***Living by the Full Knowledge  
  
Colossians 1:1-2  
  
COL-089***

Our subject is "Prayer for the Colossians, number 21 in Colossians 1:9-14.

2 Timothy 4:2-3: "Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but, wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. But you grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior."

Ephesians 3:21: "To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

All of mankind has one of two possible fathers in spiritual matters. God is the spiritual Father of believers – those who are born-again: the saved. This is indicated in one place, among many, in Matthew 6:9, where Jesus in His model payer (the apostles’ prayer) said, "Pray then this manner: 'Our Father Who art in heaven.'" On the one hand, there is a certain number of human beings whose spiritual Father is the living Creator God.

The only other father that one can have in spiritual matters in this universe is the father which unbelievers have, which is Satan himself. This is indicated to us, in one place, in the gospel of John 8:44. Jesus says, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Then in John 8:42, we read, "Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love Me. For I proceeded forth and have come from God. For I have not come on My own initiative, but He sent Me." So here again, we have the contrast that in this universe (in this world) there are two fathers: God, for those who are believers; and, Satan, for those who are unbelievers. This is a very important doctrinal principle to remember. All day long you are associated with people, whatever your age level is. All day long you're looking into the eyes (the windows of the soul). And behind those eyes lies a person, and that person is governed by a mentality. He is governed by the mentality of a person: either God; or, he is governed by the mentality of another person, namely Satan.

Each of these fathers has a mind which is in total conflict with the other. The mind of God is the divine viewpoint as expressed in Bible doctrine. The mind of Satan is the human viewpoint as expressed by the sin nature in man. Every one of us functions daily on the mind of God or on the mind of Satan, with consequent inevitable results. Those with the mind of Satan gravitate to evil of every kind in the mind and body. They gravitate towards sins and toward human good works. Those with the mind of God gravitate to what is holy in mind and body; godliness; and, divine good works.

A Christian who is out of temporal fellowship with negative volition to Bible doctrine, and rejection of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will revert to functioning on the mind of Satan. Christ at that point is not that believer's Lord. Now, that is a very shocking thing to realize – that a Christian – born-again, whose destiny is heaven, yet when he is out of temporal fellowship, he has short-circuited his access to the mind of God, and the only place he can resort to is his own mental processes as they are guided by the sin nature. He's been abandoned then to his own sinful self. And it is amazing what Christians, when they have the mind of Satan, will do.

We were standing around in the office recently – the secretaries and I. And we began reminiscing about people (Christians) we have known in days past, and the appalling course of action that they have taken – things at which we shake our heads, and we cannot believe that these are people who operate on the mind of Satan. And these are people who are mature in life. They are people who have experience in life. And they walk around totally oblivious to the fact that something is controlling them which is not of God. But something hideous and ugly is controlling them, which is a Satan. And they don't have the foggiest notion that that is happening.

Well, the first step to protect yourself is to realize that those two minds are out there. And at any particular point in time, you are on one or the other. The poor unsafe person is always on the mind of Satan. He cannot produce anything but sins or human good from the sin nature, and both those things are evil in the sight of God. He is one continuous output of evil with everything he thinks and does. It is the emotions and the will that are governed by the mind of God that enable us to have emotions that are under control, and that enable us to make choices that are right.

On the other, hand, if the mind of Satan is what governs you, then all of your emotions and all of your decisions are exactly what the devil produces for you. These determine the nature of one's relationship to others. The kind of emotions you have, and who controls them; and, the kind of will you have, and who controls that – that's going to determine how you treat other people, in a godly or ungodly way. It depends on that controlling mind. Your emotions and your will can be agents of godliness or of ungodliness.

Now, in a society, when it begins functioning on the mind of Satan, it will in time self-destruct. The ultimate example of that is going to be in the tribulation. Now, it is very important, therefore, for you to understand what we're saying – that you be aware of the fact that you are constantly surrounded by people who are putting things out at you from the mind of Satan, and how you should react and relate to that. The younger you are, the more important this is.

There's a little bouncy tune that's come on the charts now. It's called the "La Macarena." The "La Macarena" virtually became the theme song of one of the presidential conventions. And one of our high school kids was telling me that, at one of their pep rallies at school, they were dancing the "La Macarena."

Now, while it is true that most of it is in Spanish, there's enough of it in English such that you stop and listen to the words. And it is a very bouncy tune. And yet I wondered how many Christian kids were aware of what the "La Macarena" is teaching them. And I wondered how many of them were saying, "Hey, I'm not going to get into this dance with this. I'm not going to join you with having a lot of fun with this song. This song has an evil message."

It's about this girl. She has a very dear boyfriend. He's out of town. The boyfriend has two of his closest friends. They're very much like her boyfriend. In fact, they both remind her of her boyfriend, and they want to play house with her. And she says, "What could I do?" So here's a song that says: infidelity; unfaithfulness; and, disloyalty – that's the way to go. But because of the bouncy beat of the "La Macarena," we can all stand out there, and move around on the dance floor, and have a lot of fun. Christian kids should walk off and say, "Not from me. I know what that song is saying, because that song comes from the mind of Satan. It is not from the mind of God.

So, you don't just float along in American society today. I wonder what is happening to children whose parents are not at home, or they're away, and the kid comes home and turns on the TV. I make a survey of some of the programs. They are the most mindless, stupid, loudmouth, honky-tonking, idiot programs that you could imagine. And these are the kid programs that the young people watch because they're funny. They're stupid. They're degrading. They're a vulgarity. And worst of all, they're mindless. And why is that? Well, because the mind of Satan produces it. And what is this mind that Satan put out? Well, you heard it this morning. He puts out lies. He makes it look like good stuff. But he puts out lies. And the "La Macarena" is putting out a monstrous lie as being something innocent and okay.

Well, these wonderful Christians who are in the city of Colossae, that the apostle Paul got such good reports on, and were so highly esteemed by him, were admonished by Paul to continue to accumulate the full knowledge "epignosis" of doctrine in their human spirits in order to possess the mind of Christ. This would enable them to know God's will for their lives by proper application of the Word of God, and by having a spiritually discerning mind. This mind of God would enable the Colossians to live in a manner worthy of Jesus Christ, as we were told, in Colossians 1:10, they were called upon to do: "Have this full knowledge of God so that (for the purpose) you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord." And we pointed out to you that this word "worthy" means that you would walk in a way that your life is in balance with the integrity of Christ." The word worthy means that Christ's integrity is on one side of the scale, and you balance it on the other side. You will never be more than He is, but you never should be under Him. This is a life in which Jesus Christ is Lord of the believer. And that kind of a life is the only one which is worthy of Jesus Christ. And He cannot be your Lord if you are not in balance with His integrity.

Here's again, I cannot believe what sometimes people tell me. And it makes me a little mad. I had a man some time ago moving in all the Christian circles, and who has some capacity with computers, who didn't want to buy insurance for his car. So, he is very proud to show me how he had created a false insurance card. He managed to copy a real one. And he said that he just goes up to the desk; gets his license plates; and, shows them this false card. And I said to him, "Well, that's not a very good thing to do, apart from being a Christian. If they find out, that's a criminal act, and that could be very costly. You ought to consider that. And I'm sitting there: "How can this be?" Well, how it can be is when the mind of Satan takes over the mind of a Christian, then there is no limit to what you'll do. There is no limit to the insanity that you'll pursue. And when a society does that, the society will self-destruct. You can count on it.

The lifestyle compatible with the holiness of Jesus Christ enables the believer to please the Lord in all respects. Colossians says: "So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, in balance with His integrity, so that you may please Him in all respects. And the word "please" here means to seek God's favor and blessing in life ~for doing right by biblical standards. There's nothing wrong with saying, "I want to do right so that I'll be blessed by God. I don't want to do wrong. Do you? Do you want to do wrong so that you'll be disciplined by God? No. That's stupid. I want to do right, and that's what this word "please" in the classical Greek meant – literally, to grovel before the king in order to gain his favor. The Holy Spirit used this word, and placed a dignity upon it, saying, "Do right by the standards of God." That will please God, and that will cause you to have blessing and a good life.

The Bible is exceedingly explicit, as we showed you last week, on the practices which do please the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, the way he thinks. Christ, of course, is pleased when His believers are producing the spiritual fruit of divine good works, which is the purpose of the Christian life.

So, Colossians 1:10 goes on and says, "Bearing fruit in every good work." Good works are the product of salvation. They're not the source of salvation. Satan's religions always put the worthiness of works before salvation. And thus, there can be no salvation. Tonight, we'll introduce you to some of the horrendous things that have taken place in the Christian community, where men of God whom you highly esteem have signed an accord, the Protestants and Catholics Together accord, which agrees that Catholics are not to be pursued with the gospel of the grace of God, but should be treated as brethren. The truth of the matter is that no Catholic is going to heaven, because every Catholic says, "I have to have my works to make myself" what? "Worthy."

How do the Mormons put it? They get their information from Satan too. They will operate on his mind. What do the Mormons say? "My going to heaven depends on proving myself worthy." And that's exactly the opposite: "Bearing fruit in every good work, proving yourself worthy: walk in a way that is worthy. And you do this by bearing fruit in every good work. The good works are the product of salvation. They are not the cause (the source) of your salvation.

So, it is amazing how Satan has very simply turned it around. Instead of good works being the fruit of the tree, good works become the root of the tree. And unless you know something from the Bible, that seems very reasonable to you. That's the natural way for man to think: "I have to prove myself worthy to God, and then He will accept me."

Christians' bear spiritual fruit also at various levels of productivity, as they function on the marvelous mind of Christ, as Jesus pointed out in the parable of the sower and the soil. Some are 30-fold; some are 60-fold; and, some are 100-fold. Christian's produce at different levels for various reasons, but they do produce fruit. They cannot produce divine good fruit until they're Christians.

Then, continuing in Colossians 1:10, the next thing that constitutes a God-pleasing life, along with bearing the fruit of good works, is "increasing in the knowledge of God." The word "increasing" is an agricultural word. It's the Greek word "auxano" (owx-an'-o), A U X A N O. "Auxano" simply means to grow. The Christians please God the Father by personal growth in some respect. The grammar indicates that this is a continual activity on the part of the Christian. And because it is continual, it indicates that it is intensive. When a plant is growing, it's in an intensive stage. When it is not growing, we say that it is in a dormant stage. Well, this is in present tense. It means that it is intensive and ongoing, in some kind of growth. And it is in the passive voice which tells us that something else causes the growth. You don't cause it. You cannot cause this kind of spiritual development in yourself.

Here's a spiritual principle. But this increasing (this growing) is a divine requirement for all Christians in order to please Jesus Christ. Specifically, the growing is in knowledge. And here we come back to that critical word that we've been teaching you: the word "epignosis" E P I G N O S I S. This means more than knowledge. It means real knowledge or full knowledge. We walked you through the 20 times that the Bible uses this in the New Testament. It has a dramatically different meaning when this word pops up.

So, here we're talking about full knowledge, or real knowledge. What is this referring to? Well, as we've shown you, this refers to Bible doctrine truth which you have learned, but you've also said "Amen" to it. You've believed it. Therefore, it has been stored in your human spirit reservoir as your reservoir of divine viewpoint truth. It is not enough to go to Sunday school and learn the Bible. Plenty of people have done that for years. It is not enough to attend church and learn the Scriptures. Plenty of people have done that for years. But they've sat there with mental reservations. They've sat there with doubts. They've held back. Therefore, that Word means nothing to them. It's useless. It is a seed which has not germinated.

However, once you are positive to the instruction of the Word of God, then it is transformed from plain "gnosis" (gno'-sis) information to full "epignosis" (ep-ig'-no-sis) – the impact of the Word of God which now takes hold of the believer. That's the difference. This is a knowledge in which the knower is personally impacted by what he has learned. It controls the soul of a Christian. Many Christians know a lot of the Word of God that does not control their souls. They know a great deal of what they ought to be, but they're not, because they choose to ignore the Word of God.

This is a knowledge in which the knower is personally impacted. This knowledge you'll learn from the pastor-teacher, fundamentally in the local church ministry. This is the knowledge which your perceptive mind receives when you take it by an act of faith as the Word of God, as being true. Then it is stored in that human spirit reservoir. And there the Holy Spirit can use it to guide your decision-making from your directive mind. Plain intellectual knowledge, in other words, becomes full spiritual knowledge which will impact the believer. The hearer of doctrine becomes the doer of it.

So, what's the nutrient that causes spiritual growth? It says that Christ is going to be honored and pleased, and we will show ourselves worthy if we increase (if we grow) in the knowledge of God. How do we grow? We grow through the full knowledge of doctrine. Those who are denied that kind of instruction, they're never going to grow spiritually. Are they going to be nice people? Yes. Are they going to go to church on Sunday? Yes. Are they going to hang around with the other Christians, and greet one another at the end of the service, and smile, and say nice things? Yes. Are they going to go to heaven? Yes. Are they going to be enriched at the Judgment Seat of Christ? No. That's where they're going to lose it. But you can go through all the pretenses, and you can go through all the externals, but if you are denied the knowledge of doctrine, you're denied everything.

It is so sad that this is usually the case in churches. I went by my favorite church sign this week, and there's the Scripture up there. One nice thing about my sermons is that I don't know what Scripture I'm going to preach on until Mrs. Danish types up the sermon for me Saturday night, and I get to see what's going on the next day. But one nice thing is that, if you've been in a ministry, and you go to another church, you get all those sermons. I mean here are 50,000 sermons ready to go. You could know a week ahead what you're going to speak on. And then they put it up on the sign with lights flashing. I'm dreaming about doing that. You can buy them at Sam's – one of these big signs with flashing lights around. We could move it around the campus.

Anyhow, every week there's a Scripture. And it has nothing to do with the Scripture the week before. It's not like they're going to go on to three verses this week, and the next three verses next week. There is no continuity. I know that those people walk in there, and they sit there. They open their Bibles. They don't know where they are going to go unless they looked at the sign. And all they're going to see is some verse like John 3:16. That's it. Or Ephesians 2:8-9. It's going to be some verse like that. Whatever the verse is, it's going to be to preach the gospel. And all those folks sit there in church, and they're listening to the gospel preached. And some people think it's terrible because we point that out.

Well, we point that out because what is terrible is that those people are being robbed of the mind of Christ. That's what's terrible. You will not get the mind of Christ from listening to the gospel every Sunday that you've already be believed. You've got that part of His mind. What you need is what Paul called "the full counsel of the Word of God." Now, the Christian who does not have this kind of full knowledge is never going to make it in the Christian life. He is going to be very shallow. And he is not going to go out to a very great enriched eternity. And I'll guarantee you they're not going to have much of a throne in the Millennial Kingdom. They're not going to have much of a domain over which to reign in the Millennial Kingdom. And don't forget that that's what's in store for each one of you, men and women alike. You will have an area (a domain) in the kingdom. That's why, in Revelation, we found that there were thrones that were in heaven awaiting to be filled.

Now, the reason this is so important is that this full knowledge is of God. This full knowledge is God's knowledge. The full knowledge which transforms comes from God the Father through the Bible. And if the Bible is not explained to people on a verse-by-verse systematic basis, they're never going to get it.

Paul prays, therefore, that the Colossian Christians would please God their Father by increasing daily in their full knowledge of doctrine which comes from God through the Scriptures – positive volition to a pastor-teacher's instruction, who is doing his job; and, where, as good Bereans, you have looked at the Scripture, and you have said, "Yes, that's what that's saying. That is true. He's not making that up. That's not his opinion. He has even explained to us the very nuances of the original words behind our translation. So, we know that this is what is the truth."

Positive volition to that instruction causes that truth automatically to be stored within your spirit as positive full knowledge. And that's why it is in the passive voice. You can't stick it there yourself. Only God can place it there as the result of your being receptive to it.

What the apostle Paul wants is to see this growth in full knowledge in order that the Colossians may reach the prime of their spiritual lives at super grace. And you can imagine the impact that they will be on their society then. A believer therefore must regularly feed on the word of doctrine to expand and strengthen his reservoir of full knowledge truth. This is the reason for attending expository church services. It is vital to your survival in the devil's world. And once people know this, they won't go anywhere else, especially if they reject it. If they reject expository instruction, they'll leave that, but generally they won't go anywhere else. They'll sit around, and they'll float into a deeper and deeper pit that they're digging for themselves, because they have known better.

What's going to get you through your week? People are always saying, I need to go to church so that I can get something to help me through my week. What you need to get through your week is the mind of Christ. That's what gets you through the week. And if you don't have the mind of Christ, it's because someone has not taught you that mind, which is contained in the doctrines of Scripture. That's why an expository type of preaching service is critical to your survival in the today in the devil's world.

So, we're talking about the life which is worthy of Christ. A godly Christian life is the product of full knowledge doctrine functioning in the spirit-led believer.

A church down the road here from us has a sign up that says, "The Spirit-Filled Church." That's wonderful. Every Christian in that church is Spirit-Filled. The word "Spirit-Filled" in Scripture means that they're all controlled by the Holy Spirit. Does anybody want to take any bets? I am checking those people out, one-by-one this week. It's a meaningless term, but I know what they mean by it. They mean, "We have drums," and we will bongo play with the music. It means that here we have loose-joined people in the armpits. They use lots of deodorant, and they hold their hands up in the air to worship God. They're carried away on an emotional binge. That's what they mean by Spirit-Filled. But the last thing on earth that they have is the Spirit of God and the mind of Christ.

It is the duty of every Christian to see to it that he is capable of a life which is worthy of Christ – not a nonsense that covers it up and leads him away from Christ. But you know what the news media does every time it wants to shoot down people who believe in the Bible. What kind of a service do they shoot? The guys who've got their hands waving up in the air, or the guys who are swaying in the aisles, or the people who are falling over. That happens every time. They never come in and say, "Here's a group of people whose minds are being enlightened by the Spirit of God." And when you meet them, their eyes are a little shinier. They're a little clearer. And their bearing is a little nobler. And they walk a little more king- and queen-like because they have been ennobled in their royalty.

A godly Christian life is the product of the knowledge of doctrine. With this kind of full knowledge, and out of temporal fellowship, the Spirit of God has been short-circuited. The spiritual maturity structure doesn't work. A carnal Christian is not able to resist, then, the sin nature; the world; or, the devil, and he does evil, because he's now operating on the mind of Satan. The purpose of full knowledge in operation is godly conduct. That's the whole purpose of this – just to do right. Since every Christian is called upon to live worthy of Jesus Christ, His Lord, every believer has the right to full knowledge instruction. That's what makes a worthy life possible. God the Father has provided that through the grace system of perception, that you know so well. For this system to work, the pastor-teacher has to do his job of expository preaching, and that's very hard. That's very hard.

One lady one time came up and said, "I've been listening to this. How in the world can you get up in a service and preach the way you do? And all you've had was a week to get ready to do that." She said, "If everything you said was written down, it would be a term paper at college. And the research to be able to bring all that together is so inordinate as to be mind-boggling to have that." And yet that is exactly what the people of God are entitled to. Well, how do you produce a term paper? Well, you keep shuffling the sheets of paper around, and then, the night before, you sit down and prepare a term paper. No, you won't make it that way. It is not only years of training, but it is constantly staying on top of the Word of God, and constantly being alerted. Your mind actually is constantly carrying out little cards, so that when a divine thought pops into your mind, you start driving with your hands off the wheel, and you start writing this inspirational thought, because something has clicked, and a connection has been made for some reason – something you saw on the highway, or something that came to your mind. And it is all week long that you're putting it together. And finally the Word of God, and the explanation after a lot of hours of intensive preparation, is ready for the people of God to have.

It is a banquet. Yes, it is a spiritual banquet. And that's what it should be every service. That's the right of the people of God. And that's what God has called the pastor-teacher to do: explain the Word, and preach the Word. Now most Christians, obviously, cannot live a worthy life of fruit-bearing and of learning doctrine, because they're simply denied that kind of instruction.

Christians are to so live before all mankind as to bring honor to Jesus Christ through their good works and their godly conduct. The Christian is to be pleasing to Jesus Christ in all that he thinks and all that he does. We are not perfect. We have a sin nature. And when we start thinking wrong, we say, "Whoop, out of bounds. Time out. I don't do that." You change that pattern of thought. Conduct on the spur of the moment – "Oops, out of bounds. That's not godly conduct. Time out." We change the plan. And we constantly revise what we think and what we do so that we are pleasing the Lord, and thus proving ourselves worthy. You betcha we want to prove ourselves worthy. That's exactly what it tells us to do – to balance our integrity over against His, and to prove ourselves worthy to be entrusted with all kinds of great honors, and great authority, and great responsibilities, and great blessings in the Millennial Kingdom.

Some of you people are going to be really surprised at what a prominent place you're going to be playing in the Millennial Kingdom, in contrast to the sorry state of those who end up in the tribulation. The whole realm of the believer is a realm of great opportunity. And you're going to be some kind of person that maybe nobody even thinks a great deal of, and considers you an impact on life here in the service. You come in; you do things; you serve the Lord; and, you're a terrific person, but you're kind of a quiet person. But boy, are you open to the Word of God. You listen and you say "Amen." I guarantee you that God's going to give you the nod and say, "Come over here. I want you to be My administrator over this part of My earth. This is your throne. This is your domain. Now I want you to take everything you've learned at Berean Church, and you're going to start adding to it. Take charge, buddy." Do not sell yourself short. It is the Word of God, and the Word of God, and the Word of God. That is our life.

Christians are to live so that God is honored. And the Lord is to be pleased in all we think and do because we are constantly revising. Find out through Scripture what pleases the Lord, and do it. Don't be guided by what the world approves. That is the kiss of death. If you are not guided by what the world approves, but what the Lord approves, you won't be out there jiggling and jumping into the La Macarena at the pep rally. You'll have a second thought. You'll say, "Not for me. I step aside from that." And when you start stepping aside from things of the world, and things of your peer group, that's the first sign that you have become a very noble person in Christ.

**12-Year-Old Jesus**

Here's a great example of what it is to have the knowledge of the Word of God, and therefore, to serve God in a worthy way, and to live in a way that is honoring to the Heavenly Father. Turn to the book of Luke 2:49. The circumstance surrounding this verse is that Jesus has reached the age of 12. He's a precious little junior age boy, and He has now been taken by His parents this year to Jerusalem to observe the Passover celebration. This took eight days of celebration. And after the eight-day feast, which is a combination of the Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (the Passover, one day; and, the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, seven days). Eight days have passed. And the family packs up and begins to make their journey back to Nazareth. Jesus, as in the freedom of the time, was with his with companions and with his friends. He was a normal kid, and He knew other families. So, the caravan starts back. And His parents assume that He has dropped in with one of the family friends, and that He is traveling with them someplace in the caravan.

At the end of the day's travel, however, Mary and Joseph discover that Jesus is not anywhere in the caravan. So, they immediately, with a great deal of concern, turn around and go back to Jerusalem. And by the time they get back, of course, it's very late, so they can't do anything. So, it takes the next day that they're searching for Him. And they search for Him for a whole day, and finally on the third day since they left, they locate Him in the temple. And, of all things, He's sitting there: this 12 year-old-boy – picture this in your mind, surrounded by the theologians (the rabbis) – the guys who know the Old Testament Scriptures backwards and forward, and all the things about it. This is all they do. They spend their lives studying the Scriptures. And here Jesus is sitting here (this Child), and they're discussing things with this Child. And Mary comes up to Jesus when they spot Him. And in Luke 2:48-49, "They were astonished. His mother said to him, 'Son, why have you treated us this way? Behold, your father and I have been anxiously looking for you."

Then Jesus asked this very significant question that you and I must ask ourselves: "He said to them, why is it that you were looking for me? Did you not know that I had to be about My Father's things?" That's the literal translation. The King James puts it beautifully. That version says: "About My Father's business? Did you not know that I had to be about My Father's affairs (My Father's things)?"

Here's the implication of the question. Jesus was not being impertinent to His parents, but He was raising a point of logic. We know He was not being impertinent. This struck Mary. Luke 2:51 says, "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them. And His mother treasured all these things in her heart." He was not an impertinent child. He did not do something wrong. He was acting in full propriety when he asked this question. Jesus had been brought to Jerusalem to engage in what? The spiritual experience of the Passover. And he was doing that far beyond the rituals of the Mosaic Law. That's what was amazing. How could He do that? Because He had a deep knowledge of doctrine. He was filled with "epignosis" doctrinal truth. And He wasn't born with this. He had to learn it like anybody else. But His parents were very faithful in teaching Him these principles, and alerting Him how to apply it, and not allowing Himself to be put in positions where He could compromise Himself in any way. He was filled with the full knowledge "epignosis" of God, so that He was capable of showing Himself to these rabbis as being worthy of God His Father.

Jesus viewed His knowledge of the Word as placing upon Him a special responsibility. He declared that He had to be in His Father's house, the temple, doing His Father's business. What was his Father's business? Propagating the Word of God, because that's exactly what He was doing. Jesus, at 12 years of age, was aware of His mission of being a communicator of divine viewpoint truth to His day, as all of us are to ours. Jesus had spent the day clarifying Scriptures, and the people to whom He spoke were all amazed at His insights.

Notice Luke 2:47: "All who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers, because (Luke 2:46:): "It came about that, after three days, they found him sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions." This boy would listen to the rabbis, and then He would ask questions. And they would look at one another and say, "How could this Kid be so discerning? He's gone to the heart of some deep significant point.

Christ was filled with the "epignosis" knowledge of God. That's where it all began. Now, he was going to prove by His life that He could live worthy of His Father in heaven, in both how He lived and how He served. Jesus declared that He had to center His life on doing the Father's will for Him. And that began with His knowledge of the word. The revelations to Mary and Joseph about the nature and the mission of Jesus at His birth should have prepared them for the fact that, when He is moving on toward His bar mitzvah, at age 13, where He is going to become a Son of the Law, that this is exactly the direction that He would take. He would become a student of the Word of God with great intensity.

When I was in Israel at the Wailing Wall, a bar mitzvah was taking place. And the crowd came by, and there was a great deal of happiness, and this boy was carrying the Torah – the Law: the first five books of Moses. And it was a big scroll. And he's walking along carrying this Torah, and just smiling with his cap on his head, and he is just rejoicing over the fact that now he has become a son of the Law. And I thought, boy, you've become a son of a Law which will condemn you to the lake of fire. What is in that Law is only to show you how bad you are. But for you to become a son of God, it's going to take someone who has some information – more than you can give.

That was the occasion when I stood there, and a big Jewish man came up to me and said, "What is your name?" And I said, "My name is Johan Ben Danish (Johan, son of Danish". And he put his hand on my head, and he started saying a blessing. Did he have a blessing from God that he could give? I don't think so. His empty blessing on my empty head – without the real God, and without the Spirit of God, and without the relationship to God, you have nothing to pass on. But it made a good movie scene, because I yelled at Mrs. Daniel, "Get the camera rolling." And I stood there very humbly while he pronounced his blessing. But it was all meaningless without the real Word. Without the doctrine of Scripture, it was nothing.

However, here Jesus had to be about His Father's business. And He demonstrated His acceptance by this, of the Father's mission for Him, as His first priority in life. Whatever else He was going to do, with all of his soul, the boy Jesus already devoted Himself to working all temporal things to the end of dying on the cross. His mission became His life. But how could it be fulfilled? With the full knowledge of the Word of God that He bowled the rabbis over with, of His grasp and insight of Scripture.

As He grew to manhood, He matured, and He was perfect in all respects. Luke 2:52 said, "And He went down with them. Jesus kept increasing in wisdom, intellectually; in stature, in His physical development; in favor with God, spiritually; and, in favor with man, socially." He was not a rebel against biblical instruction that He had received. He used it to walk with God. He wasn't trying to imitate the other kids who were rebels. As a young adult, Jesus was sensitive to the presence and the reality of the Heavenly Father in His life. And that's how He lived. He always lived in the fact that He was in His presence. He was never in a room by Himself. He was never away where no one could see Him. He was always in the presence of His Heavenly Father.

The human family of Jesus was broadened to include all, who like Himself (He said), "Pursue the will of God." And that is also the truth with us. Jesus said, "Who is My family? It is you people, who honor the Word of God. You are my true relatives. You are the true family that I must care for, and that I must be concerned for. Jesus was not indifferent, and He was not negligent of His earthly families, as we know. He made provision for them, but God came first. And the goal of Jesus was that which was expressed in Psalms 23:6. From His boyhood on, the goal of His life was Psalm 23:6: "Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow Me all the days of My life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." He wanted to prove Himself worthy so that He would have His Father's blessings. So, he was true to His mission, right to the end of His life. This is the believer's duty today. The will and the plan of our Heavenly Father is to be our top priority in life. That is our cross. Our closest earthly ties will be with fellow believers who are engaged in the day-by-day angelic conflict with us. The spiritual family is to be supported. We're to care for each other. We're to comfort each other. We're to love each other as those who are of the household of faith.

Paul pointed that out to us in the book of Galatians 6:10, when he specifically made this point: "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." And this is especially true for those who are part of Berean Memorial Church (BMC). God's work is the family's business. And we're all part of it. You carry your share without somebody having to prod you. You're to be loyal to the members of your family. You don't slander one another. You don't envy one another. You do all for the Lord's glory. And you walk in holiness that is befitting those of us who are members of the body of Christ, so that you don't disgrace us, or you don't disgrace (more importantly) the Lord, because people are watching. We live with a society of unbelievers who are operating on the mind of Satan. We are separated unto God with the mind of Christ. So, we follow totally different guidelines. Doing our Heaven's Father's business in society means that we act as ambassadors communicating the truth. We know the Word, and we tell the Word. We live now in preparation for facing our Heavenly Father, and having our life priorities reviewed at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). We're all going to stand there. That's what we're living in the face of.

So, when you're tempted to cut out of a spiritual ministry, or when you're tempted not to be on hand when it's time for you to be here in some activity of the Lord, think twice. You may have noticed that I've been using the term that when people make the choices to absent themselves, it is because they've been told by God not to be here. It is the will of God. If you can't say "Yes, it is the will of God for me not to perform; not to be here; not to be on deck; and, not to be responsive, then it's okay. But you better be sure it is the will of God. That's what Jesus made the center anchor point of His life. All earthly relationships are temporary. All those fun and games are temporary. But your relationship to the Heavenly Father – that's eternal.

Revelation 14:13 is indeed true, and we close on this note: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write: blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.'" This is indeed a true doctrinal statement. But how much blessed forever are those who live all their lives in doing the Father's business. These are blessed martyrs. Well, they have been blessed. "'Write: blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on (those who are believers). Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.'"

The Lord Jesus Christ took all of His deeds with Him from His childhood on. He knew the Word. He lived by the Word. And He proved Himself worthy of His Father by serving in accordance with that Word. That is our pattern. That is our role.

Father, we thank You for this, Your Word, and for this example, and may we emulate the Savior. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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