***Reversionism, No. 1  
  
Colossians 1:1-2  
  
COL-69***

Our subject is "Reversionism," number 1 in Colossians 1:9-14.

We've been studying the book of Colossians, and we have come to Colossians 1:9-14. And we've come to verses 9-10, among the most important verses in all the Bible. And in Colossians 1:9, there are two words that are of such enormous import that they're almost beyond belief – that such majestic truth should be put into one verse. And it is the key to the whole business of the Christian life – why we're here, and how to be here, and how to function, and how not to be a casualty in the devil's world. It is a verse, interestingly enough, which people seldom hear, and its in-depth exposition, which can only be arrived at by going back to the original language, is easily missed when you read it in English.

That's where we should be this morning. However, I begin with strict directions by the advanced party at summer camp that I'm not to preach on Colossians this morning while they are absent. Therefore, we are going to switch to an associated subject that is related to that problem, and they'll be upset because they weren't here for this one, but at least they didn't tell me to avoid this.

We look at the tragedy of reversion. Actually, Colossians 1:9 is going to tell you how for this not to happen. So, we're going to back it off the other side – when it does happen, here's what's happened, and how terrible it is. The Christian life, you must understand, is not a static condition. It is one that's either moving upward toward heaven or it's moving downward each day toward earthly things. Either the Spirit of God is running the show, or the carnal nature within, under Satan's control, is running the show.

At the heart of this movement back and forth in the spiritual life is the principle of temporal fellowship with God the Father based upon 1 John 1:9, which tells us that, when we do step out of line with the will of God, and with the Word of God, that our confession and admission (ceasing and desisting and correcting) brings us back immediately into fellowship with God the Father, into the full capacity for prayers to be heard, and for Christian service to be performed that result in eternal rewards in heaven.

Those believers who are careful to deal with their personal fractures in their holiness as it occurs by being repentant and by their confession – they continue to go upward, and they gather greater spiritual strength over a period of time. Some are careless to deal with these personal fractures, and these personal evils. And remember that evil is of two kinds. One is sins, specific violations of the Word of God – the moral code. The other is human good from the sin nature. The world calls it "compassion." That is a horrible, horrible sin in the eyes of God, because it spews out of the sewage of the sin nature. It also is therefore an evil that must be admitted, and again from which we must turn. The good that is in the world that is meaningful comes from the Spirit of God functioning in the life of a doctrinally oriented believer.

So we go upward or we go downward in the Christian life. Those who are careless, go downward, and they go into increasing spiritual weakness, and then into what we call "reversion." In a former era of church life, they used to call it "backsliding," and that's a fine word too, because it's backsliding from a former position of grace empowerment. Salvation is always, of course, secure once it is in place. But spirituality for a godly life is not a permanent possession. This is where the movement takes place. It is required that we maintain our spirituality. God maintains our salvation. So, that is no concern to us. But the spiritual life and the honors; the privileges; and, the powers that are yours as a member of the royal family of God – all that can be hindered as a saved person if you are not functioning properly in the Christian life.

Satan neutralizes most Christians at this point. So, while these Christians are very pleased with their religious activity, and their religious lifestyle, they are, in fact, no longer any threat to the devil whatsoever. They sit in churches where the preaching is calculated to be non-offensive – to stay away from that which is going to create a furor with someone. And this, of course, is in direct contrast to the Lord Himself. Any preacher who can speak and not offend people is not in the tradition of Christ who said, "When I speak, I divide people." What's He dividing them over? He's dividing them over the truth. And what comes out sometimes as being harsh and unkind is also the truth being portrayed in its full integrity.

So, Jesus says, "I'm going to set the members of the family who are going to be fighting one another. They're going to have ill feelings toward one another. They're going to be squabbling." Over what? Over the truth. But remember that we're not only talking about biblical truth. Biblical truth is a foundation of thinking. But everything else you do in life: every institution of life that you're engaged in; and, every human relationship is based upon your life (your world view), which comes from the Bible, or it comes from Satan. And the consequence is that you will not be able to speak to people, no matter how close they are to you, on political matters, for example. If they're functioning on Satan's world view and on anti-biblical principles, you're going to be on one side. And if you operate from the biblical doctrine of the institution of human government, you're going to be on the other side. You're going to be a freedom person over against a socialist enslaved person. The two are directly the result of your biblical understanding.

That's true in education. It's true in your social relationship. It's true in family and marital relationships. It's true in every institution of life that you're associated with. What you are relative to the Bible determines which side of the fence you come down on in terms of whether your life is significant or whether it is insignificant.

So, the occupational hazard of the Christian life is reversionism. And I have noticed that this is nowhere more observable than when you compare yourself and others to a year ago. I've begun to get some very great insights by comparing people to a year ago. And I'm just absolutely amazed how often somebody who, one year ago, was there as a powerful leader, and a significant person spiritually – one who is held in the highest esteem, and a year goes by, and the person is zip; gone; out; useless; and, nothing, and people feel sorry for that individual.

How does that happen? Reversion. And the subtlety is so great because it all steps down in a very small way of negative volition to something that they have heard from the pastor-teacher, or the exposition of the Word of God, that impacts upon the way they want to live. It impacts upon the ideas that they have picked up from the world system that they have not been able to distinguish from God's system.

**Demas**

In other words, we're talking about Paul's associate Demas. The Demas syndrome is the ever-present danger for those who think that they have it made as Christians in the spiritual life, and especially when they think that they have great insights – that they haven't made. Now I remind you that you don't have to agree with the exposition of the Word of God that you hear from this pulpit. You should, and if you don't now, you will at the Judgment Seat of Christ, because what is taught from this pulpit is right because it is biblical, and is not opinionated. It's the implications of the Word of God, and of the clear statements of what is in the Word of God.

**The Church at Laodicea**

In the Bible, there is no greater example of reversion within a Christian community than that in Revelation 3. So, please open your Bibles to Revelation 3. This is a part of the Bible where God the Holy Spirit is speaking for Jesus Christ, and He's delivering a message to seven churches that existed in what is a part of modern Turkey today – seven churches that existed in New Testament times. They each had some very specific, distinct characteristics. These were characteristics, which, incidentally, as you may remember from our study of this book, strangely seem to pattern the progression of church history. And down near the end, the seventh letter goes to a church in a place called Laodicea.

**Lordship Salvation**

Now, I preface this with telling you that we're talking about Christians, because this church has some terrible things about it which are not uncommon today. And you might be inclined to say, "Well, these are not Christians." This is the problem of Lordship salvation – that you're not a Christian if you don't act like a Christian, according to the standards of the Word of God. But, of course, here you have a whole church full of people that weren't acting anything like a Christian, but they were saved, which gives a big lie to Lordship salvation. Salvation is by grace – not by any promises, or intentions, or commitments. Salvation is an appropriation of the gift of eternal life. It is not a commitment to living a certain type of life.

Will you live better as a Christian? Yes, you will. Will you have a life that moves toward godliness as a believer if you're taught doctrinal principles? Yes, you will. And if you understand the principle of temporal fellowship to match your eternal fellowship, you'll go without limits, whether you're young or whether you're old. The Lord Jesus Himself, in His humanity, had nothing else to fall back upon except this. We're no different than He is. He had to learn doctrine, and He demonstrated it at age 12, because of His parents and His associations, how well He had learned it when dealing with the rabbis in Jerusalem. He had to learn doctrine; He had to be positive toward it; and, He had to depend upon the Holy Spirit. And because He did that there, were no limits to what He rose to as a human being. It was not a matter of His deity. Therefore, you and I have the same capacity.

Revelation 3:14: "And to the angel." The Greek says, the "aggelos" (ang'-el-os). This is transliterated from the Greek. A Greek letter is substituted for the appropriate English letter. And that's "aggelos" (ang'-el-os) in Greek is called "angel" in English. This word transliterated means "spirit beings." If you transliterate something, you haven't translated it. This is why there was so much squabble about baptism, and so much difference of opinion. And when the King James Bible was written, they didn't translate the word. Every time they came to the word "baptizo" (bap-tid'-zo) or the variance "baptisma" (bap'-tis-mah), they just took a Greek letter, and they changed it into an appropriate English letter. And nobody wanted to say what baptism really meant – that the word "baptism" meant "an association." So, here you can do that with the word "angel," and as the word "angel," it is a Spirit being that is referred to. But if you translate the word "aggelos," it's means "messenger." And that's very important for you to understand. So, you may translate this into the "messenger" (the communicator) to the church in Laodicea.

Now guess who that would be? That was the pastor-teachers scattered all over the city of Laodicea in all those house churches. There was one elder (one pastor-teacher) to a church, and he is the messenger of God to that congregation. So it is addressing this communicator. Revelation 3:14: "The Amen, the faithful and the true witness, the beginning of the creation of God says this."

Now, the city of Laodicea was a very beautiful city in the Lycus Valley in Western Turkey. It is 40 miles southeast of the city of Philadelphia, which was one of the most outstanding churches to which the Holy Spirit addressed these letters. This city was founded by Antiochus II in the middle of the third century B.C., and he named it after his wife, Laodice. So, it was called "Laodicea." It was a major city in the Roman Empire, and it had grown wealthy from the production of wool cloth. There was a terrible earthquake in 60 A.D. that devastated the city. And because they were so proud of their economic prowess and their stability, they refused to take any financial assistance from the emperor. But they rebuilt the city on their own.

So, in the ancient world it became a center of banking; of sports; of arts; and, of drama. It was no mean city. In fact, it was the headquarters of the tax department for that part of the Roman Empire. It also had a famous medical school at the Temple of Aesculapius in Laodicea, which was worldwide known for its production of a medication that was particularly useful for the eyes. People who had eye problems would come to the medical center at Laodicea to have their eyes treated. And they had methods of healing eyes that were not to be found anyplace else.

It was also noted for its hot springs. The hot springs were therapeutic to bathe in, but if you drank it, it made you throw up. That made the pool very messy when that happened. So, they had a lot of signs up: "Don't drink the water," because it was very devastating. But if you just bathed in it, it had powerful therapeutic effects. Well, the city today is nothing but a ruin. But here, when John wrote to this city, it was very much alive. And it had a lot going for it.

**The Letter is from Jesus Christ**

So, the command comes to write, and it is coming from someone called "the Amen," which means "to believe," and that refers to Jesus Christ. He is also identified as "the faithful and true witness," which means that he is a reliable and a genuine witness. He is the witness, which is the Greek word "martus" (mar'-toos), which is a word that's used in the court of law, and it refers to a legal statement which is required by Roman law in a trial. Jesus Christ is the Witness for Whom? For the Godhead, He is the witness of the realities of spiritual things. And He is the only revealed member of the Godhead that we see, and there are many Scriptures that describe Him as such.

Furthermore, we're told that He is the beginning of the creation of God. This does not mean, as the Jehovah's Witnesses like to teach, that He is the first creature created. The Jehovah's Witnesses are wrong on that as they are on most other things. But it means that He is the one who began creation. What the Greek is saying here is that He is the Creator. He is the one who created everything that the Laodicea esteemed so much. In fact, He is the Creator, as Colossians 1:15-18 tells us, of all the created world (the natural world). And the Laodiceans' first problem was that they esteemed the creation more than the Creator, because they were focused on things. And if He is the Creator, then that declares that He is also deity.

Revelation 3:15: "I know your deeds (works)." Here is a brief evaluation of the Christians in the church of Laodicea. It is not a good evaluation. These people are clearly in reversionism. And I suspect, as always when that happens, that it's because they had a faulty pastor-teacher. They had some yo-yo up there in the pulpit who was giving people little programs for their church.

I'm amazed. I've sat in big time churches, and I listened to people all around me: in front of me; behind me; and, beside me, and they're going through the bulletin of all the things they're going to go through this week: this program for this one; and, this program for this one: "Oh, here's a good one. Let's go to this one this week." And they have these programs of activities, and the fun things: the ladies' sewing circle; the mens' building circle; the ladies' take-apart circle; the mens' repair circle; and, they have all these things. And then, of course, there's a big basketball game circle. And these are the programs to substitute for what? When the pastor-teacher stands up, and because I'm a professional, and I have ears to hear what goes on, I can see how he's tiptoeing through the tulips. I can see that he is very careful to avoid certain subjects. He may have a text, and I've sat and listened to texts – brilliant, marvelous texts of the Word of God that could bring a Christian right up to where they're ready to stand up and shout "Hallelujah" in the service of what is their privilege of their relationship to God, and what doctrine does in their soul. And they come right up to the border, but at a certain point, you're going to start stepping on people. They're going to start stepping on their old sin nature, and they veer off from that, and they give it a velvet glove treatment.

I suspect that that's what was happening in the good life in Laodicea. They had plenty of money; they had plenty of members; they had plenty of seats; and, they had plenty of programs, and what they didn't need was anything at all, and especially the irritation of God.

So, along comes this evaluator, the Holy Spirit. And He says, "I know your deeds. I have omniscience. Jesus Christ is speaking here, of course. And these people have these activity programs, but what are they? They're in reversionism. These people are believers, and this implies that once things were better with them – that they were once people of spiritual quality, and people of spiritual judgment. They may have even been at what James called that super-abounding grace level. They were super-grace Christians.

**Neither Cold nor Hot**

But they are being evaluated now by the performance of their works, and what Jesus sees is not good. What He sees is that they are "neither cold nor hot." They're not one or the other – the contrast of extreme spiritual conditions. The Greek word for "cold," here in this context, deals with Christians, not with unbelievers. But the word "cold" does apply the status of an unbeliever. A believer is cold toward Jesus Christ.

Now, here you have Christians that are acting, like Paul describes in Corinthians, as natural men. They're acting as unbelievers in their lifestyle. And they're pleased as punch with their religious activity, and their religious involvement, and their religious hoopla. But whose mind and whose soul is being impacted to the point of standing as a "martus" (mar'-toos) for Jesus Christ – a martyr? And who is it that really stands up, and will take Jesus' words when He says, "You are not My disciple unless you are willing to give every last cent you have for My work – what is necessary for the ministry of God. That is a tough Scripture.

**Cold**

At that point, somebody wants to give velvet-glove instruction because that offends a lot of Christians: I don't own anything? It's all God's? And I stand around and bemoan that we can't take care of this, and we can't take care of that. And I have stuff in the bank. Cold is spiritual zero. And it is the condition of an unbeliever toward Jesus Christ. An unbeliever is unmoved by the gospel. It arouses no heat in them whatsoever. The person of Jesus Christ is only important to him as a swear word.

**Hot**

On the other hand, they're not hot. Now, the Greek word for "hot" here in this context means a super-grace Christian. Apparently, these people were once at that state. And they're not that anymore. They're saved, but they're carnal to the end of their hair roots. They're as carnal as they can be. And because they persistently refuse to make the corrections of the sin (to make the confession) then the carnality is picking up speed, and it has become reversion. Now you completely go in the other direction spiritually. Instead of moving heavenward, you're moving as fast as you can.

So, these people are neither completely unsaved, so that they're clear-cut in their position; nor are they enthusiastically, super-grace devoted to Jesus Christ. Now those are the only two places you can be. And you're clearly identified. Now, when you're in between, it doesn't set well.

Who of you is inspired by the latest activities of one of the famous television preachers in our area that you've been seeing on the news? He has married his second wife. A child was born. She was an evangelist too. Therefore, in that circle of the charismatics, there are always great financial material things accumulated. So, he stole his wife's possessions. And she went to court. She says, "He took all my things. He has them all in his name. He has all my money, and all the things I've accumulated with all my con games, and all those preaching services I went through." And the judge said, "You have to give it back." And he said, "Hang it on your nose, judge. . . . The Judge says, "You got till Thursday, or you're going to be in contempt of court." <>Now here this is, all on television – this guy, stealing from his evangelist wife, and running his church on Sunday. Where do you think he is right now? Yep. He's up there on the highway, preaching away. Now does that make you comfortable? Would you feel comfortable in a situation like that, such that you have that kind of a ministry that is really not, at least as humanly as possible, hot for the Lord? Yeah, the old song title is right: "When You're Hot, You're Hot; and, When You're Not, You're Not." And these people were not. And it was pathetic. And Jesus is telling these people, "You're a big church. You're a powerful church. You're a big impact in the part of the Roman world in which you live. But you're zero when it comes to spiritual life. And because you're not completely disassociated from Me, we don't see you as a clean-cut unbeliever. Then we know that there is the kiss of death upon you. And yet because you are not totally spiritual, such that the Spirit of God is controlling you, you're not on My team. And people don't recognize that that's where you are. You're slithering here in between, and you're being discredited both to the unbelievers and to the believers alike."

"I know your deeds: that you're neither cold nor hot. I would that you were one or the other: cold; or, hot. "I would" in the Greek language is one of those plaintive expressions: "Oh my, how I wish we would say this or this." And that's the kind of an expression that the Holy Spirit uses here – so tenderly wishing that each of them would be in a normal state: hot, or not.

In Revelations 3:16, He introduces the consequences: "Because "you are lukewarm:" "Lukewarm" means because you are "nauseating." "Lukewarm" has a taste that causes nausea, and is describing a condition of reversionism to which these people have come. They're saved. But their spiritual lives are totally deteriorated. Whatever they were in their past, they're now spiritually backslidden, and they are cooling off from any kind of a spiritual level that they had before.

Well, you go backwards from the spiritual life, where can you go? The only place you can go is toward the unsaved life. And this is what gives people sometimes the idea that some individuals begin living in such a way that they weren't Christians at all – that they weren't saved. But that's not true. Here you have a whole church full of people who are saved, and who live and encourage one another as if they were not saved, and that is disgusting. It is a terrible statement in view, probably, of the fine image that these Christians had of themselves. They thought they were something spiritually significant. And the worst people in the world, I can assure, you are reversionistic Christians. Their thinking and their feelings are all distorted from God's point of view, and they're faking it. Yes, they know what they should be. They know enough Scripture to know the way it should be. And they're faking it.

Do you feel that, when somebody gives you those emotional outbursts, and you just feel that this is such a warm, enthusiastic person? But if you're a discerning Christian, you see through the fakery. You see that this is the front. And you are not going to be trapped by it. The worst people in the world are reversionistic Christians.

So Jesus says, "Because you're nauseating (you're neither hot nor cold), and you're not in one position or the other, I'm going to spit you out of My mouth. I'm going to spew you out of My mouth." The Greek word is "emeo" (em-eh'-o), E M E O, from which we get the English word an "emetic:" "I'm going to spew you out of My mouth." What it literally means is: "I'm going to simply vomit you." That does not mean that they're going to lose their salvation. That would contradict the Bible doctrine of security. But it does mean that whatever spiritual blessings they have is going to be gone.

Now, if you don't think that's a powerful figure, for the Holy Spirit to use of describing the Almighty Creator God, I don't know what is. A vomiting God? That's what He tries to convey, just as when he uses the word "abomination." That word "abomination" is a feeling. It's a loathsome, disgusting feeling. And God lists these things in the Word of God: moral conduct such that He says, "This is an abomination. This is a special loathsome conduct." What this refers to, when He says, "I'm going to spit you out of My mouth," He is saying, "I'm going to bring great, severe, divine discipline upon you. And if your reversionism continues, I'm going to put you to death. You will come to the point of death." And the sin on the death, of course, is only imposed upon revisionists who have gone beyond the point of no return. And this is something that is the purpose of God.

God needs no help with other Christians dealing with these revisionists. When you come into a revisionist, when you come into somebody that's off-kilter doctrinally, just be careful when you're around them. Just be careful of how in-depth your associations become. Just be careful how much you listen, and how much you permit yourself to be carried away by the emotion of the moment. They're very dangerous people. They make God sick, but they love one another. And they reinforce their mutual disorientation and their carnality.

In Revelations 1:17, He gives a little more explanation of why it is that He's so disgusted with them. He starts quoting their own words. One of the worst things you can do to a person who is in error is to quote his own words. And before the era of the video camera, politicians were able to carry on their deceits easily, because who's going to remember? Who's going to remember what you said a year ago? Who's going to remember a promise you made six months ago? People have too many other problems to remember what somebody has said. But in comes the television camera. And all you have to do is get somebody who keeps a file, and then shows that on the screen. A videotape does not lie. People can lie. But you can see what happens. You can see what was done. You can hear what was said, and the truth is out there.

Now, when you confront a person like that with what they have actually said, which is what Jesus is going to do, they really get mad at you. They start saying, "You're misrepresenting. You're taking it out of context." They have all of these cover phrases for the fact that you really do think this; that you really did say this; and, that this is really what you want to do. But the Lord Jesus comes along and says, "I'm disgusted with you. You nauseate Me. And I'm going to tell you why. First of all, you say that you're rich. You are in a very wealthy community, and you are indeed wealthy." He's quoting these reversionistic Christians who keep insisting that the reason they're so rich is because God is blessing them.

**Money**

I heard a man who is quite an example, almost a classic example of reversion of carnality. And I heard him say, because he was a man of wealth: "God knows who to trust with His money." The idiot didn't know that it was the devil who was entrusting him with that money so that he could convey the false impression that what he thought, and what he was doing, and the way he was acting, that it had the blessing of God upon it. Don't kid yourself. Money does not prove that you are under the blessing of God. If you think that, then you have a little bit of a problem with Jesus, Who couldn't even find a place to bed down though the animals had a place they could sleep. Do you remember that Scripture? The apostle Paul who said, "I can't keep doing the great things I can do in evangelism and in the care of the churches, because I have to stop and go to work to apply my trade; to earn the money; to take care of the people on my team; and, to get the bills paid, because the Christians aren't coming through with the money that they could.

So these people were so rich, and they believe that, therefore, God has certainly blessed them. And He mentions this because this is one of the most powerful ways of going into reversion – the desire to be rich: "Because you say, 'I am rich, and I have become wealthy. I become 'ploutos' (ploo'-tos). I'm a plutocrat. I have a great deal of money. I've lost control of the material things of life. I used to go around singing, 'If I were a rich man.' I don't sing that anymore, because now I have to sing, 'Now I am a rich man.' . . . And I've got staircases that I've built all over my house – circular staircase. They just go to the ceiling. They don't go anywhere. It's just for looks.'" It's just like Tevye wanted in "Fiddler on the Roof." He said, "Boy, when I get to be a rich man, I'm going to build one of those magnificent staircases. It just goes to the ceiling. You can't go anywhere. But boy, does it look good." That's because you have so much money that you go crazy with trying to figure out what to spend it on. And it's all trivialized. Status of material wellbeing gives you an opportunity to ignore the Word, and to ignore the Lord. But if you have great money, it also gives you an opportunity to emblazon your name in glory for the great things that you have done to open the doors to the human race of an understanding of doctrinal principles. What a great reputation to have in heaven. There he is. He's the guy. He opened the doors. He had the money, and he turned it loose. He held it lightly. And what a great impact a group of believers were made because they had the means to do it.

"I have become wealthy." They have an abundance of the details of life, and these are crowding out their doctrinal and their spiritual qualities, and regression has set in. The good things of life have driven out the best. And the Bible often warns about the corroding effects of prosperity without much doctrine. And I don't want to pause to read these verses again. In James 4:13-14, James very clearly warns about what happens to those of you who are making your big plans. James 5:1-6 and 1 Timothy 6:3-11 talk about piercing ourselves through with that love of money. Matthew 6:25-34 says, "Just be happy with the logistical grace that God has given you to exist day-by-day. Whatever else, it's luxury for you to have for your ministry."

So, what social event; what entertainment; what person; or, what thing sustains you in your time of trial and heartache which you substituted for Bible study? Nothing. When the time comes, when you need some sustenance to carry you through that is above the human level or human services, it has to come from the Lord God Himself.

"Because you say, 'I am rich, and I have become wealthy, and I have need of nothing.'" What a thing to be able to say: "I have need of nothing." Now, doctrine is incidental to these people. Their super-grace status is irrelevant to them. Their prosperity is crowding out their dependence upon the Lord. This society that they live in is very proud of its prosperity. And they're going right along with the society that they live in – that their wealth is their esteem. And Jesus says, "You think you have need of nothing." But Jesus says, "There is something you don't know. There is something that you should have learned in the past from the Word of God, and you would continue to know it now. What you don't know is that (Revelations 1:17) you're wretched, and you're miserable, and you're poor, and you're blind, and you're naked."

**Wretched**

Here is the real condition of revisionists: "You are wretched." That means that "you endure hardness." This comes from two Greek words. One word means "to endure," and the other means "a callous." You endure a hardness toward God. What a terrible thing to say! This is the same thing that Ephesians 4 describe in such detail – the facets of my callouses upon my soul: upon my mind; my emotions; and, and my will toward God. And the result is an enormous state of indifference toward God.

**Miserable**

Furthermore: "you are miserable." This word in the Greek language means that "you are to be pitied." Now this is a shocking idea to people who are wealthy – that they are to be pitied. They think that they're to be envied. But when they are in their great wealth, as Christians, and they're in that syndrome of being caught up in those material things, and they've lost the mastery-of-details-of-life factor, then they're to be pitied. This word "miserable" (or "eleeinos" (el-eh-i-nos') in the Greek – "to be pitied"), is used only one other time in the whole Bible. That is in 1 Corinthians 5:19, to give you the idea of the concept of great sorrow to be extended toward a person: "If we have hope in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." Here, Jesus is saying, "If there is no resurrection from the dead, and so all of our religious activity and our talk about Jesus is only to make us feel good now, but when we die, we have no hope, we are to be pitied. And that's these people who are so rich. Where are they to be pitied? They're going to live a good life. So they're going to die. Where are they to be pitied? When they stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Then they're going to be such wretched poor people. Others are going to walk off with great rewards to enrich their eternity. No, everybody's not going to be the same in the new Jerusalem, in his capacity to enter into the things of God. Some people are going to be pitied because of what they did with the times of their life.

Mark 8:36: "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own . . .?" This does not say "soul." Look up at the verse before it. In Mark 8:35, it's to "lose his life." It's the same Greek word there, but they change it to "soul." And it's okay if you understand that that means "your life" – "the days of your breathing on earth," that's what that verse refers to.

So, if you are a Christian who is in a reversionistic condition, and you have the good life, and instead of opening the doors of great spiritual opportunity, all you did was rummage along like one of the people (of the gang) of this world. And you wasted your life. And then you stand there hunkering at the Judgment Seat of Christ, like some poor dog with your tail between your legs, when they show what you really did with the times of your life, and how you squandered your potential? That's what the people of Laodicea were doing. And that's why reversionism is bad. And that's why you have to understand Colossians 1:9-10. That is so that that system cannot hit you and cannot entrap you.

**Poor**

He says that they are also poor. They're not only a pathetic miserable sight, but they're poor. The Greek "ptochos" (pto-khos') means "a beggar." It refers to a bigger type – somebody who lacks ability to care for himself. The word "beggar" means that he's cowering in somebody's presence to get his favor. He is fawning on people. The Laodiceans now are in such an abject state of poverty, and they don't have any desire to correct it, because they don't understand how bad off they are. They know they're okay because they got such a large congregation; they have so many programs; they have so many smiling faces; and they have to run so many services. But when it really comes down to the crunch of what is in the depths of the soul that has me attached to the living God, there is not much. And these people are like cowering beggars when they face temptation. They can't cut it. Their thinking goes to the world. Their actions go to the world. They cannot think divine viewpoint. They're a bunch of beggars in reality, no matter how large their bank accounts are. They have great external sophistication, and they have great status, but they're beggars. They're unable, consequently, to enjoy their money really. They're on a frantic search for happiness,

**Blind**

Furthermore, he says that they are blind. They're blind to their own condition. They're blind to spiritual things. These Christians view themselves as people of great insights and great spiritual things. That's what is so amusing to me. When I get into association conversation with these reversionistic types, I'm just appalled how much they think they know about spiritual realities. And they're so pathetic, and they're so blind (that that's exactly what this word means). They have the condition of emptiness that Ephesians 4:17-19 talks about it, that we went over in such detail – that emptiness in the soul of divine viewpoint sucks in human viewpoint at every breath they take.

**Naked**

Worst of all, he says, "You're naked." You're a "gumnos" (goom-nos'). They lacked spiritual clothing befitting a new creature in Christ: that clothing spoken of in Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:24 – that clothing of their acts of righteousness. The Colossian Christians were a style show on Sunday morning. And when they walked in Sunday night, boy, they were a style show. They had the money, but they're spiritual clothing was rags, tattered, sorry, dirty, and ugly, because they didn't have a spiritual maturity structure to envelop them in the Shekinah of glory of God. They were in the same condition that Adam and Eve were, who had the glory of God around them. And when they sinned, they lost that Shekinah glory, the presence of the glory of God that surrounded them. And then they stood naked. And they looked at one another, and they said, "We have to cover ourselves with something." And what did they do? They went right to their human viewpoint solutions. They were in such revisionism in that instant (in a moment), so that by the next day, at least, when they met Jesus in the cool of the day, walking in the garden to speak with them, and to give him the next increment of their Bible study that He was giving them, they didn't want to meet with Him anymore. They were in such reversionism that they were ashamed of Him. And you know how the story unraveled, when they discovered just how terrible what they had done really was, and the consequences to the human race. And it's only knowing the Word of God, and somebody teaching it to you who has the gift to do it, and the equipment to do it and we'll do it without worrying about who he's going to offend.

I would be driven crazy, even in a small congregation, if I had to consider: "Should I say this?" Or, "Is this going to bother someone? Is this going to hit this guy? Is this going to bother Mrs. So-and-so?" I don't ever think about whether I'm going to offend somebody, which is why I always do in every service. And I'm very disappointed if I don't. I'm just going to tell it to you as the Word of God puts it. And I don't have you in mind. And many people know, when they're talking about something in their kitchen at home, that I wouldn't have any way of knowing what they're talking about. And they'll come to me, and it's not unusual.

A lady came to me a couple Sundays ago, and said, "Boy, you must have been hiding in our kitchen. We were having this discussion. What we talked about was the very thing you said. And boy did you hit it just on the head. That's our problem. What was she saying? She was saying that the Word of God has the answer. And people who are receptive to the Word of God are not going to hate you and be offended by the fact that you have taught them the Word of God.

I even had one person who accused me of comparing myself to Jesus, and being a holy one of Jesus. Now, everybody who goes to summer camp knows that I'm one of the last of the good-time boys. But what are they saying? They're just so miserable, and so on edge, because I'm telling Christians, "You're going to get beaten up by the world; you're going to get beaten up by Satan; and, you're going to get beaten up by carnal Christians. But what did Jesus say? 'They did the same to Me, and I want you to know that they're going to get to you.'" Is that comparing yourself to Jesus? Is that making yourself equal to Jesus? You can see how reversionism completely gets things backwards. What you're saying is, "I'm taking comfort from the Lord's admonition. He's telling me to expect the flak, and I'm going to take the flak, and I'm going to keep flying through it." That doesn't make me Jesus. It only means that I take my cue from him. I take my encouragement. And as He survived in His humanity, I will too. When I work with doctrine in the Spirit of God, I'm in temporal fellowship, and I'm going to come through, even if not unscathed. I'm going to be there on top of it in the end.

Now the next question is: how in the world do we change this terrible picture of reversionism? We have now come to the depths of the valley. Things could not be worse in the wealthy congregation of Laodicea. And if you will join us next Sunday morning, we'll lead you back out to the mountaintop, where you should be, and the way things should be.

Dear Father, we ask You to help us to realize that the Word of God is alive, active, and powerful, and for us never to apologize to the idiots who don't know it, or to the Christians who have perverted it. We are not regretful of the fact that we have committed ourselves and sold ourselves out to You. That's the good life, and that's the life we choose. And we thank You that You have encouraged us with the fact that you are never unmindful of our works of love. And we pray that You will help us to have the courage to be exemplary as Your son was, and to be ready to stand up to the world. None of us has suffered any loss of blood yet because of our standing for the Word of God, as Jesus pointed out.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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