he is going to be condemned enormously for it.

**Be and Outcast with Jesus**

Being an outcast for sounding forth the Word of life, however, and for sounding forth the Word of doctrine is to join a very noble company. When the pastor-teacher does that for you, he will join the company of being an outcast with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. I remind you of John 6:60-69, where Jesus presents a very poignant remark to his disciples: "Many, therefore, of His disciples." This is not the 12 – but the large number of people who were following Jesus Christ to learn from Him as the teacher – the people who viewed Him and His claims of being the king of the Jews and Israel's Messiah as the One who was going to give them victory and freedom from the Roman empire. So, this is referring to the vast number of people who followed Him: "Many, therefore, of His disciples, when they heard this, they said 'This is a difficult sentence. Who can listen to it?' But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?"

Now what they're stumbling at is that they must follow Him as the Messiah Savior, or they never go to heaven. He has just talked to them, and he said, I must become part of you like you eat something, and it becomes part of you. Like you drink something that becomes part of you. You in me and I in you is the way he stated it later. Verse 62, "What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before. It is the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) who gives life to the flesh." The sin nature profits nothing.

The words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and are life. What words? The words of doctrine that he's instructed them in. This is where their real food is, but they can't take it. It's causing them to have a bad reaction. Verse 64, "But there are some of you who do not believe." That's the issue, negative volition. "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were, who did not believe and who it was that would betray him, and he was saying, for this reason I have said to you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

Now he interjects a more startling factor to them. He says, some of you ~yo-yos are going to peel off now. You decided I'm not going to give you food for free. I'm not going to be your welfare king. I did it a couple of times. You saw me feed a large crowd and you said this is the way to go. You have now concluded that the kingdom of which I'm speaking is not this kingdom on earth that is to be brought now to remove the Roman Empire. I have an earthly kingdom which is coming in the future, but this is not the point of time for that. You have now decided that all you're getting from me is doctrine. All you're getting from me is the word of life and so as a result of this you're going to shove off to some other church. But Jesus says, you should know this, that when you do this, you didn't decide to do it. God has removed you. The only reason you're not sitting where you're being instructed in the Word of God and then go out to something which is a travesty of spiritual instruction is because God removed you.

You think you made the decision. But like the kings of Israel who were so rebellious against the communicators of the Word of God, the prophets and were so indignant at what the Word of God was giving them, that God said, okay, I'll give you the prophet speakers who are possessed by demons. They will be a false spirit and they will give you lies. You want lies. God said, I'll give you lies, and he gave them lies. They believe the false teachers and they went to their destruction. You want lies? You want neglect in the Word of God, great. God says, I'll give you deceit, I'll give you neglect. I'll pull you out a blessing and I'll put you into a spiritual desert and you can be happy to your heart's content. While eventually when the report card comes in, we discover how temporary happiness was not really worth it.

So in verse 66 of John 6, as a result of this, "Many of his disciples withdrew and we're not walking with him anymore." Verse 67, "Jesus said, therefore to the 12, you do not want to go away also, do you?" Oh my, what a pointed statement. You don't want to leave me too, do you? But I must tell you something you don't see it in English. But in the Greek (verse) sentence it is structured in such a way as the Greek sentences are, when you ask a question in a sentence in Greek, it tells you whether it should be yes or no. It's wonderful going to a Greek school. Every teacher's sentence she asks a question, she gives you the answer, yes or no. Yes or no questions are easy in Greek. This sentence is constructed in such a way that Jesus is saying you don't and that's why it's structured this way.

You do not want to go away also, do you? Meaning No you don't. He (Jesus) wanted them to make a declaration now. Simon Peter, the spokesman, comes right to the bat, comes up to the plate. Verse 68 "Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life and we have believed and have come to know that you are the holy one of God." Kind of a peculiar phrase for Peter to use, "You are the holy one of God." That's what the demons used when they spoke of Jesus, "the holy one of God," his total deity. And Peter said, why would we want to leave you? How stupid could we be to go from someone who is teaching us the deep things of the Word of God, taking us into the deep valleys of the terrible things that are in the human heart and then taking us as we did a couple of Sunday nights ago out of the desperation, the violence of the valley and then walking up that trail step by step as Paul outlines it to get back up to super-grace, to the mountaintop of superior living.

But once you become arrogant. Once you become a smart Ale. Once you become an activist in religious things. You are now walking on very thin ice. Because you are now a prime candidate for Satan to tell you fight the authority. Be your own authority. That's where people often say, “Memorize the Word of God. Just memorize the Word of God.” And then what do you have? Yeah, you should memorize the Word of God, but if all that you're doing is memorizing the Word of God, you're acting on your own authority, because you don't know what it means. Until a pastor-teacher, or someone that he has taught, has passed down the information of what that Scripture means that you're memorizing, you're acting on your own, and you have nothing.

And the whole concept of breaking away from the authority of the teaching ministry of the local church and what God has put together in the pastor-teacher gift and that line of communication for you to verify by the confirmation of the Holy Spirit within and the written Scriptures in your hand, that's the system that God's provided. You may learn in other ways, but your maximum line of learning and reinforcement, reinforcement as well in spiritual things is always a local church pastor-teacher. You can't make it any other way. So go to the big church. Go to where the crowds are. Go to where everything is jumping the jive and where they got programs. Anytime you see a church with a lot of programs and people sit in church and they look at their bulletin and they're marking the programs they're going to go to that week, I can guarantee you almost without a question, that's a church that is trivial when it comes to teaching of the Scriptures of doctrine.

They're trivial on doctrinal instruction whether they have to do that, take programs to keep you from killing yourself and to tearing yourself up in your life during the week. It is the spirit of our times to seek entertainment rather than instruction and to be diluted by the powers of numbers. Those disciples that left Jesus were sure they were right because they could look around them. The whole crowd is leaving. And if a whole crowd begins to leave, boy you know that they're right and what they're leaving is wrong. But God says no, that's not the way it is. And it certainly was not the way with Jesus as he sat there with 12 men and one of them a traitor who is still being putting on a front. And that he sits there with those people around him and he watches the rest of the people going down the road shaking their head and abandoning the Son of God.

Oh, they were so smart. They were so competent that they were so ignorant of spiritual things and without the teaching ministry of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, they had nothing. So what's the point of all this? Paul's point to the Colossian Christians in reference to Epaphras is that if you have a faithful and competent pastor-teacher (PT), don't beat up on him. Don't be ignoring him by not attending the church services. Or kicking in a morning and not an evening service, something like that because you've had a belly full with one service. Don't be beating up on him like that and don't be restricting his capacity to do the work, especially the more experience, the more knowledgeable he is because you restrict the financial means that are necessary in our age for the outreach and the potentiality of the ministry.

The Bible is very explicit on that kind of beating up on the competent teacher who's faithful to his job. Hebrews 13:7-9 deal with that. It says, "Remember those who led you, who spoke the Word of God to you and considering the result of their conduct imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today. Yes and forever." What he did for your teacher, he will do for you. By the same means your teacher who learned the doctrine from someone and went positive to it and has integrity to follow it will do the same for you." 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." To be strengthened by grace. That's what happens in the church service. It is the grace of God that saved you, but it's also the grace of God, and only the grace of God, that'll take you to spiritual maturity at the super-grace level, and he does that through the PT (pastor-teacher) teaching ministry in the local church.

It is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace. And then notice the negative that is so popular in our day. "Not by foods, foods through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited." Here to these Hebrews who are drifting away from grace Christianity, they're born-again, but they want to go back to the Mosaic legalistic, hands around a throat, system of making you do right. And the writer of Hebrews says, these people falling from grace going through foods, I don't eat certain foods, I will eat other foods going through their ceremonial procedures, all of which had a representation and at a proper point in history was the way God worked. But now it means nothing. Because the reality Christ has come. Plus in churches we have all of these food things. It's a key word for entertainment. It's a key word for fun and games of various kinds. You want to train your youth to be a follower of Christ, to come up to adulthood so that when they're confronted by a moral temptation, they will slap it down. They will give it a quick karate chop right to the throat so the thing will gasp to death before their very eyes.

Well, you want that. Find a gym and get the place jumping and jiving with games every Friday night for the kids and see that your kid is there. Hey, tell them to go there. That's where it's at. So they can associate with all these kids, most of them who are bad influences in one way, or another cause they're ignorant of doctrine. And have them have a lot of fun and then let them come home exhausted and tired and worn out and say, boy, this is a wonderful Christian life. Yeah, until the devil comes up and slaps them and then all that fun in games isn't going to stand them in any stead.

I would think twice about that kind of dependence for your moving through the devil's world. Foods aren't going to make it. So the world today is full of the sorry sight of untaught Christian people who know not the mind of God but who arrogantly declare it because someone left them spiritually blind to keep them happy so they think their authorities and competent to speak on spiritual things. Please remember that the Bible was produced by God. It is therefore as perfect as he is, and it is without error. Its meaning is clearly discernible from the words it uses, and it alone sets forth the viewpoint of God. God's viewpoint is not received through some ecclesiastical authority. It's not received and determined by a consensus of what people agree is the mind of God. It is not even received from your pastor-teacher even if he's a competence. One who studies the word and knows what he's talking about. It only comes from the word itself. And you have to know the Word of God.

Nothing is more important in the life of a human being than to get to know God through his word, doctrine. God's grace has given us a complete bible and a local church system for learn learning the deep things of doctrine. The grace system of perception that we have introduced to you many times. This is a biblical system. It is one that you should be able to click off clearly in your mind from the point of the completed canon of Scripture right down the line to divine doctrine stored in your human spirit and then functioning up in the mentality of the soul to govern your emotions and your will so that you're not a fool as a Christian. Do not be intimidated if you are a well-taught Christian by the indignation, the arrogance, the competent, the assumed authority of some Christian who has not been taught doctrine or who has veered off on some kooky tangent, but he thinks that he is as good an authority as you are.

Don't let that kind of a person intimidate you. You know your truth. You know your ground when that person is out of line with the Word of God. He isn't an authority. He's just dumb. Now, they may once have been an authority, but it's so easy as we have shown you to go from super-grace maturity into reversion back to nothing. They may have once been spiritually smart, but now they've become spiritually dumb. The believers in the great New Testament city of Colossae were blessed by a pastor-teacher and Epaphras who knew doctrine. And who did his job of teaching it to his congregation so that the Holy Spirit could enlighten them from Epaphras who had been trained by Paul. The Colossians learned of God's grace way of life from salvation to rewards in heaven for service on earth. Epaphras taught, the people listened, they learned, they believed, and by that act of faith they stored that doctrine in their human spirits. And from that they built out of that that evolved a spiritual maturity structure in their souls and they became terrific human beings.

The families in Colossae were thereby guided spiritually and they were emboldened in teaching, training, and disciplining their children in godliness. That is ever the occupational hazard of the life of a parent. That as a child gets older and the body gets bigger, the patients do not realize that the inside person is still a midget. And that a person (child), in old Israel, until that child blew 20 candles off on his cake in Israel, he was under the directive authority and responsibility of his parents. After you're 20 and on, you're your own responsibility before God. So here these families in Colossae had been trained by their PT Epaphras. He gave them the information, so these people knew how to deal with their children and in a terrifically evil society of their time. The ultimate focus, therefore, I have reminded you again, is the local church ministry must always be its young people.

It must be in teaching them the principles of doctrine. It is not to be in entertaining them. That is very clear from Jesus on through the apostolic instruction. Our responsibility in a local church is first and foremost our children, which is why that is what is often attacked. And I'm amazed how many Christians who should know better would attack a ministry that is geared to guiding young people to a knowledge of Christ and the deep things of the Word of God. Treating them like they were ignorant, little nincompoops who cannot begin to prepare for their adult life by entering the deep waters with God now. This is what Jesus ultimately meant in Mark 10:13-15.When he was being crowded by mothers with their children and "They were bringing children to him so that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them."

The disciples kept saying, "Get away, get away, little kid, you bother me. Beat it. Beat it." And Jesus noticed what they were doing. He heard what they were saying, and he didn't like it. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant "and he said to them, permit the children to come into me. Do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter into it at all." Nobody comes into the Christian life and ultimately God's kingdom without a very simple childlike faith. Children believe what you say, you are the authority and that's how you come into the Christian life.

Therefore, children are very trusting. If you don't trust Christ, if you don't trust your Father's word, you will never come into the Word of God from salvation to the deep things of the Word of God that will build you up spiritually. Then there's Ephesians 6:4. We cannot fulfill these verses, and we cannot be true to these verses as a church unless we are centered very significantly on our young people. You cannot fool your mission as a parent unless your child becomes a big thing in your life. Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and in the instruction of the Lord." Don't be inconsistent. Isn't it terrible when a kid goes positive to spiritual things? We see this all the time because we're with children all day long in the school. Kids are absorbing things left and right. Then they got a parent who is a humiliation to them – a parent who is out of touch with the Word of God, and who acts out of touch with the principles and against the principles of the Scripture. You think that's not an agony to that child. It's an intense agony. And some of you have gone through that. And you have known what it is to wish that your parents could rise to what you have risen to: to see a consistency; to see an integrity; and, to see a capacity of real kingly, manhood, queenly, womanhood in your parents. Fathers, do not live in such a way as to provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline. Discipline means the training and the instruction of the Lord and that means doctrine.

Now, how can parents do that? If we as a local church have not told those parents the Word of God, they're not going to get it anywhere else mostly. They're going to get little mattering tidbits if they watch TV. They're going to get it from the instruction of the local church. Then there's Proverbs 22:6, this great point of wisdom, "Train up a child in the way he should go even when he is old, he will not depart from it." And it's such a great blessing to see some of these parents we have in this congregation of very small children, children are learning the Word of God. They're learning; they're memorizing; and, they're being brought in line to act with within its restraints. They are being taught to be respectful. We had a little boy, Mr. Gitchel, and I, in camp and I think it was a camp situation. This boy was there with us, and he was talking to us, and this kid was yes sir, right? Very pleasant. We winsome little kid and just his language and his respect. And Mr. Gitchel said to him, I like the way you talk. I like the way you respect authority. He learned that at home, didn't you? Kids smile and say, yes sir. And the kids' got parents who know how to teach him restraint and orderliness and purpose and direction in his life and focusing on the things of God, first of all.

Then, of course, there's 2 Timothy 3:14. How can parents do this? How can they carry through on this if a local church is not devoted to training parents to train their youth? 2 Timothy 3:14-15, "You however, speaking to Timothy, "continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of. Knowing from whom you have learned them." He learned them from his mother and from his grandmother and then in his Christian life from the apostle Paul. "That from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus." Timothy was reared with the knowledge of the word. His father apparently was dead, but his father was apparently a gentile. But his mother and grandmother were Jewish, and they reared him in the knowledge of the Word of God. What a great heritage to give your children. And Paul says, that's it. Someone taught your mother, someone taught your grandmother, they knew doctrine, they pass it on to you and they gave it to you from Scripture. And Scripture is from God and it's true. You've got everything you need in life to make it a significant life and to defend yourself against the world, the devil and the sin nature within you. Now, when either parents or child or children follow a foolish and wrong path, then what should your PT do when he sees it? He to sound off about it. And he to sound off about it without apology to you without intimidation because he's right and you are wrong. When your children are being denied their spiritual heritage, their associations in the things of God and in the local ministry because of you interrupting with your lifestyle, you're wrong. And I'm right because I'm telling you what the Word of God says.

Now, the apostle Paul was therefore delighted with the good report that had been brought to him by Epaphras about the Colossian Christians. The world needed a group of people in that city of Colossae to start standing up for the enlightenment of doctrine that could only come from a teacher who knew it, who had the capacity and the gift from God to convey it. The same teacher that may be brilliant in conveying to you American history, science or mathematics is a bust when it comes to teaching doctrinal things unless he has that special gift at the point of his salvation.

Well, I went by to visit my big church as I drove by to see what's on the big board for Sunday sermon, and sure enough, there was another verse about salvation up there. Sure enough, again, this vast congregation is going to sit there and they're going to hear the gospel once more being preached to them. And the people of God are going to be left starving for the Word of God. When you have someone that is doing the job, that's the person to support. That's a person that the grace of God will be able to carry you to the heights of your experience. Paul was delighted with the good report brought to him by Epaphras with the special attitude and the progress of the grace of God of these Colossians Christians in the face of false teachers and the con artists who were enriching themselves.

The people of Colossae had been blessed because they had Epaphras who delivered the information to them and they said, amen, Lord. And they went with it. They were not rebellious; they were not indifferent and they were not trying to silence the voice that they might have even disagreed with. You think you disagree, and you think there are scriptural reasons to set it on a back burner. It just may be that the PT is closer to the truth than you are, and time will tell. But what a travesty to know that people go to church in all sincerity, and they don't know any better. They think they should be in church to hear the gospel preach to unsaved who aren't there. And nobody blinks an eyelash that you would think they would say, Hey, I'm never coming back to this place again. I didn't come here to hear the gospel. I've already believed it. The people who need the gospel aren't in here. It's the children of God who need the food of God. You go to a restaurant, and you order a meal and they bring you an empty plate, you smile. You scratch around on the plate; you go up and pay the bill and you leave. You're perfectly happy, aren't you? No, you raise a furor, Hey, I didn't come in here for an empty plate. I came in here to be fed the Word of God. So you see, it's not erratic for me to say that if you have been fed the Word of God, then go buy the offering plate and pay the bill. That's the way it should be. And if you have not received instruction, the Word of God, pass that offering box. Don't look at it twice.

I have never heard any of these preachers in the big churches that are giving out sweetness-and-light say, "If you have not received instruction in the Word of God, don't put anything in the offering plate." They wouldn't dare say that because they know what the consequences would be if they got people thinking like that. But here in Colossae, a church that needed to bring enlightenment to the part of the Roman Empire in which it existed as a strategic city, here was the apostle Paul so delighted in Epaphras, and as we shall see as he goes on describing this man in such brilliant terms, as we look at tonight, you'll see why Epaphras was so dear to him. Why Paul said, I don't need to go to Colossae. I don't need to go there to do the teaching. God is giving you the man who's fully capable of doing that job and who is doing the job. And I will write you this letter because I want to back him up and I will deal with those problems in this letter that you brought up of the false teachers and the things that are threatening you so that I can encourage you that you're on the right track, but all beyond this letter, you don't need me. You've got it all. What a brilliant testimony for an Epaphras for the apostle Paul to indicate that about him! But was he some kind of a superior person? Did he have a big brain? Maybe he did. What he had though was knowledge of doctrine and he knew his job as a PT, and he wasn't afraid to do it. And he was willing to go with the Lord Jesus Christ, and if he had to be abandoned, then he would be abandoned. But the truth would be honored and thereby Christ would be honored and the individual believer who is made in the image of God where we started this morning is going to be fully respected for what he is. If you do not teach that person his spiritual heritage in Christ, you have degraded him in terms of the image of God in which he was created.

That is not the way of our Father in heaven. He's given us everything we need. It's just a matter of whether we are going to catch hold of the fact that doctrine is your life. And you can never ride on past instruction. That's why I was careful to use the word this morning reinforcement. It'll be teaching you the word, but you constantly need the reinforcement of what's in your human spirit of doctrine that you have learned and stored. That is why coming to church is important. So go ahead and show your children by your lifestyle what you think of what the Word of God has said about the Word of God. In fact is you haven't really gotten a good picture of that tonight you will.

Father, we thank You for Your Word and for Your instruction, and we ask You to give us once more the insights that will carry us from animal level to prince level and to princess level. We ask You, Father, to help us to seal these words to our understanding, and to realize that while this is not the popular view of local churches. This is the biblical one. We thank You that, from the earliest days we find in the book of Acts, Christians gathered for the apostles' doctrine, and they put their shoulders together to serve and to pray together.

We ask You to help us to be that kind of a people, and to be very bold and courageous and confident because we are going to face a lot of powerful religious forces who come right up to the line, but never lead people into the great and deep things of the Spirit of God. We thank You for the ministry of Berean Church. May it live with greater prosperity and greater outreach and greater impact to the day that we empty it at the rapture. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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