***Christian Service

Colossians 1:1-2

COL-088***

Our subject is "Prayer for the Colossians," segment number 22 in Colossians 1:9-14.

A spiritually functional Christian operates on the mind of Christ. That means that he lives a divine viewpoint lifestyle. The mind of Christ is full knowledge doctrine, not just knowledge of doctrine, but that which has been received to one's heart (mind), and has been fully accepted in great zeal and enthusiasm and conviction. It is in the believer’s human spirit reservoir. The mind of the Lord guides one to the will of God in matters relating to spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding.

The purpose of the mind of God is to enable the believer to live his life in a way befitting the Lord Jesus Christ. The idea is that a Christian has a holy character and a conduct which balances with the holiness of Jesus Christ. So, we pointed out this morning that the word "worthy" in Colossians 1:10: "So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord" means so that your life in its moral character and in its integrity balances exactly the scale on the other side with that of Christ. What is on the side of the Lord is exactly what is on the side of the believer who has that positive volition. The two balance. This is the way that the Christian life will function. And that will be the norm when the mind of Christ is guiding the believer through the Word of God.

Now, the Bible, as we pointed out to you extensively this morning, is filled with clear statements of what constitutes a worthy walk of Jesus Christ. The saved and the carnal Christian are out of fellowship with God. And they cannot balance the scale of their lives against the character of Christ. But there are very clear distinctions between what is fitting for a Christian and what is unworthy of a Christian. One makes Christ, Who is His Savior, also the Lord of his life, through this "epignosis" full knowledge and temporal fellowship.

It is the purpose of God for a Christian to walk in a manner worthy of Jesus Christ, and thereby to make Him one's Lord. First He is the Savior. Then He becomes the Lord.

Now, the local church, functioning on the grace system of perception in teaching doctrine, is the basis for enabling a believer to make Christ Lord of His life. And that's why a meeting like this is so important. That's why the people who attend the instruction in the Word of God are the only ones who have a chance to make it in life in any kind of a balanced functional way. The rest are with a life that is dysfunctional.

**Please God**

So, in Colossians 1:10, the apostle Paul then gives us the purpose of a functional Christian life. Having said that, the reason we have full knowledge to find the will of God in all spiritual matters relative to wisdom and understanding – the purpose of all that full knowledge is that you may walk (your lifestyle) – you may live daily in a certain way, a manner worthy of the Lord, which means that your life of integrity balances the integrity of the character of Christ. Why? What's the purpose of that? "To please Him In all respects." The goal of the Christian life is to please the Lord in all respects.

This Greek word for "please" has a very special meaning. It's the word "areskeia" (ar-es'-ki-ah), A R E S K E I. "Areskeia" means to be desirous or pleasing. Now, the background of the meaning of this word comes from classical Greek. Classical Greek is different than New Testament Greek. Classical Greek was like what we would call British English today. But American English, that we speak in common, ordinary day associations, was like New Testament Greek. The Greek was described as Koine Greek. The word "Koine" means "common" Greek. And this is the kind of Greek which was spoken all over the business world of the ancient world. It's like English today. Wherever you go, you can find people who speak English who you can do business with. In the ancient world, they knew Koine Greek. Whatever else they spoke, they knew how to speak Koine Greek, especially if they wanted to do business.

Now, the Koine Greek is the language that was used to write the New Testament. For a long time, until they understood the nature of the common Greek that was used in New Testament times, they couldn't quite figure out why the Greek of the New Testament was so much different than classical Greek. The writings of the classical Greek writers were so much distinctively different. It was like a high class British kind of language over against the ordinary American everyday speech. And because they couldn't explain it, they concluded that the Bible was written in a Holy Spirit Greek. And they used to describe it as a Holy Ghost Greek. Then they finally found what was different. The reason that it was distinctively different from the classical Greek was because it was ordinary Greek. But that common language that the people spoke on the streets came down from classical Greek. That's where its meaning came from.

So, when we look at a word like "areskeia," we find something significant about its meaning by looking back to its origin in classical Greek. There it had a bad connotation. It connoted the picture of somebody who was cringing; who was subservient; and, who was obsequious. He's holding his hands, and he's cringing, and he's trying to gain a favor from someone who is a superior. His behavior is such to seek to gain a favor from a superior. So, he is in some kind of a servile compliance.

However, the Holy Spirit takes this word, and He gives it a dignified meaning. He uses it here in the sense of a Christian who is pleasing God because he wants something. As in classical Greek, this had a bad connotation about somebody who was cringing because he wanted to get some benefit. That same concept is brought down in a dignified way – that the Christian is pleasing God in order to secure God's favor and blessing in his life. He wants God's blessing. He does not want God's discipline. He wants God's prosperity. He does not want God's poverty upon him. Therefore, he understands that the kind of life you live as a Christian, has a direct bearing upon how God treats you, and how God deals with you. Yes, He sometimes puts us to testing. And we sometimes come under trials. But people who live a life of integrity, and who balance the scale of their lives with the quality of the morality of Jesus Christ (His integrity), those people are specially blessed by God. And certainly their children are blessed by God. The Bible is very clear about that. Godly parents bring godly blessing upon their children. So, it is a very right and proper thing that a Christian should say, "I'd rather be in God's favor. I'd rather be one of His special objects of blessing. Therefore, I want to comply with what will secure that favor and blessing for time and for eternity.

Furthermore, this word is described as: we want to please God in order to secure His blessings "in all respects;" that is, in every way that we live our lives. And certainly, in all respects must include the primary favor and blessing that we seek of having rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

A functional, rational Christian always in his life (every day of his life) wants to save the value of his life by serving God. Only a dysfunctional Christian, who is out of step with the will of God, will want to waste his life in some way, such that when he stands the Judgment Seat of Christ, he will have to stand there ashamed of himself. What we are called upon to do in pleasing Him (balancing our will to His will in all respects) is a conscious striving to please God our Father – to be a delight to Him in every way.

This is emphasized by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:31: "Whether then you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." That is a verse that carries us a long way toward balancing the scales of what Christ is, over against what we should be. If a Christian is motivated by that, there are a lot of things that will unbalance the scale from Christ to putting the Christian in the position of condemnation instead of a blessing that will be avoided.

This is also stressed in 1 Thessalonians 4:1: "Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God, just as you actually do walk, that you may excel still more." The apostle Paul said, "I'm very pleased with the believers here in Thessalonica. I have spent not too much time." Actually, he only spent about six weeks with them. And during that six-week period of time, he taught them an enormous amount of prophetic truth concerning the antichrist. And 1 and 2 Thessalonians are just filled, as he reviews with them what he taught them. And as the result of their knowledge of where the world was going, and where history was moving, Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:1: "I exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received instruction from us on how you ought to walk and please God." That meant that He is coming, Jesus is on his way. Therefore let's get our lives lined up with His purpose (His will): "So you should walk." And he said, "And I'm happy to say that that's actually the way you do walk. But I want you to excel still more. What you're doing is fine, but I want you to focus upon this for your life to do even better." This is a conscious striving to please God the Father.

Then Paul goes on and explains the means for pleasing God. First of all, you please God by bearing fruit. This word" bearing fruit" refers to the result of Christian service. This is part of walking worthy of the Lord. It is in the present tense in the Greek. So, that indicates that this is constant life activity. There's never a time in your life when you do not bear the fruit of Christian service. It is in the active voice, which means that the Christian has to do it personally. You cannot ride upon all the good people around you who are serving God with great faithfulness and with great personal sacrifice. And it is very tempting (very tricky) to be part of an organization like Berean Church, where we are surrounded by people of every age group who very faithfully and regularly serve God and are faithful to Him. And we rejoice in seeing what they do, and seeing the good things that this produces. And we can suddenly find ourselves getting the impression that we're doing it. Just because those around you are doing it, that doesn't cover what you are to do. It is the active voice. You are to bear your own fruit. And this is a spiritual principle that includes every believer.

The purpose of the Christian life is clearly to bear spiritual fruit as a consequence of one's Christian service. This is illustrated in the gospel of John. In this chapter, Jesus Christ presents Himself as the "true vine" through Whom the believer produces fruit in God's service. Because Christ indwells us for fellowship to be our role model as He sacrificially served, we are to serve. But we cannot do that without His capacity. You cannot do that, in other words, if you're not a Christian. Only a Christian can genuinely serve God.

**Jesus Christ is the Vine, and We are the Branches**

So, Jesus says in John 15:1, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away, and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit." Jesus Christ is the true vine. When we are in Him, as those who are saved, then we are in a position to produce divine good works. If we are not in Christ (if we are not a Christian), the only kind of works we produce come from the sin nature, and that's human good. And the Bible calls that "filthy rags." And for the Christian who tries to serve while he's out of temporal fellowship, he isn't producing divine good works. The Spirit of God is not working through him. It's the sin nature that's producing the compassions and the things that substitute for divine good works. And in his case too, he has wasted his life, and the Bible calls that just a pile of "filthy rags."

God the Father wants believers to bear fruit, but you must be a Christian. In John 15:2, Jesus says that if you are: "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away." This can, of course, be taken in two ways. If you're not a Christian, then you will be taken away to the lake of fire. But He says here, "Every branch in Me." So, that suggests that this is a Christian that he's talking about. This is a believer – one who is in Christ, and yet he does not bear fruit. He takes him away. The time will come at a certain point in life, such that there's no point in your being here on earth anymore. John 15:2, "Every branch in Me that is not fruit bearing, He takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit (those are functioning), He prunes it, so that it bears more fruit." That's very interesting. Whatever you give God, He enables you to give all the more. That's exactly what the apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8:6, "He that sows sparingly, you'll get back sparingly. He that sows in the work of God abundantly, you will get back abundantly." That is the great promise. That abundance may not always come to you on this earth, but it will most certainly come to you at the Judgment Seat of Christ. However, the point here is that Christian service is one of the ways that we walk worthy of Jesus Christ to bear fruit.

Notice John 15:4, "Abide in Me." That means temporal fellowship: "And I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in a vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me." The first step of abiding is to be a Christian. Thus you come into Christ. The second step is to maintain your temporal fellowship.

The, as John 15:2 said: "God will cultivate the believer, so that the branches bear more fruit." And then the Christian will move on for more fruit to much fruit.

Notice John 15:5: "I am the vine. You are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I and him: he bears much fruit. For apart from Me, you can do nothing." So, from bearing more fruit in verse 2, he goes to much fruit in verse 5.

Also John 15:8: "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples." So, in other words, if you're going to live and walk worthy of Jesus Christ, the first thing you do is you have to be a fruit bearer. You are a person who is serving Him. And as we pointed out this morning, this is not just any old thing, but those works for which He has prepared you to serve – that which He has designed for your life particularly.

What we're talking about in Colossians is bearing fruit "in every good work." The word for "good" here is the Greek word "agathos" (ag-ath-os'), A G A T H O S. There is another word for "good" ["kalos" (kal-os') (beautiful, good (beautiful, as an outward sign of the inward good.)] This word "agathos" connotes something which is beneficial in its effect. It's a good work that is beneficial in its effect. There are many good things that people do for other people. Governments try to do good things for people, but they are old sin nature good things, and they are not beneficial for people. But what the Holy Spirit produces is beneficial in its effect upon those that experience this.

**Every Good Work**

And what is beneficial is a thing called "work." Good works is again a reference to divine good service produced by the Holy Spirit through the spiritual Christian, through the use of that Christian's spiritual gifts. This is in very serious contrast to human good works, which are produced by the sin nature. Those human good works, in Isaiah 64:6, are called "filthy rags." And in Titus 3:5: "He saved us not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing by the Holy Spirit." Titus 3:5 points out that it is not works of the sin nature (the works of our own good doing), but the works that God produces.

So, what we have here is the Christian with "epignosis" full knowledge mentality of Christ's controlling. That bears the fruit of divine good works using his spiritual gifts. And in that way, you have treated Jesus Christ in a very worthy manner.

Divine good works, of course, are the product of salvation. They are not the cause of salvation. That's always a tricky point that has to be made very clear. Romans 7:4 says, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law according to the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another – to Him Who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God." Joined to Christ how? Joined through salvation. You cannot produce divine good fruit unless you are first saved.

**Roman Catholicism**

Now, Roman Catholicism gets that all backwards. It says: "First you produce divine good works, and then, over a period of years, you'll gradually get more and more justified, and more and more grace, until finally, near the end of your life, you may have almost enough. But in case you don't, you'll go to purgatory, and you'll finish working out your suffering in time there, unless somebody pays the way out through special Masses and special benefits from the church." But this is totally contrary to Scripture in every way – that good works are the root of the tree. No. Good works are the fruit of the tree of salvation. Good works are not the root of the tree of salvation.

Now, people get very mad when you say something that counters their religious opinions, especially when you happen to touch on a raw end nerve, and you have the Scripture demonstrating it. When people wish to reject what the Word of God says, then they respond to truth with indignation, and they flee with their hands on their ears. The man who got up and walked out of the service this morning walked in, and as soon as he heard a few things, and when he heard the idea of approaching God on emotional domination of the soul, and finding truth in the emotional realm, so that there is jumping and jiving and snake handling, he got up and left. And may he be bitten on his way out. But the poor man – here by the grace of God he walked in. Here by the grace of God he heard something about his own emotional orientation. And I'll just guarantee you, he's a little charismatic, oriented to the silliness of his emotions. And when he found something to alert him, instead of having the manhood to say, "Let me see how wrong you are," he fled, not realizing that Satan has put a hook in him, and jerked him right out of an opportunity that may be the last one he'll ever have in his life. Grace is the root of the tree, and divine good works are the fruit.

I referred to Ephesians 2:8-9 on this point this morning. There were 11 visitors here this morning. Another visiting family lived close by. I could tell that the father and the mother both were getting really warmed up. They were enthusiastic. The heads were nodding. I was talking about the fact that some great prominent evangelical leaders have signed up with the Catholics (the Catholics and Protestants together) on the CPT Concord. They have agreed that they will not try to save each other's people. They have agreed that the Protestants evangelicals will not try to give the gospel to Catholics, but will view them as Christians who are going to heaven. These are horrendous things. These are men that you have great esteem for, but who think that somehow they can create a unity among people if they go along with that. I pointed out that cannot be, and that is not God's way, and that cannot be the truth, and that cannot be pleasing to God. I pointed out Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

After the service, the father of this visiting family came up to me and greeted me, and introduced himself, and he said, "I want to thank you for how refreshing it is to sit and hear the Bible explained (the exposition of the word of doctrine) instead of a bunch of psychology." And I said, "Whoop" to myself, and I'm trying to read this man. He knows something. Anybody who knows that psychology is a bunco operation is already halfway to heaven, with at least one foot in. Now if you can get the rest of the story, they'll jerk him in the rest of the way.

Titus 2:13: "Looking for the blessed hope." What is the blessed hope? "And the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus." How did we get our salvation? From our works? No. From Christ, Who is the root. He is our great God and our savior Christ Jesus.

Titus 3:8: "This is a trustworthy statement. And concerning these things, I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men." So, it's very clear that once we're saved, were saved to serve. Have you ever seen that on a plaque? The bookstores used to sell little plaques with those words on them: "Saved to serve." And that was very aptly a little summary of exactly what salvation is all about. And that's exactly what Paul is talking about here to the Colossians – that they have gone so far, and they're well on their way, and that he wants them to, in every respect, walk in a way that is worthy of the Lord in order to please Him in all respects. And here's how you please Him. You bear fruit in every good work. You serve Him with divine good service.

**Christian Service**

Here are three primary things that are the fruit of Christian service, and that should concern us.

1. **Converts**

Number one is converts. 1 Corinthians 16:15: "Now I urge you, brethren, you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints." Here are people that were among the first that Paul led to Christ here in the province of Achaia in Greece. And he said that the household of Stephanas was the firstfruits. They were the first ones he had reached. And they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints. But he called these converts "fruit" of Christian service.

1. **Financial Offerings**

In Romans 15:26-28, we have another significant fruit that believers may all have a part in producing. These were financial offerings: "For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so. And they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs (the fruit of theirs is their offering – their financial gifts), I will go on by way of you to Spain." Paul is going to take the special gift for the starving saints in Jerusalem who were going through a famine condition. And what he calls their financial gifts is a "fruit" of Christian services – a divine good work.

1. **Godly Living**

The, certainly, Hebrews 12:11 gives us a third and primary fruit that the Christian is obliged to pursue, along with converts and financial support. And that is personal integrity, or godly living: "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." God brings discipline and says, "Listen, I want to wake you up. I want to get you on-track. Here's an area of fruit production you're capable of, and I've talked to you about this several times. I've asked you to do this, and you've dug your feet in. Now I'm bringing some discipline upon you, and this is not going to be very pleasant. But if you'll say, 'Okay, let's get through this, Lord, together, and I'm on track with You,' then you can look back on the discipline, and it's the peaceful fruit of righteousness. It is the consequence of doing what is right. It is the consequence of the righteousness of God Himself.

Now, the unsaved, and carnal Christians, as I said, certainly cannot produce divine good fruit through the Holy Spirit. They're not in Christ, and they're not, therefore, in fellowship with the Lord Jesus. John 15:4-5 stresses that for us once more: "Abide in Me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine. So, neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine. You are the branches. He who abides in Me (temporal fellowship), and I in him, he bears much fruit. For apart from Me, you can do nothing." So, walking in temporal fellowship is a big key to pleasing Christ in every way.

Wisdom in applying doctrine – we've learned about asking God for wisdom to apply doctrine. When you ask God for wisdom (to give you the biblical spiritual guidance for any particular situation in your life), the result of that is going to be fruit in your life as a Christian. James 3:17 points this out: "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering without hypocrisy." Any Christian who is operating on the wisdom of God is producing good fruits. It is dumb not to produce divine good works. James 3:17 makes it very clear. When wisdom comes from God, it has several characteristics. It's pure; it's peaceable; it's gentle; it's reasonable; it's full of mercy; it is filled with good fruit; and, it is unwavering without hypocrisy. Many Christians do not produce good works because they are hypocrites. They produce a hypocrisy. There are hypocrites in the images that they portray and the words that they use. They are not intending to do something that they are making a front that they will do. But God says that that's bad business. If you are really getting wisdom from God, you want to produce divine good works. In other words, you want to be worthy of Him. And that means that you want to serve Him appropriately.

The qualities of Christian character are of course a prerequisite to bearing fruit. 2 Peter 1:5 points this out. "Christian character: integrity; and, temporal fellowship. You have to have that or the fruit that you produce is going to come from the sin nature. 2 Peter 1:5: "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence in your faith, supply moral excellence; and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control; and, in your self-control, perseverance; and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness; and, in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours, and you are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Did you get that: true knowledge? That's "epignosis." They signaled it to you by using that combination of words: "In the true knowledge of our Lord (which is what triggers everything), you will have true knowledge (positive response to the Word of God), and you will not be a useless person as a Christian without divine good fruit.

The apostle Paul, in his epistles, lays great stress on performing divine good works. So, this is not an optional activity, but it is required to be the daily focus of the Christian's life. Now, if you don't take hold of that, and get to understand that, you're going to have a time when you are going to regret standing before Christ – that the life that you had that could have meant so much has been wasted. There is great stress made upon our serving in the mission to which we were called. It's not an optional activity.

We've already looked at Ephesians 2:10: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Not only is the plan of God very specific for you, but you should understand that this verse is saying that we (that is you and I personally) should walk in them. All over this auditorium there are people who are capable of doing something. They have the ability. They have the gifts. They have the knowledge. They have the means. They have the time to do something that nobody else here can do. And if you don't do it, then you have violated that principle that he's talking about – that you should do that which God has before prepared for you to do. He prepared you to do it. And that means that nobody else is going to fully be able to do it the way you will do it.

Titus 1:16 says, "They professed to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him; being detestable, and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed." That is a terrible condemnation – that any Christian should be disobedient, detestable, and worthless for any good deed. If you're worthless for any good deed, then God has no further purpose for you – no further use.

Titus 2:7: "In all things, show yourself to be an example of good deeds with purity in doctrine (dignified)." Isn't that interesting? If you're going to show yourself an example of good deeds, it's going to be based upon purity in doctrine. If you do not have purity in doctrine, then what you think are good deeds are simply human good.

Titus 2:14: "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed, and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works." It is the purpose of God, and it is the work of God, to purify us from the evil control of the sin nature. And why would He do that? So that He can have a people who are His own troops – His own special people. Those who are Peters, James, and Johns – that select inner circle group of believers, and they are identified by one thing. They are zealous for good works. They serve and they serve, and everything they are and everything they have is on the line for God. There is nothing withheld, and nothing about which they are hesitant. The opportunity is all they need.

Titus 3:8: "This is a trustworthy statement, and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

2 Corinthians 9:8: "And God is able to make all grace abound to you." 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 have to do with Christian giving. This is the church age method of giving. It is not tithing. It is a grace oriented giving. And now in the midst, coming at the end of this discussion about Christian giving, he says, in 2 Corinthians 9:8, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you." And by "all grace," he means the means of financial giving. That's the grace – the finance: the money. That's the grace: "That always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed." That is a great honor – for God not only to give you logistical grace, which you need, but to give you more than you could ever use in your situation: "So that you may have an abundance for every good deed, that the work of the Lord doesn't scrape what it needs. Genuinely and legitimately, you are God's agent to provide.

There's the book of Galatians 2:10. And what we're looking at is that the epistles of Paul lay great stress on performing divine good works, not as an optional activity, but as the required focus of our daily lives. Galatians 2:10: "They only asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I also was eager to do." Here they're talking about what the Jewish people asked of the Gentiles coming into the church. And the Jewish people, because of their Mosaic Law admonition and requirement, they had to take care of the poor; the family; and, the social group of believers about them: "The only thing they asked us to remember was the poor, the very thing I also was eager to do." Paul says, I'm eager to remember the poor." And you notice Paul was not the Roman government. Paul was no government. He, like all the other Jews, took this upon himself as a personal burden to help those first within their family, and the wider circle of their acquaintance, when they needed financial help.

We have one more in 1 Timothy 2:9-10: "Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works as befit women making a claim to godliness." Now that's interesting. You may not walk into church and strike everybody as a fashion plate. You may not catch everybody's attention as to how stylish you are. But when they speak to you; when they listen to what you say; and, when they observe your conduct, they see that you have a true claim to godliness by what? Not by the front you put on, but by the good works – by means of the good works. That includes all these kindnesses, and all these taking up of slack that is necessary for other people. What good is it for you to have a closet full of expensive clothes and lots of jewelry when Jesus comes and takes us all home to heaven? But that which you've done in his service, I guarantee you, that is going to go along with you.

So, in the book of Colossians, this evening we have learned that we are to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. We are to balance our integrity with that which characterizes Him. And all that is the result of knowing what integrity is from the full knowledge of doctrine. The purpose of this is that we will please Him in all respects of what we do. When you are acting with God in full integrity, He'll be very pleased, and you'll be very happy.

And one of the ways we please Him is by bearing fruit in every good work. God the Holy Spirit takes our spiritual gifts; our capacities; our physical bodies; our strength; our vitality; and, our possessions, and we bear divine good works through these things. These include the especially good works that we alone are capable of doing, that everybody around you in church cannot do. They don't have the means; they don't have the ability; they don't have the capacity; or, they don't have the calling, but there is you alone to fill that notch. And this is the way you please God in the highest sense of that word. May that be true of us indeed.

Father, we want to thank You for this time together in the Word. And we pray that You will bless the things that we have learned through this day and this night to our experience. We're not interested in learning something that doesn't go into practice. So, help us to be powerful fruit-bearers this week. Help us to step up to the plate, and to bat that good work out of the park. An athlete who has the integrity of Christ, and who therefore serves with full conviction, eagerness, and realizing that this is what makes us worthy of the wonderful salvation which we received as a gift. May the root of salvation bear great fruit upon the trees of our lives this week.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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