***Everyone is Important

Colossians 1:15-20

COL-130***

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Our subject is "Hymn in Honor of Christ," number 20 in Colossians 1:15-20.

The natural state of our souls is one of confusion, as human beings, until the Word of God (the Bible) brings us to spiritual sanity. There's nothing, nothing, nothing in the world except the Word of God that transforms a human being into a normal person. Up to that point, you are abnormal. To the degree that you do not know the Word of God, the basic principles of doctrine, you are abnormal. To the degree that you have them, you have normalcy. What you do with that is something else. When we neglect the learning of doctrine, that leaves us victims to the many poisons that the sin nature feeds up to us in our spiritual lives.

The lives of Christians today bear many sorrows and confusions because they stopped learning and responding with positive volition to the Word of God. Many Christians never get a chance to learn the Word of God. They go to church, and it's nonsense. It's froth. It's show. It's showmanship. It's some preacher who has a bunch of one-liners, and makes everybody laugh, and they all go home feeling good. Jack Benny used to do the same thing, and Sid Caesar even better. But it never led anybody one step closer to a walk with God, or to a realization of becoming a real man and a real woman in the person of Jesus Christ.

I cannot emphasize enough to you the glorious age in which we live – the age of the church. This is the age when doctrine is par excellence in availability to us – the full revelation of God is upon us. I'll guarantee you that everything in your body physically, and everything in your soul spiritually at this very moment, and everything in your mentality right now is working against you taking in the Word of God. Every single distraction that is possible will be brought to you so that your mind is drifting off someplace else. The devil hates the Word of God. He does not like to hear God speaking to people. Worse yet, he does not like to see people listening to God. And even worse, he does not like to see people obeying the Word of God.

**The Church**

One great doctrine which is at issue today is that dealing with a special group of people that the body calls "the church," the body of Christ. You and I have a great deal personally at stake in understanding this truth. When Paul greeted the Colossian Christians in Colossians 1:2, he greeted them as those who lived in the city of Colossae. And in Colossians 1:18, he greeted them as those who were the body of Christ. Therein you have two parts of the church – the local expression based upon the universal body of Christ. God is forming today the church from among Jews and gentiles. It began at Pentecost. It will end with the rapture of the church when we are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The church was never revealed in the Old Testament, though as we will, in time, see, there were many gaps left in the prophetic progression such that they didn't know why this hole was here. The prophets didn't understand why this hole was here until God said, "I'm going to form another group of people from all the people over all the nations of the world: from Jews and Gentiles alike, and they're going to form a very special group to My Son Jesus Christ. They'll be to Him like a bride is to her husband. There will be no other people on the face of the earth this close to God, and they will actually reign with him in His Millennial Kingdom. That is what you and I are part of in the church. And we fit into that gap which was left repeatedly in Old Testament revelation.

The church is a unique body of believers in God's plan of the ages, and it has unique privileges. In time, we will detail those privileges to you that nobody has ever enjoyed before. The sad thing is that most Christians don't know what the privileges are. And worse yet, a lot of them don't bother living by them. They don't bother realizing what advantage they have in being able to live life where God is actually there with His hand in your back, very gently moving – that intuitive thought. And I remind you again when you are steeped in doctrine, and you're walking in temporal fellowship, God is going to put the thought in your mind; He's going to put the warning; He's going to put the guidepost; He's going to put the guidelines; and, He's going to put the pointing finger. Don't ignore it. I'm still learning that lesson. When He speaks, and when He calls your attention to something, act accordingly. This is what is meant by the power of the direct leading of the Holy Spirit. No, you won't hear voices. No, you won't see visions. You won't see any of that fake nonsense that Satan has thrown up, but you will see the truth.

I had a taper who called me. I wasn't there. They left their number. I called them back. He was at his office. He said, "Dr. Danish, can I put you on the speaker phone?" He had another friend, and we must have spent 30 or 45 minutes with these men's probing questions. They were on tapes. They're both from a charismatic background, and the confusion that is there is now horrendous to them because they finally got instruction in the Word. They know what God thinks, and what the truth is. And they're so open and so positive. It was really sad to me to sit there, and thinking that Sunday morning, I'm going to go to church, and there'll be all kinds of seats that are empty. People don't realize the great honor and the great privilege of being part of the body of Christ. So, when a church service is run, they don't mind being someplace else. They can't wait to find something else to do with their lives. And the time will come when they will look at themselves from the other end, and say, "What a fool I was! What a fool! I stayed at home for some stupid triviality when I could have been in the presence of God, and reinforcing that intuitive leading of God.

People in these empty seats, I guarantee you, are not enjoying the intuitive leading of God. He doesn't lead people who aren't fed and oriented to His thinking.

So, we are a unique group. And God has a distinct plan for us, with unique privileges. God's purpose today is that every Christian should learn to obey everything that the Lord has commanded for the church-age believer. You're not going to find that in the Old Testament. And that's what these two men, as they talked back and forth to me in that conversation were asking. I could tell that they were in some kind of a group where legalism was constantly being pulled in from the Old Testament and imposed on Christians. And they realized now how oppressive that is, and how it is man trying to become spiritual, rather than letting the Spirit of God do it. In heaven's name, we had all the generations under Israel when nobody really got spiritual. They couldn't make it.

Paul said, "No matter how you try, you won't make it with the Law." And in Romans 7:24, he agonizes: "Well, what am I going to do – this helpless, hopeless creature I am. When I want to do right, I do wrong. What am I going to do?" And then in Romans 8, he says, "By the power of the Spirit of God, and he goes into that magnificent song of victory in Christ and the power of the Spirit of God leading me through the principles of doctrine. I am a victor over the sin nature. I'm no longer some stupid little helpless victim of the devil. And I get more and more impatient, as indeed we should not be, with Christians who know better and don't do right. It is so stupid. It is so sad. It is so disgusting.

I had a little brief conversation with a father in the office yesterday, who happened to walk in on a Saturday. And I had an opportunity to say a few things to him that I thought he needed to be on guard against in dealing with his own youngster, and he blew it off. There was no point of contact that I could even reach him. He just blew it off, because what he was doing was so much kicks for him that he thought that this must be right. The devil is a liar, and he's extremely capable of deceiving you. What protection do you have sitting in these chairs? That's what you have. People who sit in these chairs in these services are not fools.

Now, it is bad enough for an individual to do that and to starve himself spiritually, but just think of the poor kids who live in families where their parents aren't even in church, and where their parents aren't being fed upon the Word of God. And just think of the poor kids who have arrogant parents, who think they know something about God because they're religious. The main purpose of God today is for you to come to a deep understanding of what the Bible calls "the mind of Christ – thinking the way God thinks. You're not going to get that by experience. You're not going to get that by emotion. You're going to get that by the hard, cold facts of doctrine. When you know the Word of God, you are no man's fool.

So, we as Christians are called to live for God. As a matter of fact, you and I have a very specific divine appointment. In 1 Corinthians 12, we have a great deal of discussion in that whole chapter about the work of the Holy Spirit and the lives of believers, and about certain spiritual abilities that God gives you at the point of your salvation. And in 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, God says, "For even as the body is one (the physical body) and yet has many parts (many members); and, all the members of the body, though they are many are one body. So also is Christ." That's the principle that Paul has just laid out in Colossians 1:18: "the body of Christ, the church:" "For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free. And we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one, but many members."

The moment you were saved, and the moment you accepted Christ as your personal Savior, you received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit immediately placed you into the body of Christ, and you can never be removed because this has been entirely a work of God, and man has no part in it. All you do is accept.

Now, what he does in the rest of this chapter, he points out that no part of your physical body is unimportant, because every part of the physical body has a marvelous function. This is one of the reasons we know that nothing could be more ludicrous than the idea of evolution, because you could not get all these pieces that constitute the physical body working so intricately together in a coordinated way until all the pieces were there at one time. And the only way you can get all the pieces there at one time is by an act of divine creation. And that's exactly the way it happened.

**Everyone is Important**

So, God has put the body together, and everything is important. That's why when we have somebody within this local body, which is part of the expression of the universal body of Christ, who's not sitting in these chairs, and who's not on target with the work of God, then we get hurt as a local body. I suggest to you once more: think back a year ago. Think back of how many people in your association were once active with you in the work of God. Now they're no longer here. Now they're no longer functioning in the work of God. Now they're off in some goony land of religion, debasing themselves; degrading themselves; and, not rising to what they should be. How can that happen? Sadly, for many of these, it's not because they don't know better. It is because they became careless. They became indifferent about one simple little thing. And I've been keeping an accurate record of this, because I want to see the cause and effect. And it is people who have absented themselves from the church service. They are not here. They're not in fellowship. They do everything they can possibly do to get out of here – young people and adults alike. And when I see that, the red flag goes up, and I see a Christian, whether he's a youth or an adult, who's on his way into big trouble.

It is not a simple thing to stay away from the teaching of the Word of God. And that's why the book of Hebrews says, "Don't ever do that:" "Don't ever neglect the assembly of yourselves together. Don't ever get up on Sunday morning, look out the window and say, "Well, I think I'll stay home today." Don't ever, on Sunday night say, "Oh hey, I think we need to get this program. I need to watch this program. Nobody has that excuse with VCRs anymore. In fact, I don't know how anybody watches television without a VCR. Unless you record it first, you may be selective, so you can do it when you want to. Otherwise, it's a degrading, debasing personal experience usually. People say, "Yeah, well, we'll go. No, we won't go." Just remember that God is standing there. Christ is in you, and He's listening to this conversation. And the Spirit of God looks at Jesus, and Jesus looks at him and says, what's going on here such that they should even be discussing this, or that they should have some trivializing thing. And remember, you may not feel too good sometime. I haven't felt well in 40 years. When I was a kid, I would come, and people would say, "There comes good old John." Well, I was not neither old and I wasn't feeling very good either. Most of the world's work is done by people don't feel too good

You know that you don't treat your employer that way. And you know that you don't treat your income that way. And yet, when it comes to feeding your soul, you can be that negligent? Why is it that these people in our tape ministry have a constant stream of tapes to put out? Because somebody out there, like those two men in that office, who carried on that conversation with me yesterday, grabbed hold of the fact that they got a tape with the Word of God upon it, and all of a sudden, God became real, and Scripture plain, and they knew what to do. And from then on, they were thirsty.

Jesus said here in 1 Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, Jews or gentiles, slaves or free. And we're all made to drink of one Spirit. We're all filled by one Holy Spirit. But remember, while the baptism of the Spirit is one (one time only), the filling of the Holy Spirit is all the time, because the word "filling" means "control." The word "filling" means: "I have my sins confessed. The Spirit of God is running my life. I'm getting his intuitive signals." You will not have that if you absent yourself from the regular instruction in the Word of God.

So, you want to be sure, when you don't feel too well, or you're kind of worn out, whether you're ready to exchange not feeling too well spiritually and wearing out your spiritual life for making the effort. If you do not, in time, the devil will peel you right off, and you'll be gone.

Romans 12: we are appointed to a mission of service. Romans 12:3: "For through the grace given to me, I say to every man among you." Now if you buy the New International Version of the Bible, you won't have this sexist talk: "man." God the Holy Spirit put the word "man" in there in the original, but they're taking it out. It would read: "For through the grace of God given to me, I say to every human among you." Isn't that going to be better? I know a lot of men who aren't human, not even humanoid. How dumb can you get?

Note: When several revisions to the popular New International Version (1984) appeared to employ gender-neutral language, for example, Southern Baptists condemned the translation by name and chastised its publishers. A 2011 resolution even instructed LifeWay to cease selling the translation in its stores.

Well, you're going to be getting it. Zondervan is going to be pitching it. They're selling it all over England like crazy – the non-sexist NIV edition of the Bible. And you'll get it, and you might be stupid enough to go in and buy it and say, "Yeah, I'll be glad to have the paraphrased words of men rather than the exact words of the Spirit of God.

Well, Paul says, "For though the grace given to me, I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." Sound judgment because you have faith. Faith in what? Faith in the Word of God. How can you have faith in something you don't know?

So, we're back to: "Stop leaving the seats empty. Keep your chair filled." Otherwise, you won't know the Word of God, and you have nothing to put faith in except yourself, and your sin nature.

**Spiritual Gifts**

Romans 12:3-8, "For just as we have many members in one body, and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us." We have nine spiritual gifts now in operational function. There used to be more, but when those served their purpose, they were discontinued: speaking in languages; the word of knowledge; gifts of healing; and, so on: "Let each exercise his gift accordingly. If prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches in his teaching, or he who exhorts in his exhortation, or he who gives with liberality, and he who leads with diligent, and he who shows mercy with cheerfulness." Here's a list of some of these operational spiritual gifts.

Now, we have spoken before on what these gifts specifically identify – the nature of these gifts, and how you may identify what you have a knack for doing. Now, I'll tell you one of the best ways to know that you have a spiritual gift is that other people say, "You have that gift." That is one of the keenest things: "You have the gift to mercy. You have the gift of teaching. You have the gift of faith. We ride with you on your confidence. You have the gift of giving, because we see your liberality. All these things that are evidence to others, let alone to your own personal conviction. And when you know what you can do, what you have the ability and the means to do, then do it.

As each part of the human body has a specific function, so too does each Christian in the body of Christ. A believer's function in the body is determined by his spiritual gift which was sovereignly bestowed by the Holy Spirit at salvation. You cannot, as the Charismatics like to say, "Pray for a gift." No, no, no. You're born with it. I guarantee you that I could pray myself blue in the face that I could sit down and tickle the ivories like Joyce Wallace does. And that prayer will never be answered. I'm going to keep praying for it, but it'll never be answered. She was born with it, along with many other things that weren't so good, but that's a good thing. She was born with it. And man, that is great.

You know that you have certain things – you just have a knack for doing this. I can just do this. And this is where the gift of ministering comes in. The gift of ministering takes all those natural abilities you have: "Man, I'm a good carpenter. I'm a good this. I'm a good that. I'm a good singer. I'm a good musician. I'm a good administrator." Those aren't spiritual gifts, though there are spiritual gifts of administration. But you have all kinds of natural abilities. Those are not spiritual gifts. But when you take them, and put them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the gift of ministering takes over. That's why I believe every Christian has the gift of ministering. Every Christian has a gift of serving God with natural gifts, and in specific spiritual abilities. But in any case, it's the Spirit of God that has to give us the gifts.

Romans 12:11: "Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as depends on you, be at peace with all men." God has sovereignly bestowed the gift. You use it. Don't get sidetracked with all kinds of nonsense.

1 Corinthians 12:11, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually, just as He wills." It is the Spirit of God who gives you your gift. You don't go asking for it. It is what God gives you. You don't decide: "This is what I'd like to do. And this is why we have sometimes have problems with people who want to serve in some area in the local church, and we have some discernment to know that you don't have the gift for doing this. It's a lot of kicks and fun. And it might excite you to do it, very often in youth work: "I want to do it." You don't have the gift for doing this.

We used to have a lady, many years ago, who just wanted to be in the youth work. We had her in the youth work, and the kids hated her. And everything she did made the kids hate her more. She didn't have a knack for dealing with kids. But she was bound and determined that she was going to deal with young people. We have to say, "No, this is not the slot for you."

So, you should take that with kindness in your Christian service, if somebody gives you a signal: "This isn't where you are at your best."

1 Corinthians 12:18 says, "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desires." So, which one of you is important, and which one of you is not important in the body of Christ? There are no stars.

Have you ever lost a fingernail? In seminary, I used to work for a big cotton gin company. And I was in the shipping department, and I had to put these big machines and nail them up with all these wooden crates. And I'm standing in the truck, looking over, and I say, "Now, that board looks a little weak." So, I went down there and I held this nail. Wham! I missed the nail (the metal nail), but I hit the one on my thumb, with a hammer full force. The nail left me. But what's that? Just a nail. There's plenty more of me. There's more today than there was then. But from then on, no matter what I did, that's always touchy – just that nail. If the rest of the body could touch this. Nope, just that nail. Every time I'd hit it, it was excruciating – that sensitivity there, because there's no nail there. It's very sensitive under there. Finally, I had to wrap something around the finger and say, "Now, how do you like that? One little part is important. So, please don't dismiss yourself. And you don't have to be important because we know your name, and because you're in the spotlight, and because you're up front here doing something.

There are a lot of people who are going to be working very low-key in summer camp. And I have to walk around, and I have to keep an eye on all of them. And I'm seeing the behind-the-scene things. They don't even know when I'm watching them. They don't even know when I'm evaluating them in my own mind. They don't even know that I'm standing there looking at them at the docks, and how they relate to this guy and this guy, and this kid and that kid. And some of them, we might not even take a second look at. I'll walk through the kitchen. Those people who are standing there washing the dishes, and doing all that hard work. Or the boys, while I'm sitting at the table doing some of my job, they're in a dining room, and they're sweeping. They don't know I'm evaluating them. Well, I'm looking at them, and seeing what they're doing, and thanking God that they're there, and that all these people are carrying on this job, and knowing that there are other people who could be helping us, but they didn't come. These did. Nobody is unimportant just because nobody's talking about you, or they may not know your name. I guarantee you that you are not unknown in heaven. God the Father is very much aware of you.

**The Judgment Seat of Christ**

So, this is what it is to be part of the church. You're part of a special body, and you're not just out there on your own. All the members of the body are necessary to one another, and all are going to be fairly rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ for exercising their spiritual gift. So, don't think that there's somebody who's in a public eye that everybody knows – that he's going to be more rewarded than you because you're behind the scenes, but you're doing your job. You're coming in, and you're carrying the burden of God's work at some particular point that you're capable of doing it, with the natural abilities under the gift of ministry, and of your spiritual gifts.

It is the learning of Bible doctrine that enables you to learn the ways of God – how God operates. It's not services such that's rewarded. It's your preparation base for service that brings the reward. You have to know the Word of God.

I saw a little part of a program on TV. A young man wanted to go out in the wilds of Alaska all by himself, and he did. He lived there for quite a while. He lived off the land. He shot the animals. He knew something about the vegetation that he could eat. And then when spring came, he had a great success, and he was ready to go home. He had a big, empty bus that he lived in. So, he heads out, and packs up. He's going to trek out now cross the overland route that he came in on. He came to the river that he had to cross, which, when he had come to the place, was just a little stream. Now, in the spring, with the melting snows, it was a raging torrent. And he just put up his tent there, and he stayed there for days trying to figure out: "How can I get across this?" It was very hard to cross a river that is high-speed even if you had something to float on. It is very hard to control it so that you're going to get across to the other bank, and not just go out into the wilderness where you can't trek back.

So, finally decided that he's going to have to wait until subsides. He packed up his gear, and went back to the bus to set up again. Now the food problem became increasingly great. And one of the things he had learned was (I think they call it) an Eskimo potato. It was a long root-like thing, and he knew it was nourishing. And he thought, well, things are desperate. I might as well eat the foliage on top – the green stuff on top. And that's what he didn't know, because on top were berry-like things which were poisonous. They were poisonous in that the fact that once you ingested them, it made a permanent impact that you could not digest any food. And once he had eaten them, because he didn't have the right information, he had a deadly counter-poison to everything nutritious that was coming into his body. And they found him dead. And it was very sad for his mother to sit there in the bunk where he slept, and see his clothes and his things around. Once he'd eaten that top of that plant, the bottom was nourishing but the top was poisonous.

How many Christians are feeding on poisonous doctrine? How many Christians are feeding on poisonous doctrine by getting no instruction at all? That's as bad as the poisonous one. How many think that, because the bottom of the plant is nutritious, they never thought that doctrine can be distorted to become an evil thing, and become a deadly thing? That's where most Christians are. Do you want to know what happens to some Christians? How they go overboard, and they never return? They never seem to get back on? They've eaten the deadly Eskimo potato. They've eaten the wrong part of the food. They've eaten the wrong part of the plant, and their nutrition has turned to death.

So, that's why we have pointed you to Romans 12:1-2 which declare that it is a duty for you as a Christian in this church age. First of all, because of God's mercy of saving you, and making you part of the body of Christ with all the privileges that appertain to the church age as you present your body, with all of its parts, including your brain, as a holy, living sacrifice to God. This is acceptable to Him, and this is an act of spiritual service – an act of worship."

Then in verse 2, Paul points out, "Do not be conformed to this world." That means externally. Do not follow the patterns of the lifestyle of this world. That is so hard for people to do, because the styles of this world – some Christians are so attracted they want to look like the world. But it says, "Be transformed," and this is an internal change. You can't do it. The devil can make himself outside look like an angel light, but inside he's still the devil. But you are not. You're made in the image of Christ. And do this by renewing your mind. Make your mind totally clear. Peel off the scales of human viewpoint. Flood it with God's divine viewpoint through the Word of God. Then you approve what the will of God is for you. Prove ("dokimazo") (dok-im-ad'-zo) that word means "approve." It's a tricky word. In the Greek language, it isn't like I'm going to test and prove that this is this. In the Greek language, it means that you're going to confirm. That's what "prove" here means. I'm going to confirm what is the will of God. Now isn't that great? Here's a way for you to confirm what the will of God is to you. What shall I do? Go here? Go here? Should I do this? Should I do that? What should I do? How should I relate myself to this person? Should I? Should I not?

He will confirm what the will of God is. How? Because when you have doctrine in your mind, you will think like God. So, some lowlife person will come along, and you will think like God. You will recoil from that person. You will not open your arms and say, "Come to me." You will recoil because God recoils. When some person is in an abomination, it'll be an abomination to you. You'll be able to confirm what the will of God is for you. And it will be that which is good, suitable, acceptable (meaning well-pleasing), and perfect (meaning mature."

Now, who does not want to have good ("agathos") (ag-ath-os'), and the Greek word means "beneficial" – who does not want to have what is well-pleasing to God? Who does not want to be a mature Christian instead of a stupid-oso who can be stomped on by anybody, because the world is smarter than you are?

Well, here's the system. Christians of the church age, therefore, are to live every day of their lives for eternity, not for earth. Every day, live your life for eternity, not for this earth. I'm trying to figure out: what can I say to summarize these two verses (Romans 12:1-2), and that's what I've come up with. Every Christian should wake up each morning to live his life for eternity, not for time – not for now. Then life will prove to have been worth living.

Let's close with a few verses to show you what the Bible means, and how true that is. Live every day of your life for eternity, not for earth. Colossians 3:1-2: "If then you have been raised up with Christ (and you have, positionally), keep seeking the things above, where Christ who is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth." Is that what I just said? That's exactly what I said. If you have been raised up with Christ, which you have, through your salvation, and you are in union with Him, then start acting as one who is in Christ. Get your mind thinking on things of eternity because that's what Jesus is thinking about, as He is seated up in heaven at the right hand of Christ. And set your mind on the things above, not on the things of earth. That's your daily life.

2 Corinthians 4:18: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." That's exactly what I just said. Don't live your life by looking at the things which are seen: "I own this. I have this. I have that. I have this. I have my big barn. I have my bigger barn. I have all that I need." God says that's going to go, one way or another. Either it's going to go, or you're going to go. But put your mind on the things that are eternal. Live your life in view of the Judgment seat of Christ, not of what you can accumulate here.

Then there is the gospel of Luke 9:23-25, "And he was saying to them all (that is, Jesus): 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." What is your cross? Well, my lumbago. My aches and pains. My shortage of money. No that is not your cross. Your cross is not your hard times. The cross in this text means your mission for which you were conceived. And every one of you has it. There is where your spiritual gifts come in. There is where your service to God comes in. And when you understand that, that's why your eyes are going to be up there, and not on things down here every day. "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it. (That is the value of your life for rewards.) But whoever loses his life for my sake, he is the one who will save it." The one who uses up his days here on this earth in God's service and for God's purposes, he's the one that's going to have a real life for all eternity: "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world and loses (or forfeits) himself (his life)? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when He comes in his glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels."

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Lord's going to be ashamed of some of us, because our eyes were glued to here instead of to eternity. And I guarantee you that if you leave your seat empty here in church, that's where your eyes are going to be. Just count on it. Don't kid yourself. You're no different than the rest of us. Without nutrition of the Word of God, you're going to take the world to your bosom.

Romans 14:10: "But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ."

2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." This is not for salvation. This is not talking about salvation. We stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ for what we have done." "Good or bad" means whether we have done human good works through the sin nature, or divine good works through the Holy Spirit, when we were in temporal fellowship.

What a beautiful system, you can't lose. All you have to do is learn the Word. To do that, you have to be here, and then you have to be receptive to it; agree to what God says; and, live every day in terms of eternity, not in terms of this life. And that's how you serve.

It'll keep you from trivializing your life. There are so many things that Christians do. If they came to me and said, "Do you think I should be doing this?" I would say, "No, don't do that." I'm smart enough. I'm old enough, I'm experienced enough. I know that they're trivializing their life. Jesus tried to put it like this one time: "Let the dead bury the dead." And we have so many Christians spiritually alive. What they could be doing, and what physical capacity God would give them to do it. But they're out there burying the stupid dead, when there are all kinds of dead unbelievers around who can do that stuff of the world. Our society has many functions, and many things which are of value, and somebody should do them, but not the Christian.

So, what are we saying? Do not just go through life on a treadmill – uselessly running off your allotted lifespan. I always get a great encouragement from Jack Smith when he calls me on the phone, which he does when he can't contain himself anymore; and, when he sends me a letter. I like the way he puts it. When I wake up in the morning, I get myself alert, and I just look up to heaven and say, "Now Sir, what is your mission for me this day?" Now that's having your eyes on the things of eternity. That's looking on the things up there. He's not groveling down here.

It's like the man I heard of one time who was walking along a path, and he found a $5 bill right there on the path. He reached down; picked it up; and, looked it over. It was a real $5 bill. He never saw another sunset. His eyes were always down looking at a path for another $5 bill. Get out of the world system. Let the world carry its own baggage. You're not making that much of an impact. If you think you are, compare it to the impact you would make in the work of the Lord, if that received your capacities, and that received your impact. There were a great deal of things which were done here this morning; which were shown; and, which were heard, that you might pass off as being, "Well, these are the routine things we do in the service." No. People have been impacted in their lives. Their thinking has been oriented to God by the song; by the words; and, by the visuals, and they have been brought to a realization that there is something so great when you walk with the Lord in the light of His Word. You walk with the Lord in the light of His Word.

If you leave your seat empty, you're not going to have the light of the Word, and you're not going to be able to walk with Him. That is ipso facto the case (by that very fact or act: as an inevitable result). That's the way it is.

So, if you're not going to walk through life on a treadmill, uselessly running the years off. And that scares me. I see Christians. They get up, and they're just walking on this stupid treadmill. And where do you get? When I wanted to be certified as a scuba diver because I was a little older, the instructor said, "You have to go take a stress test." And they put me on this treadmill. So, here's this thing walking. And I'm not going anywhere. And I'm walking faster and faster, and doctor is saying, "There, we got your heart up to 200 now. Man, that thing really goes, doesn't it?" And he's saying all those stupid little side remarks about how things are pumping up. And when it was over, I was out of breath. And he found what he wanted to know, and I got nowhere. I was still there – still in that same office, and he charged me for using his treadmill. And I got nowhere. That's how it is.

However, do you know what? I can take my certificate to the instructor, and he says, "Okay, you're in." But that's terrible. Every day of your life, you're working off your allotted time on a treadmill of nothing.

How about this? Make your time; your talents; and, your treasures, a daily investment in eternal rewards as a member of God's royal family.

I close this morning with reading for your careful meditation and heartfelt consideration, the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 6:31-33: "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat; or what shall we drink; or, with what shall we clothe ourselves? For all these things the gentiles eagerly seek, for your heavenly Father knows that you need for all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Now either you believe that, or you don't. Sometimes, especially young people, come to me and say, "I really need a job. I need to do this. I don't know. Should I go to summer camp and work? Or should I stay with my job?" I say, "I'll show you." I take him to this passage and say, "What does it say?" It says, "Do God's work first. Seek ye first the kingdom of God." You're going to get all the money you need for everything you need. And I have yet once to see one who did that, and followed the doctrinal principle, who sure enough, didn't get everything he needed, or she needed, for what they had in mind – putting God first, and letting the world's dead bury its own dead. You stay there with the living people of God. Be conscious of your treasures in heaven.

One of our very kind people recently came by the house for some information. As he walked out the door, he said, "Oh, just a minute. I need to store something in my heavenly treasury." And he pulled out his wallet, and gave me a very generous gift. He said, "Here, take your wife out to dinner." I mean, his gift was so generous – we went to McDonald's several times. And what was he thinking of? His treasures in heaven, and doing a kindness to the preacher. And I think all of you should take a lesson from him. But I thought: "How nice that his mind was on up there." However, the Lord led him to do it, and to express it, his mind was on what was up there. And he stopped, and did it.

Father, we thank you for how much we know, and pray that you'll help us.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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