***The Sin Nature  
  
Colossians 1:1-2  
  
COL-66***

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Our subject is "Prayer for the Colossians," segment number two in Colossians 1:9-14.

The Colossian Christians were filled with the Holy Spirit because they knew the Word of doctrine, and they obeyed it. So, they were able to live their lives by means of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God was free to lead them. This is the divine power system that God has provided for Christians to have victory over the devil; over the sin nature; and, over the world. This same power system was what carried Jesus through, in His humanity, and it works for us today. The Colossian believers were maturing spiritually, so that they would be a great impact on Roman society in their day with divine good. This, of course, thrilled the apostle Paul, because society always needs the salting and preserving and illuminating power of mature Christians.

Paul was pleased to hear from the pastor-teacher, Epaphras, who came to visit him in prison in Rome. He was pleased to hear that there existed in that congregation a spirit of mental attitude love on the part of the people toward one another. This kind of love governed their lives. They had the principle of "live and let live." They went about minding their own business. When they were able to help believers who needed help, that was the thing they were eager to do. And when believers needed help, they were ready to reach out to a brother or sister to ask for that assistance. And all of this was motivated in giving and in receiving by mental attitude love, and that is the proper thing to do.

Somebody leaving this morning said something to me – something that they didn't do that they could have done, and wished they could had done. And I said, "Why in the world didn't you tell me? Why you didn't you talk to me?" It is understood around here this is standard operating procedure. If you have a need; you have a problem; you have a situation; or, you have something you'd like to do, you tell me. I'm the sphinx. Nobody gets to know anything out of me, but I have resources that God has placed at my disposal such that I can open doors for you. And it was unfortunate that these people were not aware of it, and they let something good slip by in their lives.

Now, people who understand that not only do they operate on mental attitude goodwill love, but so do those about them, are going to be more ready to treat you like family members, because this is what you do with your family. When you need a hand, you go to them.

Now, Paul was pleased, therefore, to hear that this was the kind of that were in Colossae. I remind you that he had never been to this church. He was not the founder of this church. Probably Epaphras himself was. And Epaphras undoubtedly had some contact previously with Paul to get church-age truth orientation. But these people, because they were filled with the Spirit of God, as was demonstrated by their "agape" mental attitude love, meant that they were also capable of entering the deep things of God in instruction. They could learn the deep things of the Spirit of God. And the Colossian Christians were not merely sanitized worldlings in their conduct. They were not just living a cultural Christianity, so that they were moving yet in the world, doing all the things of the world, acting like the world, but being nicer about it. They were internally transformed by the Word of God. Therefore, they had godly reactions to the issues of life which faced them.

Well, that's what the whole point is of what we're talking about – spiritual maturity that is what you really are, because what you are is what you will perform.

Now, Epaphras, obviously, had done his job of explaining God's word, and the believers, consequently, were doing God's work with great joy, and with great zeal. They were doing this with eyes on the Lord, and all to the Lord's glory. If you learn just that little simple principle – your eyes on the Lord, and all to the Lord's glory in what you do, then nobody is going to be able to hurt you: no matter what stupid thing they may say about you; no matter what pressure they may put upon you; no matter how they butt into your business; no matter how they fail you; and, no matter how they let you down. Eyes on the Lord, all to the Lord's glory – you'll take it all in stride.

Now, we pointed out this morning that what Epaphras was doing was highly resented by Satan, naturally. And what Epaphras was doing was what pastor-teachers are supposed to do. They were supposed to instruct people on the basis of what we call the HICEE technique of instruction. Now, such a preacher of God is a very great threat to Satan's authority; to his dominion; and, to his control over people. Satan gets at Christians through the sin nature that is in them, so that he neutralizes them for Christian service. There's nothing like dragging a Christian through some foolish moral lapse to button that Christian up, and to jerk him off the line of service.

So, this sin nature has a factor in it which is very weak; it is a factor of sin; and, it's an area of great weakness. And we looked at in detail this morning at those terrible things that are in each one of us that we find in Matthew 7:21-23. We're cautioning all of us about something that we ought to take very seriously. You are not above these things. And this is where the devil is going to hit you. This is the part of your soul he is going to go after. He's going to go after that weakness within you in order to distract you from the Word of God, and in order to undermine what God has in mind for you to do. The devil will do anything to divert you from your potential. And the way he will do it, first of all, is that he'll distract you from instruction in the Word of God. He'll keep you at home Sunday morning and Sunday night. He'll do anything in his power. And when he does that, you miss out on the instruction. And the result is that you are then tempted to go at a certain point for the shallow church activity type of place.

People who think they go to a place: "Well here, this place stands for the Bible." And it's been interesting how I've had so many reports from people who sat here, and then have had occasion to sit out there where the big-time Bible and church instruction is supposed to be. And they say, "I can't believe the triviality that I'm listening to; the shallowness; and, the lack of the real depths of God. But everything is jumping and jiving in this place. And you would think that this is a wonderful church. People are going; people are coming; people are smiling; people are grinning; lots of money coming in; and, all kinds of members and programs galore. That's your first clue.

However, taking people verse-by-verse; passage-by-passage; and, and book-by-book through the Word of God: "No, that's a drag. That's not attractive." That isn't what will bring the crowd in. And the devil convinces you that it's more fun not to be studying the Word of God.

This sin nature with this area of moral weak weakness spews out the sins. This is one of the features, then, that undermines the Christian life, and undermines your spiritual maturity, and undermines your service. The sin nature comes into the Christian life at the point of salvation. It's not removed from you until you enter the presence of Christ, either by death, or by the rapture of the church. A carnal Christian is out of temporal fellowship, so he is subject to all these lusts. And that's what these are. This is the pattern of lusts of the sin nature. The carnal Christian, who is out of temporal fellowship, is out of the will of God in some respect. He's out of the will of God because he is in his wrong church. He's out of the will of God because he's sitting under the wrong pastor-teacher. That's a very grievous of sin. That's a very grievous act of self-destruction spiritually.

Well, the sadness about that is that you think you're really flowing on great and good and wonderful. But someday, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the horror of making that mistake will come into focus in a very great way. And we must all grieve and be sad when we see people doing that. Victory over sin in the Christian life begins with realizing that we have this ever-present danger of the sin nature within us. And it is always trying to sidetrack us from our true allegiance. And that's the issue. Where is your true loyalty, if it is really loyalty to Christ?

God's spiritual power system of doctrine and the indwelling Holy Spirit, when used, will beat the devil every time. And Christians will be victors in the devil's world. Romans 8:37 tells us that very thing. In the previous verses, we see the suffering attack against the Christians – the loyal people. Then in Romans 8:37, we read: "But in all these things, we overwhelmingly conquer through Him Who loved us." And then 1 John 4:4 adds this, "You are from God, little children, and you have overcome them (that is, the antichrists of the world), because greater is He who is in you (God the Holy Spirit), than he who is in the world."

So the sin nature is a powerful element to lead you into sin, including the sin of doing something you shouldn't be doing. It may not be a bad thing, but something that is good, but it's the wrong good.

Now, that brings us to the other side of the sin nature. It has an area of powerful strength. It has an area of enormous good – enormous things that one would consider acts of righteousness. The prophet Isaiah understood this problem when, in Isaiah 64:6, he said this, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean. And all of our righteous deeds (our human good) are like a filthy garment. And all of us wither like a leaf."

Now, here's a believer. Here's a person who is born-again, and he is trying to produce divine good when he's not in fellowship with God. And it's coming out of his own sin nature. But he thinks that God is doing this. The unbeliever thinks that God is doing this. And the end of that verse says, "Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Away from what? Away from our true loyalties; away from our true purpose; away from our true destiny; and, worst of all, away from our true eternal rewards: "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all of our righteous deeds are like filthy garments." And propriety in a mixed audience keeps me from telling you what the Hebrew means there when it says that: "And all of us wither like a leaf. And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away."

He is talking about our righteous deeds. Do you see the plural: "righteousnesses," as the King James says? It is the multiplicity of the things we do to soothe our conscience. Human good, therefore, is what? Here's the kicker. If it comes from the sin nature, it's evil. There are two things then that make evil. One is sins. That comes out of the weakness tendencies of the sin nature. The other is an area of strength: a pretense of morality. And out of that comes all this human good. But that human good is just as evil as the sins. They are nothing but filthy rags in the sight of God.

**Common Grace**

There is such a thing as what we refer to theologically as common grace. The rain falls upon the just and the unjust. God supplies food for the unbeliever as well as the believer. That is that the common grace of God. God gives guidance for propriety of living to the unbeliever as he does for the believer. The Roman Empire was a great and powerful institution, because, in its early days, without having a Christian frame of reference, it operated on biblical moral principles: on justice; on family respect; on marital integrity; and, on all the things that you would find in the Ten Commandments. That was the Roman Empire. Therefore, it grew into a powerful institution, and a powerful force for good. That's the common grace of God. But it is this common grace of God which people mistake for the divine good works of God, because any unbeliever can control his conduct to do what is good as far as men is concerned. However, it is not good because of its origin. It's the sin nature.

**Compassion**

Sometimes Satan's goals are best served by drawing this human good out of the sin nature. The code word in our society, politically, for human good – I bet you know it. It begins with the letter "C." What is it? "Compassion." Every low-down politician, spewing out of his sin nature human good, under the guise of government assisting people who can't carry on without government help, call it "compassion." And "compassion," as they mean it, and as it really comes from them, is a great evil.

Now, if you understand that, then you'll see why it is that we are in such a distraught society today – why we are having compassion shoved down our throats, and it's causing us, spiritually, to regurgitate. The reason for that is that it offends your spiritual biblical doctrinal understanding. This compassion is not of God. It is of man. It's from the sin nature, and it violates all the personal freedoms and the integrity of a human being made in the image of God. It is not compassion which is compatible with doctrine. That's what we're saying. Therefore, it is not of God.

Now this whole sin nature human good has been rejected at the cross. Most people are trying to get to heaven by this human good. What does a Mormon do? He's kicking out human good from here. What does a Catholic do? He's kicking out human good from his sin nature. Unless you're born-again (and in Mormonism and in Catholicism, you do not have a doctrine of grace salvation, trusting in Christ, so therefore, you can't be born-again), you're nothing but a simple, sad, sorry unbeliever who's trying to be nice because of what? Because of the influence of the common grace of God. There is that influence to want to preserve yourself. A society that acts upon this grace will preserve itself. Otherwise, they tear each other to pieces.

So, this human good, totally rejected at the cross, is not acceptable to God. Titus 3:5: "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds (works) which we have done in righteousness." This human good righteousness – He didn't save us on that basis. But according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration, as the result of faith in Christ, and renewing by the Holy Spirit, making us spiritually alive. And you all know Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace we are saved through faith," and so on. It's an act of God all the way.

**The Great White Throne Judgment**

Now the unbeliever's human good is going to be judged at the great white throne. That's the great white throne judgment that we read about in Revelation 20:11-12. This is for all the people of our society who have been trying to make it with God on their compassion, and all the people of influence who are screaming "Compassion, compassion" for people, because they want government to be their caretaker. And so they want to just justify it, and make it look good. But unless you're a Christian, and you understand the sin nature structure, and know what that compassion means, you're not revolted by it. You think maybe that's nice. Maybe those are good things to do for people. But if those people need those things, it doesn't come from government. It comes from their families, or it comes from voluntary assistance of people in society. That is God's way.

So, those people, with all their human good (the unbelievers), are going to stand before the Great White Throne, and he's going to be found wanting in the righteousness to get into heaven. And some of them are going to have a terrible time understanding this. They think that that human good compassion should count for something with God. But it's all evil. It's all tainted by the sin nature. Therefore, it cannot be accepted by a Holy God.

You and I, however, as Christians, can also be guilty of spewing out human good. We're not immune from it either because the sin nature is there. And for some of you, you're really nice people. So, this area is not going to be where Satan can hit you very much. You're cautious. You're careful. You're knowledgeable. You're not mindless. It's very hard for him to get at you that way. But boy, he can kick you all over the football field with this one. Your natural inclination to decency is what the devil capitalizes on. So, we Christians too are faced with having our human good judged.

1 Corinthians 3:12-13 describe this as works of hay, wood, and stubble. And it says that all of that, when we stand before Christ at His Judgment Seat, will be burned up. It will be turned to ashes, and there will be nothing left. We will stand stripped of all the human good. And when he comes to saying, "Here's the treasures that you have heaven, and here is what I have for your blessing for all eternity, it will not be from anything out of the sin nature. It will be from what God the Holy Spirit produced through you, with His divine good leading. That's the great difference. There is a great deal of human good that is performed by Christians under the control under the control of the sin nature, if they don't know how this power system works, and are not careful to keep it operational through personal confession when necessary.

A classic example in the Bible is Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11. Here are these two people. They get moved. The early Christians need to join themselves together financially for their survival in an empire that increasingly is antagonistic to them. So, they voluntarily pool their resources. And people come to the apostles, and they say, "I have this money. Here it is. Put it in the general fund, and use it as we need for our Christian community." And nobody told them they had to do that. They were free to do that. They weren't even under the obligation of a tithe to do that, because that's Old Testament Jewish order. It's not imposed upon Christians, though it's not a bad thing to do.

In any case, here come Ananias and Sapphira, who have a piece of property. It's in a good location. They get a lot of money for it. They sell it. And they come to Peter and say, "We've sold that choice piece of property. We had great plans as to what we were going to do with it. We had great hopes. We were going to build something on that. But we sold it for the Lord, and here's the money." But they only gave part of the money. Peter says, "Is this all of it?" They said, "Yes, that's all of it." Human good was motivating them. What did they want? They wanted the glory. They wanted the credit. They wanted the commendation of other people: "Oh, isn't that wonderful? Look at what these people do." They didn't just walk up to the offering box and drop it in where nobody would know. They didn't just do it on the side where only God and the apostles would know. They wanted to blare it out so everybody could know what they were doing. And the result was that they were motivated by human good, not by the Spirit of God. So, they lied.

Well, Peter said, first, to the husband who came in: "You have lied to the Holy Spirit." Isn't that interesting? You're dealing with the spiritual leader. You're dealing with one of the factors of deceit that come out here from the weak side, in order to promote something here on the strong side in the way of human good. He said, "So, you've lied to the Holy Spirit." And the result was his instant death.

His wife came in looking for him, and he asked her the same thing. And she lied again. They kept back part of it, instead of saying, "Well, we gave this much," and so on. And Peter says, "Do you hear the footsteps of the young men coming in? They've just buried your husband. They will now bury you." Boy, am I glad God doesn't work that way today. Am I glad that He doesn't work that way today in executing judgment when deceit is being played to the Holy Spirit out of the human good of the sin nature. And the interesting thing about that was that Peter said to the two of them, "Wasn't this your money? Wasn't this your property? Wasn't it your right to sell it if you wanted to, or to keep it if you wanted to?" And the answer to all those questions is "Yes. It was ours. It was nobody else's business. We could keep it. We could do with what we had. It was our legitimate possession." And Peter says, "Well then, you could have done anything you wanted with it."

It was private ownership capitalism. It's the only thing the Bible knows. It never knows socialism. The Bible hates socialism. God hates socialism. It's a doctrine of demons. And here these people were practicing the deceit that they didn't need to practice. Peter said, "It was yours before you sold it; and, the money was yours after you sold it. You could have given us part of it. Nobody would've thought ill of you to say, "We want to help out with this much of the offering for the needs of our Christian community, which is under the gun of the attack of the empire authorities. And all would've been well." This is a classic example of what the sin nature will do, and how it'll blind you.

**Emotions**

Now the stimulation behind the human good production of the sin nature is the emotions. It is our emotions that drive us through the sin nature to act in this way. These emotions are not controlled by a mind which is controlled by doctrine. For this reason, Satan always keeps people operating on their emotions. Then he can lead them away from divine good production. He can lead them into doing things that are emotionally motivated. It is very bad not to have your emotions under the control of your mind. And I don't want to take time to go through that diagram to show you how it works. But the mentality of the soul is what controls the emotion and the will, or else everything goes amuck. And it is only the Word of God that can give your mind direction on how you should feel. You don't just feel something because it just pops up in you. You feel something because it starts up here in your head. You have an attitude; you have an outlook; you have a conclusion; or, you have a decision, right or wrong, or whatever it is, and that triggers the emotion. If that is wrong up there, or is being governed by what is not proper in the principles of the Word of God, then your emotions will take over, and they'll slam you against a wall. And the same thing is true of the will – what you decide to do. Christians who operate from a mind which is oriented to divine viewpoint of doctrine are not subject to Satan's emotional manipulations.

So, we have a terrible problem here. The resistance against a pastor-teacher's instruction of the people is because it undermines Satan's control of the sin nature. It gives people a chance to rise above this terrible thing which is in them, and to find great blessing in their lives.

What's the solution? There's a verse in the Bible that sums it up: Psalm 119:11. This is the longest Psalm in the Bible. Here is the solution for solving the problem of the sin nature's potential threat: "Thy word have I treasured in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Do I have to explain to you what the Word of God is? It's a doctrine that your pastor-teacher is supposed to be explaining to you. And when you have hidden it in your heart, do I have to explain to you what your heart is? That's your mind. That's the mentality of the soul. And when you have treasured it, the word "treasure" means that you said "Amen, Lord. I believe it." When you treasure it, you've accepted it as God's truth. That's an act of faith. Remember in our diagram that it comes from the perceptive mind where you learn things. It kicks it down to the human spirit, because now that is your treasure of doctrine. And as doctrine is needed, the Spirit of God kicks it up to the directive side of your thinking, and you act in your emotions and your will, and you make your decisions accordingly. It's a beautiful system: "Thy word have I treasured in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee."

Somebody recently told me that a friend of theirs said that the church that they go to doesn't give them any real doctrinal instruction, but they're happy there. Now, if they're happy there, what are they going to be at the Judgment Seat of Christ, when they find what the sin nature has done to them? They don't understand that the happiness they get is a fake happiness out of the sin nature, not the happiness from God.

**Be Filled with the Spirit**

So, only one thing is going to keep the sin nature in the Christian from expressing itself in the twofold evil of sins and human good. And the answer is doctrinal understanding in the mind. This gives us the very mind of Christ. This gives us His divine viewpoint for living and for making decisions. Under the status of being filled with the Spirit, all known sins are confessed so that there is no fracture in your fellowship with the Father. Under the status of being filled with the Spirit, Satan's control of this whole sin nature, in its strong side and its weak side is neutralized.

**Priorities**

You young people (you high school people) – this system works for you. It's the only thing that'll work. If you want your kids to be able to stand up against evil, this is what they have to know – that there is a propensity within them that'll make them do the crazy, stupid thing – the mindless thing. And the devil is going to work on that possibility. But when they are walking with God, and great loyalists to Christ, and admitting when they're wrong, and putting Him first in their lives, that's not easy to do. There are so many things to put first in your life, and some of them are good things. Some of them are things that you think you are obliged to do. You think that they are priorities. And one of the things that the sin nature will deceive you into thinking is that you only have one priority. The problem is that you have priority number one, number two, number three, number four, and number five: "I have 403 priorities. Which one comes first?" Number one. Number 403 is as important as number one, but you can't do number 403. You can only do so many. Number one comes first. And the one that always comes first is the mission – your mission with God. That is first. The image of Christ maintained in you – that's number one. Before God ever wants you to do anything for yourself or anybody else, that is a divine good act, He wants you to become something in spiritual maturity. And that's where Christians go wrong. They don't understand that they must become something in God through the Word of God, and then they can be something in doing the priorities of life in the right order.

So, under the filling of the Spirit of God, Jesus Christ is your Lord. Then you will live a life which will be godly. That will be your natural realm that you breathe and walk in. It will be a life of which you are producing great things in Christian service – genuine things.

So, this is the reason that it's crucial for every believer to have his right pastor-teacher to feed him on the Word of God. 1 Peter 5:2 stresses the importance of this instruction. He tells the elder-pastor-teachers: "Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God, not for sorted gain, but with eagerness." The pastor-teacher is not to enrich himself at the expense of the flock. He is not to enrich himself in his business. He is to be the poorest guy in the flock. He is the one who is to impoverish himself if it is necessary for the work of the Lord. That's what Paul did. He even took a second job to be able to do it. That was his calling.

Some of you Oral Roberts fans here tonight, I'm sorry to tell you that your idol is wrong, because he wrote a book that said, "How I found out that Jesus was a rich man, and therefore, every pastor should be a rich man, if he is a true spiritual leader." Now that's an attractive doctrine. I loved it. I was eager to find out how he could prove that, because I wanted to really propagate that. And you know how he knows that Jesus was a rich man? Because when they stripped His cloak off from Him, they were going to tear it up for the cloth, and somebody said, "Hey, do you realize that this is a designer robe? This doesn't even have a seam. This is a robe completely without a seam. That's a very expensive robe." Now, Jesus couldn't have had a robe like that if he wasn't rich. Isn't that right folks? If Oral says it, it must be right. These are the maneuverings of somebody who is violating this very passage of Scripture: "Shepherd the flock of God among you, taking authority over the burdens of administration, not complaining and whining, not by compulsion. Just do it voluntarily, because it's your calling. And do it according to the will of God. And don't do it for some sordid gain just to get rich. Do it as unto the Lord. Therefore, do it with eagerness. Now that's true of the pastor-teacher, but it's also true of all of you equally well.

Do not fall into the trap that Satan will give you to reason to yourself that your circumstances now are not in such a condition that you can help out with God's work. He will deceive you into thinking that the time will come when you can do something for the Lord's work. But right now, things are a little tight. That's sin nature thinking. And the devil will have a feel day with you. It'll be a crack in your armor.

We are all the widows with our little mite, whatever it is. We are all with our talents. We are all with our spiritual gifts. And the spiritual gift that you have is not something that God is going to call upon you to exercise somewhere down the line. It's today. Whatever that gift is that you have, of those nine gifts, it is today. So, don't excuse yourself, because that's the sin nature kicking in. I'll guarantee you that your faithfulness in that respect will redound to your glory in eternity and to great blessing now. Our God is never going to let you down when you are faithful as a responsible Christian to do what you can do with what you have at this point in life.

It is crucial for all of us to know that we're not out there to get some personal gain, so that someday we can help God. It is so that we now serve Him with the capacities we have. And most of you understand that. That's very natural to you.

So, you have to have your right pastor-teacher feeding you the Word of God. You should never expect your sin nature to stop trying to express itself. You should never view yourself as above what we like to call "gross sins" or "sweetness-and-light human good" – what most Christians really go for. They're equally evil. You are not above that. Never proclaim your supposed virtues, or think these as being true of others. Your friends also have a sin nature. And when it hits them in the belly, because they expose themselves, and they cave, then you put your arm around them, and you sustain them, and you get them back on track. You do not suppose that any of us are not capable of being hurt by that sin nature: either in sins (that list that we looked at this morning; or, in your human good production that wastes your life. And I hope you'll not get tired of my warning you. I don't want to see you wasting your life. Matthew 16:26: "What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his life?" Nothing! Who cares how well off you are financially, if you go out poor into the Judgment Seat of Christ.

So, as long as we are on this track of learning doctrine daily, and remaining filled with the Holy Spirit, we will have the basis for spiritual stability. We will then have a sound mind for guiding our lives and our thinking. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power, and of love, and of discipline." God hasn't made us chicken livers. He's given us the capacity to be bold against the people of our society. You can even be bold against nightly newscasters. You can yell at the television set, and point out their stupidity in their lives, and their deceits. And you know that you're right, and they're wrong, because you have the orientation of God. God has not given us a spirit of timidity. We Christians are not to stand around apologizing to those who are evil. We're to proclaim the truth in love, but we're to get nose-to-nose with them. That's what Jude said. He said that he was writing a letter to help us to fight, with everything in us, for the faith – the truth of doctrine once-and-for-all delivered to the saints. What God has given us is great power of the Holy Spirit. He has given us mental attitude love. That's a great power. And He has given us the capacity of personal discipline. That Greek word for "discipline" is "sound judgment." Isn't it nice to be associated with people who have sound judgment?

So, wherever you are geographically, there is some means of being in touch with your right pastor-teacher that you need for the exposition of the Word of God understanding, so that you're not a slave of the sin nature, either on the good side or the bad side. And for some people, thank God today that we have the technology that their pastor-teacher is at a distance, but the tapes will make it for him. That happens too. But God is able to take up the slack for them. Listening to your wrong pastor-teacher is hazardous to your spiritual health.

Now, what are the effects of failing to learn doctrine regularly? Various terms are used for learning doctrine. Sometimes we call it personal devotions. Sometimes we call it quiet times. Sometimes we call it bible study. Sometimes we call it church worship. Whatever you call it, it's some daily point of contact with God. If you fail to do this, the sin nature will then have a chance to take control of your soul. When you're not feeding on the Word of God for spiritual sustenance, you'll go downhill. The emotions will begin to dominate your mind. They will direct your decisions by the sin nature. And the results will be the evils of sins and of human good. Satan will send human viewpoint error from the old sin nation to poison your emotions, and to incline your will to do his will. Satan can then use you, through your emotions, to serve his ambitions. And his ambition is what? He wants to be like God. So, suddenly you're serving him. Suddenly, you're walking in conformity to the devil. And the next thing you'll be doing is promoting religion instead of the relationship to God.

Please remember that once Satan saw what God was doing, if he wanted to be like God, he had to have a religion. Religion is the trump card of the devil's game. He overrides everything with religion. And unless you are a biblical Christian, all you have is religion. That's why all religions are not equally valid. They're not all going to the same place. Jesus said that most of them are not going to heaven at all.

Now, Satan can use you through your emotions. However, he cannot stop exposes about his nature; his operations; and, his worshipers. And that's what we're trying to do to you. We're trying to tell you the way that he works. He can't keep that silent, but he has to, in some way, neutralize what people know about him. That's why Hal Lindsay wrote a book several years ago called Satan is Alive and Well. That's all he was trying to say: you have to understand that he's trying to kid you into thinking that he's not there anymore to give you trouble. But this sin nature is a point of contact with Satan always, if you let it.

So, by leading a Christian (an informed people) into a condition of emotional domination of the soul, then the sin nature indeed can indeed influence them.

The apostle Paul, in Galatians 5:15, says, "But if you bite and devour one another, take care, lest you be consumed by one another." Here are Christians who can so degenerate spiritually that they're biting each other. This is what they're doing in Galatia. And Paul says, "Just keep that up. And pretty soon, you'll devour each other like a bunch of piranhas. And then what will you have left in your association of Christian fellowship?" If you're going to go bite and devour somebody, go out and bite and devour the world. Don't be chewing on Christians, whether they deserve it or not.

**The Tongues Movement**

The great example of Satan's emotional domination of a group of people is the tongues movement. The tongues practice today does not stem from a soul which is controlled by the mind. It is not a mind that is guided by doctrine. And it is certainly not guided by the Spirit of God. It is entirely an emotional, run-amok situation. Satan is the number one promoter of the current tongues and ecstatics orgy that is being a practiced in churches today. Christians who would recoil in horror from the grotesque practices of Satan worship, yet will embrace in their churches Satan, who comes in through the back door of the tongues and emotion and ecstasy movement. Their souls are dominated by Satan, even if they're saved, because they're carnal people. They wouldn't touch Satan if they saw him, but let him come in, in the form of a religious garb, and they go for him. You should have great pity for anybody who is in the charismatic movement today. They are the patsies of the devil. And it's the sin nature that is the feature that has brought them into that.

So, either way, Satan cleverly secures the aid of sincere people who little realize how they are serving the devil, and in the process, losing the potential of their lives for great eternal rewards.

Now, who's responsible for this condition among Christians? It's the church leaders. It's the church leaders who are responsible for the domination of most Christians by the sin nature. The people of God are left to be easy dupes for Satan to manipulate them. The leaders are ignorant of the pastor-teacher's divine duty and purpose – his key role in teaching people the Word of God. Remember that there are two key communicators in this age. One is the evangelist, who has that particular gift of propagating the gospel. The other is the pastor-teacher. Those are the only communicators you have on a major gifted level. You're not going to go very far on your own reading the Bible. You'll very quickly become your own God in doing that. But once you have a basis, a skeletal structure, a framework, a scaffold, of doctrinal instruction, then you can read the Word of God. And boy, you will go to heights that you couldn't dream possible, because you understand what you're reading, and you've got the right connections.

So, it is these ignorant pastor-teachers who, for one reason or another, have let the people drift off into this kind of enslavement to the sin nature. Christians are given inspirational and devotional talks, and they're left to muddle through to the interpretation of the Word which they need. And they never muddled through right. Christians are not given instruction in the Word. A preacher is more interested in building an organization than he is in building the lives of those believers. And how do you build an organization? You get members. How do you get members? You get people to come forward in a meeting, because you you've given them the gospel, and you want to get them saved, and come into the church. And usually, they haven't been given the gospel, so they don't know what they're doing in walking down the aisle to come into the church. Or they're asking people who have great misery in their lives, as Christians, because they're out of fellowship with God: "Please come forward, and rededicate your lives to the Lord." Have you been in a meeting like that? "Come forward and rededicate your lives?"

When I was a Dallas Theological Seminary student, and we were sitting in our barn like structure that we now call the library, and the man who was my predecessor – this is what he would do every Sunday: "Come down to rededicate your life." And these Christians would come down to rededicate their lives. Did they have spiritual problems? Yes. Were they being kicked around by the sin nature with their sins and human good? You bet they were. Were they helpless little ninnies that they couldn't control? Were they like Paul: "Dear God, why am I doing what I don't want to do, and I don't do the things that I really want to do?" Yes, they did have that problem. So what did they need to have told them? Not the gospel. They needed 1 John 1:9. They needed to be told what to do when they break down. They needed to be fed the Word of God so that they wouldn't break down. But when they did, they don't need to come forward to rededicate themselves again.

After one of those meetings with my predecessor, as you know, they used to have a bench up front covered by an army blanket. I just wish I had kept that army blanket. It should be in our archives. We could have a special case out in the foyer. Maybe I can get one and fake it. But here was this army blanket, and people were told to come forward to rededicate their lives. And they did it by kneeling at this bench. And we used to have some real jumping jiving women in those days. And boy, they would come down there, and they would moan and groan, calling upon God, but they weren't confessing their sins privately to Him to straighten out the problem.

I remember one particularly vocal and feisty, forceable woman after one service one Sunday morning, came up all aglow and said, "Didn't you just sense the Spirit of God here this morning?" And that was all. I couldn't control myself. And I said, "Yes, I think I did smell some spirits as a matter of fact. I think that's why people were acting that way." So, she was wounded that I would say that. But isn't that what the Word of God says? Do not be drunk on wine. Stay off the spirits. But get on the Holy Spirit. For all I know, her physical metabolism may have been kicking out alcohol within herself. I think that's probably possible. And that's where she was getting her jollies.

However, it is the preachers who are responsible. And it is the church organizations who are letting that kind of thing go on within their denominational structure. Christians are deceived by their leaders into believing that they can plumb the revelation of God in the Bible on their own, but they can't. People are not taught the Word of God by competent pastor-teacher by the HICEE technique, where he's done his job in preparation of study – they're going to stay as ignorant at the end of their lives, as Christians, as they were the day they came in. That's terribly, terribly sad. You have, as a Christian, the right to know the Word of God. You have, as a Christian, the right to be led through the deep things of the Word of God.

I'm disappointed with what people do with that sometime, but that is not my burden. My burden is to see that you know better. If you choose not to act according to what you know, you'll answer to God for that. That's not my responsibility. But if I have failed you in alerting you to what the great things that are true for you as a Christian in this age of grace, then I have really failed you.

So, let's get our priority straight. The number one priority is the Word, and the Word, and the word. If you live in the Word, you will live as a child of God should live. And the result will be that you'll go out in eternity, and you'll be so pleased with the results of your life that you will enjoy for all eternity. Instead of suffering loss, as 1 Corinthians says you will suffer, you will enjoy not loss, but great gain.

Our Heavenly Father, we want to thank You for the fact that the Word of God gives us the directions that we need. We ask, our Father, that You will help us.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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