***The Summary of the Doctrine of Reversionism  
  
Colossians 1:3-8  
  
COL-072***

We are studying Colossians 1:9-14. Our subject is "Prayer for the Colossians," segment number six.

The apostle Paul, from the report which he has received from Epaphras, the pastor-teacher of the Colossian believers, discerns great spiritual potential in the Christians of Colossae for impacting the Roman Empire spiritually. He realizes this from the fact that the believers were living lives which were based on mental attitude, "agape" love, which extended their sacrificial concern for the unsaved, and for the carnal Christian who has gotten off track. Epaphras made a big point of this to Paul – that these are "agape" type believers. They have the production of the Spirit of God, and of this mental attitude love within them. The possession of such love immediately showed Paul that they were filled with the Spirit. Otherwise, they couldn't have had this kind of love. They're filled with the Spirit, Who alone can produce such a mental attitude goodwill toward the lovely and the unlovely in the human race.

They were, as believers, on the one hand, capable of entering into the deep and full counsel of Bible doctrine. But on the other hand, they were also capable, because of the sin nature within them, of falling into reversionism under the influence of that evil quality that goes with us into the Christian life. Through their consistent temporal fellowship with the Father, the Colossians were capable of rising to the super grace status of living each day. They, therefore, Paul sensed, were a potentially powerful force for God's service.

Paul's concern, however, at the same time, was that these Colossians might enter a status of spiritual reversionism which would neutralize them in the angelic conflict, and make all their potential useless. The Christian who falls out of temporal fellowship with the Father through sin is immediately subject to the deceptions of Satan, and to the domination of the old sin nature. That person is immediately out of touch with spiritual reality.

Satan creates resentment, therefore, against pastor-teachers and churches which focus the church ministry on the exposition of doctrine, because those people are right, and man loves darkness. Satan wants people to love darkness. He does not want them to love righteousness. Therefore, he does not like any group of believers who focus upon the doctrinal structure of the Word of God. A Christian who is not strong in doctrine, and who is not in solid temporal fellowship with the Father simply cannot serve the Father, nor can he fulfill the divine plan of God for his life. And that's no small thing. That's a great tragedy – to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (JSC) someday, and to realize that you frittered away your life. You never got with it. You never got to the capacity level that was your potential simply because you were always sitting at home instead of being in church, and being instructed in the Word. You were always out there pursuing the things of this temporal scene, without focusing first of all and foremost upon the eternal scene. Everything in life revolved around here and now. You never once thought, "I'm going to make a trip, but let's see: is there a banquet coming up? Is there a special Easter program? What's going on at church? I can't make appointments for other things until I know that it's not conflicting with the line of blessing from the local ministry." Now that's no simple thing to do, and only people who are deep into the Word of God would think that way. The rest of them let the church orbit around their lives, rather than their orbiting around the people of God and the work of God.

This good report that Paul had indicated to him that there was potential here that he did not want to see spoiled by Satan. Satan interjects substitutes for the Word of God. And the best word for that is "programs." And those who want to justify programs in churches don't like to hear that word. The truth of the matter is that churches are failing in their ministries. They are failing in their destiny. They are failing in their calling. And you better not pretend that that's not true, because it is only as Christians are alerted to that fact that they're going to be on their guard when they walk into someplace if they're transferred from a place where the Word of God is being taught – that they're not going to walk into someplace and be deceived by programs as being the Word of God being taught.

Some months ago a person came to me who lives at a distance, and says, "I go to this church. It's really a jumping jiving church, and the pastor gets up and he talks, and he uses the word "doctrine," he says things, and I think, 'Hot dog, I'm back here where I'm being fed the Word of God.' But after a while, I began listening to him more closely, and I found that most of it was fluff." And he said, "What I suddenly realized was that he would say something that was a great spiritual truth, and in my computer mind, programmed at Berean, was filling in all the details. And I was attributing to him teaching that was already in me, and it was flowing up from my human spirit. And I was filling in, and suddenly I realized that what he is giving is triviality – very little. But a person who is trained in the Word of God – you'll fill in all the depth of instruction.

So, Satan has his ways of deceiving us in the best of our sincerity.

The good report which Paul had received from Epaphras about the spirituality of the Colossians leads him then to intense prayer in their behalf. And that's what you and I need to do. If someone is on track for God, and he is doing a great thing in the service of God, it's because he has a life capable of doing it. That's when we need to pray for that person. Don't be standing around waiting until that person has crossed the line into some act of reversionism, and start praying for him then. Jesus, in fact, told you not to do that. He said that if some character comes up and is not receptive to the Word of God, then shake the dust of your feet off of him, and don't waste time with him. Let him go where he wants to go. Let him be what he wants to be. And don't let anybody dissuade you from focusing upon the positive believer – the person who is ready to listen and who is ready to go on.

Paul regularly then prayed for the Colossian Christians – that they would not fall from the super-grace maturity level that they had received, and revert under the influence of the world; the sin nature; and, the devil, back down to where they were nothing. The "agape" mental attitude love of the Colossians was the greatest thing that they had in life. It's the greatest thing that you and I have in life. And Paul's interest was that spiritual reversionism should not destroy their testimony for Christ.

One of the signs that the pastor-teacher is doing his job properly in instructing the flock is that, periodically, he will give you summaries of doctrines. That means that he has sat down, and gone through the trouble to research from one end of the Bible to the other, to bring together the pertinent facts upon one single topic today. We do that with reversionism.

**The Summary of the Doctrine of Reversionism**

1. **Backsliding**

Reversionism is the end result of super backsliding (carnality) from a mature spiritual maturity structure. It is the consequences of persistent carnality: no repentance; and, no confession. Now you notice that I have stressed that reversionism is not just, "I have sinned." You don't revert to spiritual zero because you sin. But if you persist in that, and you do not confess (you do not admit that you're wrong), and you do not repent (change your mind) and confess that to God the Father, that persistent backsliding – then reversionism eventually does lock in.

1. **Callouses on the Soul**

Reversionism is accompanied by emotional domination of the soul, and callouses on the facets of the soul: the mind; the emotions; and, the will. What we are saying is that, while you are in reversionism, the mentality is not in control of you. Your emotions are in control. Your hard stubborn will is what is in control. Your mind is not guiding those factors. And I'll guarantee you that any human being whose emotions are not controlled by their thinking, and whose will is not controlled by his thinking, will go amok in spiritual things. Hardness upon the mind, and the emotions, and the will toward God is what results from persistent negative volition to the Word of God.

1. **Falling from Grace**

The principle of reversionism is described in Galatians 5:4 where it is called "falling from grace." You are at a spiritual maturity level. You've gone on with the Lord. That is a grace production in your life. You're up there at super-grace level. You have built a great container in your life so that you have a cup that you have built that's ready to overflow with the blessings of God. And suddenly you deviate from the grace method of living which is feeding upon the Word of God, and you go for the legalistic, or for your other human capacities and programs in the church, and the result is that suddenly you have fallen from grace. That's another description from reverting from the place of blessing to the place of discipline.

1. **Negative to Doctrine**

The reversionistic Christian has gone negative to doctrinal truth at some point. This means rejection of true doctrine, and thus divine viewpoint. It is very easy to go negative to true doctrine because of the subtleties of Satan. You can read all kinds of books that are written by all kinds of sincere, religious teachers that have subtle deviations from what the Bible really has to say. This is the result of sporadic attendance at church services, so that you're not fed the Word of God by a competent pastor-teacher. This is the result of negligence of your personal Bible study, so that you are cold to divine viewpoint principles. This is the result of the fact that you want entertainment more than you want instruction. Thus you find a pastor-teacher a bore. To come to church and be in an academic instructional setting does not appeal to you when you are in that negative status. You want to be entertained, and therefore, you go for the programs. You don't go for the sitting there, and mulling over in your mind what the Word of God calls meditation upon the Word of God. In Joshua 1:8, we're told there's one way to have great success in life. To "meditate upon the Word of God." That's it. Whatever else you do, and whatever else you'll ever amount to, the greatest thing that will ever come to your life is when you meditate upon the Word of God.

Now, you tell me how you can meditate upon an empty head. How can you meditate with a head that's empty of doctrine? Even a smart guy like Bob Short can't do that. You have to have the Word of God there. Then you can think it over, because the Hebrew word "meditate" means "chewing it over." That's like you do at El Chico's on those enchiladas. You get every delightful taste out of it. And suddenly, you eat the Word of God, and what happens? You have spiritual strength. This is a perfect analogy.

The reversionistic Christian, at some point, goes negative to meditating on the Word of God. He is also in a status of rejecting the instruction of his right pastor-teacher. He gets cool and reserved toward his real source of divine viewpoint instruction. He will resent the views of the pastor-teacher because they condemn some human viewpoint concept that he holds. Why did the Pharisees dislike Jesus? Because he was teaching them lies? No, because they were teaching misconceptions, and He was telling them the truth. And it irritated them that He was undermining the confidence of people in their false teachings.

The pastor-teacher's authority in a local church stems from only one thing, and that is his faithful exposition of the Word of God. It's not what he is as a personality that gives him authority. Many preachers try to carry it like that. They try to be pulpit personality impact types. But those who are discerning Christians are not going to be impressed by that. The only authority a pastor-teacher carries (and I'm talking about authority with God), is when he teaches accurately in detail the Word of God. Now, that is authority from the highest levels, and not to respect it is to bring the judgment of God upon yourself. It is the pastor-teacher who leads people sometimes to put him on a pedestal which often causes Christians to become reversionistic. For a pastor-teacher to put himself on some kind of pedestal such that he has some kind of a special in with God, or a special contact with God, is, in time, to bring down the destruction of Christians who eventually are going to learn that he's got feet of clay like anybody else. But when he is true to the Word of God; when he is true to his mission; and, when he is true to his spiritual gift, he has authority. That doesn't make him above the crowd. In fact, the apostle Paul says that the pastor-preacher is not to Lord it over the people of God that he is somebody special. He is just one of the crowd, but he does have an authority as long as he is faithful to the Word of God. Therefore, his word is significant in that congregation.

The pastor-teacher has a sin nature, and it must be kept under control like anyone else's. He's not freer of that than his members are. And often he's not as good as some of his members. The pastor-teacher gift never means that one is qualified for a pedestal elevation. He's only qualified to communicate doctrine. The pastor-teacher's authority in his local church does not stem, then, from his sinless perfection, or even from his meeting somebody else's ideas of how a preacher should act and what he should be.

Now, if you are a wimp, you should not go into the pastorate. I'll guarantee you that, because people are always telling you what you shouldn't say in the pulpit. People are always telling you what you should not bring out into the open for people to mull over in their minds. They're always telling you how you should handle your conduct of preaching in the pulpit as if they were some kind of authorities. It's as if this pastor-teachers, who is dolt, does not have a sensitivity of guidance of the Spirit of God, and knows when the time has come to raise red flags in people's minds, or to do the terrible things that the Word of God says. As Paul says, when somebody in authority sins, you tell the whole congregation so they can all be aware of it, and learn a lesson. Personally, I don't have the guts to do that, but that's a doctrinal principle. But at least we should alert you, if not in specifics, in generalities, what's out there that is so deceptive to Christians. So, don't try to tell the pastor-teacher how he should conduct himself before God unless you're pretty sure that he's out of step with the will of God.

The more a pastor-teacher gets clearer in doctrinal teaching, the faster the nice Christians in the congregation, who often are pillars of the church up to that point, will desert him, and they'll go to someone else where their approbation lust is satisfied, and where their old sin natures are unruffled. The closer that pastor-teacher is to the Word of Truth, and the more courageous he is in his instruction, the faster the nice are going to evaporate, and they're going to find someplace where they can feel comfortable.

I don't know whether it's true, but there's a certain group of doctrinal oriented pastors who, in our day, don't believe that anybody should be in the pastoral ministry who has not first been in the military. There is a connection that Paul often makes between military experience and teaching the Word of God that's repeated in the New Testament. So, maybe there is a connection. But I've observed that people who are in the military learn principles of authority, and they learn principles of courage, and they learn principles of being eyeball-to-eyeball with the enemy, that almost then becomes instinctive and second-nature. So, those who have not had that experience are able to be bowled over by the feisty, and the verbal, and the verbose in the congregation.

The pastor-teacher takes the flak because he is speaking for Christ. That's the bottom line. And if he's not careful, he'll make Samuel's mistake. When the people would not listen to him, that they should have a king, Samuel got terribly discouraged, and he had his feelings hurt. And God came to him and said, "Samuel, you should know better than that. They're not kicking at you. They're trying to kick me. I'm the one they're punching at. You're just my communicator, and don't forget what you are. So, don't be taking this personally. Just let them punch away at Me, because once I bring the boom down on them, they will realize who's right and who's wrong. That boom may not come down until the Judgment Seat of Christ, but I guarantee you it will come down. And those who resist the truth of the instructor (that is real truth) are going to regret it for all eternity as believers. So, the clearer the instruction gets, the faster the nice people leave.

The sad part about it is that these people were often 100% behind the ministry at one time, and 100% behind that pastor-teacher. But they had a subtle false motivation for that service. It was often very deceptive to undiscerning people. It was often undiscerning even to the pastor-teacher himself sometimes, such that he fails to discern what the real kick is that's motivating people. And God often leads a reversionistic rebel out of a congregation for the simple purpose of giving peace to that congregation, and establishing a spiritual environment that can prosper and mature, and to give Christians freedom to do the work of the Lord with the Word of God through the church in its various ministries.

The reversionism type of believer very often does not like supporting a church that is doing God's work, but because he is a reversionist, he'll keep coming back to get the benefits. That's spiritual welfare: "I don't like that church. I don't like what's coming out from that body of believers." We're talking about the point. The reversionistic Christian has gone negative to the Word of God at some point. Therefore, eventually, that whole body becomes a point of his objection: "I don't like that group, but I'll sure keep coming back to your activities. I'll sure keep coming back to your ministries. I want to benefit by your ministries." You don't like this body of believers, and yet what comes out of the life of these believers you like? I tell you that because one of the fundamental things of reversionism is everything is twisted around backwards. And you are so dog-gone sure you're right, and that you got it straight, when you're dog-gone wrong. You would think that these people would be humiliated to say, "Wait a minute, I don't like that church. I'm not going to touch it with a ten-foot pole. I don't like what comes out of that congregation. I'm not going to get anywhere near it. And anybody I know, I'm going to tell them to steer clear of that place. Don't get your kids in any activities there. But a reversionist is cuckoo spiritually. He's out of touch with reality.

1. **Biblical Descriptions of Reversionistic Christians**

Jeremiah 9:25-26 speaks of the Jews who are the people of God having an uncircumcised heart. 2 Peter 2:14 speaks of believers as unstable souls. You have these words that describe what we're talking about: the reversionistic believer.

1. **Recovery from Reversionism**

Recovery from reversionism requires confession of the sin that led you astray, to God alone, so that you may return to your spiritual status, and to your daily functioning under the grace system of perception to develop your spiritual maturity back up to where it once was. That's the principle of 1 John 1:9 – the confession of known sins.

1. **False Objects of Affection**

Reversionism leads Christians to false objects of affection and loyalty. This is one of the saddest things about reversionism, and it's one of the first signs that something has gone awry in a person. He has devotion to where it shouldn't be. He has loyalty to what he should not be loyal to. He is disloyal to what he should be loyal to. He has lack of devotion which should occupy his total absorption. Occupation with Christ, in this kind of a believer, is replaced by devotion to some idol object. He's devoted to drugs. He's devoted to sex. He's devoted to booze. He's devoted to having social status. He's devoted to accumulating wealth. He's devoted to having fame. He's devoted to exercising power over other people. These are all signs that there's a different god in the life of this person. A reversionist always has a different god – an idol of some kind.

It may be evidenced by the fact that the right man or the right woman is replaced in their affections by some unimportant wolf, or some flirt, that the person manages to come across. The reversionist goes for that every time. It is evidenced by the fact that genuine friends are rejected by this person. In fact, they're attacked. And for what? For insignificant people. Sometimes this is because maybe they're people of prominence, or prestige, or role-playing. They are false celebrities perhaps. But it is amazing how people in reversionism will give the back of the hand to the genuine people who have a genuine concern for them, and a genuine heart relationship to them, for these triviality people who are lowlife types. But once you're a reversionist, you're no longer royalty. You will become a commoner and you go for the common thing every time.

The reversionist will abandon the church where his carnal state is ruffled. He will seek a place where he can be in carnality, and not be made to feel uncomfortable – to feel guilty about it. The reversionist will have the attitude toward government which is providing liberty, to reject that government for one which is promising equality in the enslavement of socialism.

Now, here's a very tricky point. A reversionistic believer will always signal his reversionistic condition by the fact that he goes for economic socialism. Sometimes it is ignorance, but usually if he's in the know, he goes for tyranny because that's the nature of reversionism. Socialism is always tyranny, and he will go for that government rather than for liberty.

For the reversionist, eternal things are ignored in favor of temporal things. This is reflected in how he spends his money, and why he accumulates it. The reversionist lives to accumulate.

This reversionist is zealous for legalisms. So, he will attack grace. And boy, does he like to butt into the privacy of other believers? He loves poking his nose into the privacy of other believers and their priesthood. He is the companion of those who oppose the pastor-teacher (PT) and of doctrine. But he is antagonistic toward those who are positive to the pastor-teacher. He doesn't like the people who are the helpers and the supporters of the PT.

Divine viewpoint rearing of children in the reversionist is replaced by the viewpoint of the old sin nature; of society; and, of progressive education. These people will resent the correction of their children, so they defend or excuse them in their rebellion. And that's a very tempting thing to do. Nobody likes to have rebellious kids. Nobody likes to admit that: "My kid is not up to what he should be, and what he knows to be.? It is very tempting to try to cover that over, and not face the fact that this kid's old sin nature is choosing to do what is wrong, in spite of what he knows.

Dr. Dobson, who wrote Focus on the Family made a brilliant principle when he wrote that letter and said, "Parents, don't eat your hearts out because you have taught your children well, and then they go against what they should do." I have no doubt that Adam and Eve taught Cain very well indeed. After their own tragic experience, you know very well that Adam and Eve were very careful to train Cain in the things of the knowledge of God. And all he could do was be a rebel. And all he could do was finally find himself out of contact with the presence of God.

1. **Criticism, Slander, Complaining, and Judging**

Constant criticism, slander, complaining, and judging is a sign of reversionism. The habitual unrestrained verbal sin is practiced by the reversionist. This is the kind of Christian you hate to get into a conversation with.

1. **The Sin unto Death**

Persistent reversionism may result in the sin under death which is described in 1 John 5:16. That's one of the touchy things about reversionism. You keep being persistent in false doctrine, and you keep being persistent – not only you don't like the PT's resistance to your doctrine, but then you go around and see how many people you can influence to bring them into this great, strange, and wonderful thing you have found. You better be very careful, because the sword of death may be hanging closer over your head than you may imagine. Persistent reversionism will result in the sin unto death, and that Christian going to be sent home to heaven.

1. **Mastery of the Details of Life**

The breakdown in one's mastery of the details of life (control of material things) is a major step in the backsliding road into reversionism. More Christians have gone into reversionism over money probably than any other thing. 1 Timothy 6:6-10, "But godliness actually is a means of great gain." What is godliness? Godliness is being in fellowship with God. Your human spirit is filled with doctrinal understanding. You're operating at super-grace level of Christianity. But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. That means: "I have great godliness. I have a great relationship with God, and He enables me to serve Him in a magnificent way, but I don't have many things. I don't have much money. I'm scraping and making it, but boy am I serving? Maybe He'll give me more to help me make it, but whatever He decides my contentment (my happiness) is in the fact that I have the godliness. I have the spiritual maturity structure: "For we have brought nothing into the world so we cannot take anything out of it either, and if we have food and covering, in these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all sorts of evils, and some, by longing for it, have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang."

Now, do not misinterpret this Scripture. There are some times when Almighty God comes and says to a man or woman, "I want you to gain great wealth." I want you to become an enormously wealthy person, because I have a great mission for you. I've given you the ability to give away your money. You have the gift of giving, and that gift will never become inactive. In hard times and good times, that gift is going to keep plugging along. The Spirit of God never tells you: "Quit using it." When we don't feel too well, He never tells us: "Quit teaching." When we don't feel too well, He never tells us: "Quit acting in the gift of mercy." The spiritual gift keeps functioning. We have to work around the obstacles, but we keep functioning with that gift.

So, what this Scripture is talking about is those who want to get rich. Your old sin nature has kicked this up. But if God says, "I'm going to open doors of great financial opportunity to you for the Lord's work," grab it, and go for it. As long as you stay in doctrine, and you stay in orientation, it will never be a problem to you.

1. **Mental Attitude Sins**

Mental sins are a major contributor to reversionism. This is why it's important to be careful on how you think. Hebrews 12:15: "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness (mental attitude sins), springing up, cause trouble, and by it, many be defiled." You'll go down very quickly with mental attitude sins.

Now, I've found something very interesting – that people get hopping mad when you tell them that they should be careful about their mental attitude sins, because, very often, these people are very great morally on the outside, and they don't like suggesting that they are as bad a lot as the rest of us who may have overt sins. They blow off mental attitude sins as not being significant. It is as if they never read the book of James, who says, "No sin is done through your body until its first done up in your head. All sin begins with a mental attitude, then it expresses itself externally.

1. **Reversionistic Christians cannot be Trusted**

Here is a good principle to remember. Reversionistic Christians are never to be trusted. There is a sweetness and humility type. These people are very sincere, but they're quite disoriented to the Lord. These reversionistic Christians will declare their undying love; their goodwill; and, their allegiance. But emotional domination of human love and their sentimentality will overwhelm them. I remind you again, think of some people that you knew a year ago – just one year ago. I'm amazed when I sit down I start making a list on paper. I put this guy's name down, or this lady's name down, one year ago. They were tremendous workers for God. They had tremendous impact in the Berean ministry. They had tremendous outreach. And in one year's time, down the slippery slope of reversionism, of negative volition to the Word of God in one respect or another, an antagonism toward the PT, and thus toward the congregation, and zip! Suddenly, they're gone. They're still out there pumping away in churches. They're still doing it all. But there are no records being changed at the Judgment Seat of Christ anymore. Just one year ago – it will shock you how quickly reversionism can set in.

These people will use flattery, like asking your opinion that they don't really care about, so as to use you for their own promotion; their own security; their own social gains; their own temporary happiness; and, their own prosperity. The greatest point of danger to a positive believer is when a reversionism becomes attractive. You know when he gets attractive? When your heart goes out to him. Gee, you want to let him be a reversionist, but you don't want him to suffer the consequences. You don't want their children to suffer the consequences. You want to make it up for them. That's the greatest point of danger for you, because you will very quickly lose your orientation to where your true loyalties are to be.

1. **Calloused in their Souls**

Revisionists are calloused in their souls. Therefore, they're miserable. They're to be pitted. They're beggarly. They're spiritually blind. They are minus a spiritual maturity covering. They are minus any reflection of the glory of God. That is Revelation 4:14-20, and we went over that in detail last time.

1. **A Pseudo Spiritual Maturity Structure**

Reversionistic Christians often operates with a pseudo spiritual maturity structure which blinds them to their true spiritual condition. God does not promote revisionists, yet they're in very great prominence because they're self-promoted. If God does not promote you, you may have some prominent position. You may even have some people who will listen to you, and be impressed by what you have said, but if God has not promoted you to that point of influence, you haven't got anything.

1. **Super-Grace vs. Reversionism**

Every Christian is constantly moving or living at the super-grace level, or else he is moving into reversionism. There is no inactive position. You may be moving towards spiritual maturity, and strengthening it, and maintaining it. Please remember that you have to maintain that spiritual maturity all the time. That's why we meet every Lord's Day. And if you do, you're going to stay up there with that great cup of capacity that you have built – that container which God will then overflow with blessing. If you do not, you're on your way out.

There are the 15 points of the doctrine of reversionism.

Now, what is the point of all that? The point of all that is Colossians 1:9, where the apostle Paul says, "For this reason," pointing back to verse 8, where he says, "I recognize that you have a love given to you by God the Holy Spirit." You have a mental attitude "agape" love. "For this reason, since the day we heard of it," he and his associates – he knew immediately what this told about these people in their relationship to God, their super-grace status, and their great power potential for influencing the Roman Empire where they lived. Paul says, "We have not ceased to pray." And that's why we have been on this subject of Paul's prayer for the Colossians: "Prayer for you."

Then he goes on and says, "to ask." The word "ask" looks like this in the Greek Bible. It's the Greek word "aiteo" (ahee-teh'-o), A I T E O. This word connotes a request for something to which you're entitled. It's not just asking for anything. This is interesting. It is a word for which you are asking for something that you have a right to ask for. You're entitled to have this. And there are certain things for which God has said: "I'm going to take care of you. I'm going to give you food; I'm going to give you shelter; I'm going to give you clothing; I'm going to give you the care that you need; I'm going to give you what you need to serve Me." And you have a right to ask God for those things, and you have a right, therefore, to expect Him to deliver. That is His promise.

This word is used for example, to clarify it, in Mark 6:23. Salome has just danced for Herod, and before his drunken guests. And he is so impressed with her that he says to her, in verse 22, "Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you." And he uses "aiteo." Now the minute he did that, he authorized her to ask him. But then he goes on in verse 23: "And he swore to her, whatever you ask ("aiteo") of me, I will give it to you, up to the half of my kingdom." Now, he must have really been drunk that night, because this was not a poor man. And he said, "I am now authorizing you, and I'll have to do it." That's what "aiteo" means: "I'll have to do it. I'll give you the value of half of my kingdom for your dance." No wonder people like to go into dancing. There's big money in dancing, if you have the right crowd out there.

So, here the apostle is led by the Holy Spirit to use that very word – the word that means that you're entitled to get this, that you ask for. Since God commands us to ask of Him for what we need, we are entitled to approach Him in prayer. This is a grace provision, and that's why Hebrews 4:16 describes it as such, when it says, "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." This is why we gather on Wednesday nights. It is God's throne of grace. And we gather there to receive mercy, and to find grace to help us in the time of our various needs. And He tells us to do it. We have a right to ask Him. The unbeliever does not have this right. You have a right to ask Him. And if that asking is governed by the Word of God, and by the direction of the Spirit of God, you're going to get it.

In the book of Colossians, this word "ask" is in the present tense in the Greek, which means that it's a constant practice of asking. You can keep doing it all the time. It's in the middle voice in the Greek language, which says that if you ask, you're going to be the beneficiary. Wow! You can be the one. You asked; you have the right; you have the authority; and, you are the one who benefits from it. Here's a tremendous spiritual principle stated.

Paul is very specific in what he's asking God for: "We have not ceased to pray for you, and to ask (because I have the right to ask God for this) that (to introduce what he's asking) you may be filled." I told you that there are two great important words in this verse. These two words summarize the whole concept of the Christian life. These two words make the difference between winners and losers at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**Filled**

Here's the first one. It's the Greek word "pleroo" (play-ro'-o), P L E R O O. The word "pleroo" is translated here as "filled." This is a keyword in understanding how to be a winner in the Christian life – how to be a winner in life at all. It connotes four distinct ideas in Scripture.

Number one: this word means to be filled in terms of having a deficiency of some kind (a shortcoming) which is corrected. When we speak about being filled, we have a deficiency, like we have a deficiency of doctrine, and we have a deficiency of divine viewpoint. We have to have that filled up. And this word means to do that.

Secondly, it means to be fully possessed by something. It means to be a fan of something, like some people are of football or baseball or entertainment of one kind or another. They're just absorbed by it. It means to be completely possessed by something. Now, you can see the relationship there – to be possessed by Jesus Christ, or to be a person who is possessed by God like those heroes I read to you last time – these tremendous men who were just a friend of God. They were the apple of His eye, from Enoch on down. They wanted nothing in life but God, and whatever was in store of their lives for Him. They were not interested in walking through much of this life. They were looking forward to that great life they were going to spend it in the new Jerusalem with Him.

The third meaning of this word "pleroo" means to fill a person with a certain quality – a character. You have a character deficiency. It gives certain characteristic marks on the individual believer, and you can see how the potential of that is enormous. This word – the characters that characterizes a Christian.

Then the fourth meaning of "pleroo" is that it means to be totally influenced by something – something that you are so governed by that you cannot control yourself. And you see the working here of the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit). You are so overwhelmed, and so under His domination that the sin nature can't make a peep, and the devil can't make any kind of appeal to you whatsoever.

Now, this is what makes a princely Christian. This is what makes a very bold person – to be filled up with the deficiency in my soul of divine viewpoint? You get that human viewpoint out – to be fully possessed by something. This is to be possessed by the will of God rather than by my human orientation. This is to be filled with the qualities that characterize a Christian, which we call the fruit of the Spirit – those nine elements of the fruit of the Spirit. This is to be totally influenced by the will of God, so that governs you. And because you are in such a relationship with Him through doctrine and temporal fellowship, you know what the will of God is. You're not going to come up with logical reasons why you shouldn't do something that you should be doing, because God's point of view almost always counters man's.

There is significance to this word in the way it's structured in the grammar of this book. It's in the Greek aorist tense, which means that there's a point in time when a Christian resolves his natural deficiencies in spiritual things. There comes a point in time when you say, "I'm out of this dumb human viewpoint realm. I'm now going to become an intense fan of the Word of God. Every time that church door is open for instruction, I'm going to be there. I'm not going to say, 'I have to do this; or, I have to do that. Everything else will revolve around the church services in my life."

It is in the passive voice. It means that you can't produce this for yourself. It has to be something you receive from the Lord. And when you meet the condition of being there to be instructed in the Word, and you maintain your personal fellowship, these four factors of filling will take place in you like you wouldn't believe. It'll be automatic. If it gets killed off, it's because you killed it off.

Also, it's in the subjunctive mode, which means that it's potential. It's something you may do. You decide you're going to do it. It is a volitional act. This is an experiential deficiency – a deficiency in your experience, not a positional one. You are never deficient in Christ in any way. And you're not going to fulfill anything more in Him. This is strictly in your personal experience. So, therefore, you can meet this by your personal action as a believer. You can do something about this. You cannot do something about your spiritual deficiency that puts you on the road to the lake of fire. Only God can do that. But this deficiency – this is where the Word of God comes in. You can do something about this.

So, we tell you that the primary duty of the Christian is to prepare himself to live the supernatural life of Jesus Christ by filling up the spiritual deficiency of his soul.

This is what Paul is praying for: "That I'm praying for you, that you'll be filled in these various ways: filled to the total capacity; to the total occupation; to the total preservation; and, to the total protection with something of utmost importance.

Now we come to the second dramatic word of the two most important words in all the Bible for living the Christian life. And all these cuckoo books on the spiritual life that you read about, I guarantee you, are not going to deal with these two words. They will not deal with the word "pleroo." And when I go through the Scriptures, and show you how many times this second word occurs, you're going to be knocked off your chairs, because in the English, you can't see it. And suddenly when I point out to you this specific Greek word, and what is meant by this word, the impact of that will be enormous. But I can't tell you what that word is today. You'll have to come back for our next session.

Father, we want to thank You for this time in the Word together.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

[**Back to the Colossians index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/colossians.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)