***A Summary of the Doctrine of the Church

Colossians 1:15-20

COL-144***

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Galatians 5:13-15: "For you were called to freedom, brethren. Only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another, for the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, take care, lest you be consumed by one another. But I say: walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

Ephesians 4:30-32: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom you are sealed for the day of redemption. Let bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scriptures inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the Man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

We direct your attention this morning to Colossians 1:15-20. Our title is "Hymn in Honor of Christ, segment number 34.

We have been studying the doctrine of the church, and this morning, we hopefully will come to a climax and conclusion. I'm very happy that all of you are here today, because there is one particular point I want to emphasize again, relative to what it means to be part of this age, in contrast to ages past, and what it means to be part of the body of Christ, the church.

There is, in the Word of God, a standard of righteousness for personal conduct that is imposed upon all human beings. It's God's standards of absolute rights and absolute wrongs. However, it is impossible by human effort to live up to God's standard of what we should be and what we should do. The Jews under Judaism had the righteous standards of God spelled out to them very clearly under the Mosaic Law. But they, by their most sincere efforts, were simply unable to live up to that standard, which was demanded of them. The apostle Paul, in Romans 8:3-4, refers to that when he says, "For what the Law the Mosaic Law) could not do, weak as it was through the flesh. There's nothing wrong with the law. The problem was the sin nature in man. God did, sending His Own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin – He condemned sin in the flesh. God sent His Own Son. He sent Him as a human being. So, He was like the rest of us, with sinful flesh, but He did not have a sin nature. And He performed that which we could not do.

Verse 4 says, "In order that the requirements of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh (the sin nature), but according to the Spirit." Now, there is a very big doctrinal principle. Never tried to do right on your own. It's not going to work. You will blow it every time. Don't harangue people to do right. Don't harangue your children to do right unless you also accompany it by the means by which that can be done.

The Christians of the church age are called, indeed, to live a life of holiness, but it doesn't stop there. God has provided us with the means to be able to do it. We have within us the power of God the Holy Spirit. And if you understand the relationships, and how the system works, you will discover that there will be something functioning within you, such that, when it comes time for you to say, "Here's the wrong; and, here's the right," you won't even have to think about it. It'll be a no-brainer. You gravitate toward doing the right. And you'll wonder, "What is this in me? It's like some powerful magnet drawing me over here to do what is the right thing, not the wrong thing.

The Christian's life, in contrast to Israel's life, has been changed from a struggle of human effort to do right to a reliance on the Holy Spirit to do the right for us – faith not in this in nature, but faith in the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, the faith was in human doing. The faith was in human capacity. The faith was in what the nature could do. And the sin nature can do what is right, but it cannot do absolute right. In the New Testament, it is faith in God the Holy Spirit to live the godly life through you.

So, the Christian indeed lives a life of holiness by the power of God the Holy Spirit who indwells us, and which the Old Testament Jews never could. We can do it. They never could. That is not because we are any better in any way, but because we have the system of grace. That's what it means to be part of the church age. They did not have the system of grace. They were left on the system of human effort.

The Christian who remains in temporal fellowship will find the Holy Spirit willing in him to do God's will. That's an amazing statement. Philippians 2:13: "For it is God Who is at work in you, both to will, and to work for His good pleasure. God the Holy Spirit says, "This is what I want you to do. This is My will. This is the will of God for you. And now I'm going to do it through you. All you have to do is not stand in the way. All you have to do is say, "OK, Lord, that's the burden on my heart. This is what you have presented me – what needs to be done in Your service. And I'm able to do it. I have the means. I have the capacity. I have the talent. I the time. I'll do it. And the Spirit of God takes over, and He executes the mission. He always does it behind the scenes. The Holy Spirit does not push Himself to the forefront. That is the great mistake of the charismatic movement. But as Jesus was very careful to point out, the Holy Spirit, so to speak, is going to operate behind the scenes – not noticeably out front.

John 16:14: Here, in this context, Jesus Christ is speaking about the Holy Spirit Who has to come, once Jesus has ascended to heaven. In verse 14, Jesus said, "He (the Holy Spirit) shall glorify Me. For he shall take of mine, and shall disclose it to you." You don't know anything about spiritual things until the Holy Spirit teaches you those things. They come from our Lord, but they come via the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. But that Holy Spirit ministry is not going to work.

As you think about this principle – God says, "Do this. This is what's right. This is what's godly. This is what's holy." And then He says, "I'll do it for you." Whoa, what a deal that is. But you have to understand this. There's a basis upon which He will do it for you, or you will quench (the Bible says), or you will grieve (the Bible says), or you will not walk (The Bible says) by means of the Holy Spirit.

When we are saved, we enter an outer circle (a large circle), which is eternal fellowship. That's a relationship with God that never ceases. There's also an inner circle that we immediately enter, which is called "temporal fellowship." This is our daily experience. This is fellowship in time. When we are in this inner circle, we are controlled by the Holy Spirit. That's why we can do the things of godliness and of holiness, and accomplish great spiritual service for God – unbelievable capacities to serve God, and to accomplish things that we didn't think we would even dream of ever doing. I don't care what your age is. Suddenly, you're just a young kid, but you find yourself with a boldness and a courage, when you find yourself in the lion's den of your peers, where evil or false doctrine or heresy is being promoted. And because you're in this inner circle, you don't cringe like some cowardly wimp. But you stand up and say, "I'm sorry, but that's not what the Bible says. And the Bible speaks for God. So, the Bible is right. Here's what it says. You think it's all right to do that, but the Bible says that it's wrong to do that. It's not God's standard. And you'll find that you have the courage to do it. And you find what you're talking about.

Furthermore, when you're under that direction of the Holy Spirit, you'll do like one of our teenagers did last Sunday, in confronting a heretical issue. She wanted to confirm that she had the right slant and the right perspective on this thing. And she wanted more information. So, she pursued it. She knew what she was listening to was wrong, and she wanted help in getting how to deal with it. And we were able to put tapes in her hands for her to get herself oriented. The next time she talks, she's going to be better than most preachers on the on that particular subject.

This is the principle. God says, "I have a standard of being holy just as I am holy." Unless you are in this inner circle, you cannot do it, because you can't live that way. Well, when the Spirit of God is controlling you, you are a spiritual Christian, and you can do it, because He does it. But when you sin, you step out here into this outer circle. Now the sin nature takes control again. You are a carnal Christian, and you can't be the devil.

When was the last time you did some terrible sin? It was because you were in this outer circle, but not in the inner one. When was that last time you denied the Lord in front of your people of the world? It was when you were a carnal Christian. When was the last time that you quenched the Holy Spirit when He said, "I want you to do this. I want you to take this action. I want you to give this thing. I want you to take this move." And you said, "I can't do that. I don't want to give that up. I don't want to do that." You wouldn't have said that if you were in the inner circle. When was the last time you grieved the Holy Spirit, by moving into a sin? And all your life you've been taught: "This is wrong. It's against the standards of God." Yet, you're surrounded by people who say it's all right, and the people who go along with it. So you went along with it. When was the last time you were in a religious context, even supposedly to worship? And you sensed that Jesus Christ, as one lady recently talked to me said, "The music told me that this was not worshipful. The music told me that this was not of God. And I knew that what was going on was the sin nature playing religion. And who is Jesus? A cool cat, and a good old boy. But he was not the God-Man: my lord; my Savior; and, my King.

That is the difference between being spiritual or being carnal. When you are carnal, you produce all kinds of human good works. When you are spiritual, you accomplish the divine good works of God. That's the way to live the godly life. And this is not just some philosophical, theological concept. It's very practical. It works. And I will remind you again, just to be sure you got my point that the Holy Spirit works gently behind the scenes. That means that He leads in a very gentle way. I don't care who you are. I did it again this week – the gentle leading of the Holy Spirit. I had an intuitive thought, and I didn't bother picking up on it and acting on it, so I had to backtrack and fix it, because I ignored that intuitive, behind the scenes, so to speak, leading of the Spirit of God. He is not going to make Himself up front. He is going to make Jesus Christ up front. But when He is there, you'll have the direction, and you'll have the leading. All you have to do is be patient and take your time, and know that to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of the Lord.

So, what we're talking about here in the age of grace is that God always, in Scripture, joins together His required divine standard of conduct with the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, to enable you to do it. The Bible always connects the two. And if you try to do right the way the Jews tried it, by your determination; self-will; and, promises to yourself or to God, it's going to break down. But when you do it by faith, in the Spirit of God, to carry you through, you will be carried through to victory.

It's a choice between you self-effort principal of the Mosaic Law, or the by-faith principle of grace of the church age. I want to walk you through Scriptures. We'll start at John, and we'll go for book-after-book for a little bit. I want to show you how the principle of this is the way you should be, and the Spirit of God will do it for you. John 7:37-39. The background of this passage is the Feast of Tabernacles. It went on for seven days. It was a commemoration of their wilderness wanderings. And one of the things they did every day was that they had a religious processional that went to the Gihon Springs, where a priest would reach in and dip out a dipper of water, and then they would march back to the temple and pour it out upon the altar. This was symbolic of the water that Moses brought out of the rock for them when they were thirsty in the wilderness. And it was symbolic of the coming Messiah, Who, to them, would be the water of life. As they did this, the choir – and there was an official choir. You grew up in a home where you were allotted and appointed to be in the priestly services: the choir group.

They sang a song based on Isaiah 12:3 which says, "Therefore, you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation." They would take those words as a theme, and they would sing, as they walked back with this water symbolically poured back on the altar. That's the background here.

Now, we're on the seventh day, which was the highest day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Verse 37: "On the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying." Now, when Jesus taught in public, it seems that often, in contrast to the rabbis, who said: He stood: "He cried out, saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.'" Thirsty for what? Thirsty for doing what is right: righteousness: "He who believes in Me." Ah: accomplishing through a faith concept – the faith principle: "He believes in Me, as the Scripture said, from His innermost being shall flow rivers of living waters."

Do you want to do what God says is right. Then turn to a power that is within you that will flow as living waters, enabling you to do what we have done symbolically with the water we brought from the well? What does that mean? Verse 39: "This He spoke of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Jesus had pointed out that the Holy Spirit cannot come from heaven to take over, and to indwell you, and to function within you to enable you to do what God wants you to do, until I go back to heaven. When I go to heaven, I will remain here in my omnipresence, but my presence will be in heaven. The Holy Spirit will remain in his omnipresence in heaven, and He will come into His actual presence here on earth to deal with you.

Let's go over to the next book: Acts 1:8: "But you shall receive power." The Lord is about ready to ascend: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you shall be My witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Here is the Christian call to witness – the Christian call to hand out a brochure about evangelism to somebody, or to have a moment of being able to speak to someone. That is your calling. It is a command in Scripture. But you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit to be able to do that.

That's why I would never think of saying, "If you're going to be a good Christian, you should talk to one person every day about the Lord (about salvation), because the Lord may not give you a person some days to speak to you about salvation. That's doing it in the flesh. Your job is to know what to tell people in the way of the gospel, when the door opens. When the door opens, you can speak to him. That's fine. If you can leave something in the way of our evangelism brochure, that'll do the job. You can follow up. You'll be witnesses in this way. But the Spirit of God is what's going to enable you to reach out to the whole world.

Let's go to the next book: Romans 6. A standard of performance is always enabled by the Spirit of God. The two are always connected. Romans 6:14: "For sin." When this is singular in the Bible, what does it refer to? You should have said in your mind: "The sin nature." If it's plural ("sins"), what is it referring to? You should have said in your mind: "My personal acts of evil. Here it's for sin – the old sin nature: "For sin shall not be master over you. You are not under Law, but you are under grace."

Now, move over to Romans 8:4: "In order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." The requirement of the Law was a supernatural holy life. And you will not do it by walking in the power of the sin nature. You will do it in the power of the Spirit of God. You cannot do it by depending upon your sin nature. If you depend upon your sin nature, you'll fake it out. What you will do is you will tie into this area of strength that the old sin nature has. And you will produce human good works, left and right. And the Bible says, "All of this was rejected and condemned at the cross." You will get over here toward the tendency toward legalism – and to perform a good image, asceticism. You will deny yourself, and crucify yourself, and all that nonsense. And then you have a good image. And the result will be that with these two parts of the sin nature, you'll create the greatest religion, and the greatest impression that you are something special. It'll bowl over everybody except the discerning Christian, who will pick up the signals and say, "Hey, that's the sin nature strength that that person's doing." This is asceticism. This is self-denial stuff that's making this person look good.

So, you cannot fall for that trap. The requirements of the Law would be fulfilled in us, really – a godly standard, who walk according to the Spirit of God.

Let's go to the next book: 1 Corinthians 12:4-7. The background of this passage is that everybody who is born into the Christian life receives certain spiritual abilities with which to serve God. Some of you have one gift. Some of you have maybe more than one. But you do have at least one. 1 Corinthians 12:4: "Now, there are a variety of gifts (spiritual abilities), but the same Spirit (one Holy Spirit). And there are varieties of ministries, but one Lord." Now, what this means is that there are a variety of ways in which you serve God. There are a variety of ways in which you are equipped to perform your mission for which you were born. And there are varieties of effects (consequences), but the same God, Who works all things in all persons, but to each one is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good."

Everybody has a spiritual gift, but to exercise that gift, and bear fruit for which God will reward you, don't try it. Depend upon the Holy Spirit to do it. And ask Him to use your gift.

The Christian life as a very relaxed life. It's not a humpin', jumpin' life: a stress life, or a sweating-it-out life like it was in the Old Testament. This is walking with the Lord, and you have a gift. When you find out what that is (and that's not so hard to do). Then you look to the Lord to give you the opportunity to use the gift. And there never comes a time in your life when the gift is no longer operational. There are only times when you step out of that inner circle, when the Spirit of God can't use it. And that is wasted time.

Let's go over to the next book: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. Here were dealing with daily spiritual warfare of the believers. How do you fight the devil? How do you fight an evil society? "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh." They're not human attacks, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations (human viewpoint), and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God (divine viewpoint). And we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. How are we doing that? We don't want to think like the world. We want to reject its human viewpoint stupidity. We want to think the way God thinks. Then we will be able to rise to the standard of godliness that He expects of us. How can we do that? Not on our own. He must give us the capacity to do it. And when we do, we're conquerors. We destroy human viewpoint speculation: these lofty things – these things which are against the knowledge of God. Wait till you see tonight – what people do against the information from God, and against the knowledge of God.

You're going to squirm at some points. You're going to recoil at other points. But you will never be the same again. You will be in the know. And nobody will be able to pretend that something that God condemns is OK, if enough people agree to do it, and you make a pretense that sweet, nice people do these things.

Let's go over to Galatians 5:15-16: "But I say walk by the Spirit, and you'll not carry out the desires of the flesh" (the old sin nature). It's very simple. Walk by means of the Holy Spirit to carry out what you should be in life, by God's standard. And if you walk by means of dependence on the Holy Spirit – faith in Him to do it for you, you will not carry out the desires of the sin nature. What a combination. If you're in dependence on the Holy Spirit, you'll be a spiritual Christian. If you're in dependence upon the sin nature yourself, you'll be a carnal Christian.

Let's Go over to the next book: Ephesians 6:10-11: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Part of living a godly life, and part of holiness is not doing the opposite – the things of the devil. Every time God says, "This is what's right," the devil says, "No, that's wrong." Eve said, "This is what's right. We don't eat of that tree." The devil said, "No, that's wrong. You go ahead and eat of that tree, and you'll find how profitable it is, and how you'll enjoy it, and how much good it'll do for you." But she couldn't stand. She was not able to be standing in the strength of the power of God that had been given to her. Instead, she said to put it aside, and went on the basis of her own efforts.

Now, the armor of God is a very powerful thing that God has provided for us so that we are able to stand firm against the schemes; the devices; and, the trickery of the devil. And believe me – no Christian, and no rational, sane person gets into the things of the devil because they want to bear the bitter consequences. They don't do it for that. They're helpless. The most deadly consequences can come from doing something that you know that God says, "Don't do that. That's wrong." And you don't do it because you want the consequences. You think maybe you can get away with it. The only way you stand against Satan is the full armor of God, and, of course, that's a whole doctrine here that we have gone over before – the Christian soldier's armor. But without that armor, you cannot stand against Satan. Again, the connection is: "Do right, and here's the power of the Spirit of God to enable you to do it."

The next book is Philippians 2:13: "For it is God Who is at work in you, both to will, and to work for His good pleasure." God says, "Here's what I want you to do, and now I'm going to do it through you." That's a pretty good deal: "And when I get through doing it through you, I'm going to give you rewards for it in heaven forever." Why? "Because you let Me do it. It's not because you did it. It's because you let Me do it." That is the reason we so often say "No" to God. It's why we're so often quenching the Holy Spirit, because we say "No" to Him, because, on our human level, we don't want to do these things. We think we shouldn't do this. We're afraid to do these things. But God comes along and says, "I will in you to do My work. Then I will enable you to do My good pleasure. Just don't stand in the way, and keep coming up with excuses and reasons that you should not let Him do it.

Let's do one more in Colossians 2:6: "As you, therefore, have received Christ Jesus, so walk in Him." If you're going to live the life of a Christian – the life commensurate and proper to a member of the royal family of God, you have received Jesus Christ. How did you receive Him? By some work? No– by faith. So, walk in Him that way. What? I'm going to walk by faith; confidence; and, waiting for the Spirit of God to work through me? That's right. But when He moves, and when He opens the door, then get going. He'll carry you through. He will give you the enablement to do what you should be doing. And you'll get in heaven and find that you'll get rewarded for doing nothing but letting God work for you. That's a pretty good deal. How many Christians do you think are sitting in churches this morning that understand that magnificent principle related to the church age? That's what it means to be a member of the body of Christ. It is the era of grace.

Well, we probably won't finish this morning, but we're going to tie all this up now, about the church, with one of the things that a competent expository preacher should be doing periodically. We will give you a summary now of the doctrine of the church. . .

**The Doctrine of the Church**

1. **"Ekklesia" – Called Out Ones**

The New Testament word "church" ("ekklesia") means "an assembly of called out ones" from the mass of humanity. The word "ekklesia" was in common use in New Testament times. It was a common Greek word, and was used to refer either to a political assembly of free men, who are gathered for a political rally, or it was used for a religious community, a congregation, that was gathered for religious values. They both were called "a church" or "an assembly."

We have this in Acts 19:32 for a political gathering. And we have it in Acts 7:38 for a religious gathering. It is the Holy Spirit Who took this word from the Greek language – a common word from the Koine Greek. There used to be a time when people who studied the documents of the New Testament Scriptures found that the Greek was different than the Greek of classical Greek. It was distinctively different. And they decided (for a while) it was called "Holy Spirit Greek." It was a special Greek that the Holy Spirit used. Then, as they began to uncover archeology – boy, has archeology done some things? Someplace along the line, I'm going to have to work in some of the great archeological developments that you should know about. It will blow you out of the water, and it will certainly strengthen your faith and confidence that the Bible is absolutely the book of God – place after place of archeological confirmation.

Well, part of what they found was records. And, lo and behold, they were in Greek, and they were the same kind of Greek as in the Bible in the New Testament. They would find it on little (what they called) ostraca – broken pieces of pottery and clay that they would make their writings on (parchments). Finally, they realized that this is what the whole New Testament world talked. It was called "common Greek." The Greek word is "Koine" Greek. Yes, the classical writers had this. It would be like comparing British English to American English. British English is rather sophisticated talk, but there's ordinary everyday American English talk. It was what people used for talking – the way they spoke in the New Testament world.

So, the Holy Spirit takes a word that everybody knew: "ekklesia:" "Yeah, I know that. We just had a rally down at our labor union hall. We had this company that carries things around the world, and shipping things, and they're giving us trouble. So, we're on strike. We had this meeting. We had our church gathered." Their assembly gathered for their meeting: "And, yes, we had a religious meeting down there at our group. And they were also an assembly." He took that word, and gave it a technical meaning to contrast a group of people who were going to be called the church, to make a distinction between Israel and the church.

The church is a body of believers who are called out by God from the mass of Jews and gentiles, to become a special group of people related in a special way to Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:14-16: "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both groups, Jew and gentile, into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall between these two, by abolishing in His flesh (that is, on the cross) the enmity which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace." The Law – nobody could keep it. It was always a point of conflict. And it was a point of conflict between Jew and gentile. Jesus came. He fulfilled the Law. And now He's making peace between Jew and gentile. How? Not as Jews, and not as gentiles, but has joined together in a whole new body with no more dividing wall between them.

Verse 16: "And might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity." He put to death the conflict and the antagonism between the two of them. Please remember that Jews, gentiles, and Christians in the Bible are three separate bodies of God's division of the human race. We have this noted in 1 Corinthians 10:32, where Paul says, "Give no offense, either to the Jews, or to the Greeks (that is, the gentiles), or to the church of God." You could not be more explicit than that. These three are separate. And the church is a specialized body brought into being by God, in contrast to the gentiles as a group, and to the Jews as a group.

1. **A Mystery (a Secret)**

The church was a mystery, or a secret, in the Old Testament Scriptures. The word "mystery" in the Bible means "a secret" known to those on the inside, but not to those on the outside. The term "mystery" is applied to the church, in the New Testament, in the sense that the truth about the church age was never revealed in the Old Testament. It was a secret that God had, and He kept it to Himself. The church, as a mystery, is described by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 3:3-6: Paul says, "That by revelation, there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief." He's referring here to the mystery of the church. Here he says that there was a revelation being given to him, and that's how he came to know about this mystery.

Verse 4: "And by referring to this, when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ." Paul says, "You'll understand why I know so much about this mystery (this secret) that was never revealed. I have great insights because I got direct revelation from God about it.

Verse 5: "Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the spirit." Here, it is stressing that in the past in the past, the church was a secret with God.

Then verse 6 says, "To be specific (here was the secret): the gentiles are fellow heirs, and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." Here is a structure that brings Jews and gentiles, who would never have dreamed of being religiously united, are drawn together into one special group: a whole new body – the church. It was a secret, and it was revealed to Paul. And that's how he came to know about it.

God had ordained the church in His plan in eternity past. But He never revealed it until New Testament times, as we see in Ephesians 3:5, as we read.

Now, periodically, we have pointed out to you that there are gaps in the sequence of the progression of the Old Testament Scriptures, where the church later would be inserted as an intercalation, meaning that it had nothing to do with what came before, and nothing to do with what came afterwards. As God would go progressively through what His plan was, He'd go along and: bingo! He would come to a certain point up to the tribulation. He's going to talk about that. He skips over the church. He goes directly from Israel's downfall: bingo! Into tribulation. And if you didn't have the New Testament, you'd think, "Oh, these two come right together, and into the tribulation, and into the millennium.

Even when Jesus read through the Scripture in Isaiah, He stopped at a comma in the text, because the first part talked about his First Coming; the second part was the Second Coming; and, in between was the church. He couldn't stop and tell them the church. He just had to stop, and they wondered why He was stopping in the middle of a sentence.

So, periodically it was clear in the Old Testament Scriptures that there were gaps. The church secret was to be revealed that would fit in there.

1. **The Gospels**

The doctrine of the church is not found in the New Testament gospels except in Matthew 16:18, where Jesus stepped outside of Israel, on gentile territory, and He said, "I'll build My church." And they said, "What? What? What is this church?" That was the only reference in the gospel. And it was just a little preview. Plus, it is found in the gospel of John 13–17, which applied to the church specifically. Particularly, it is found in John 14:20, where Jesus says, "In that day," and He's referring to the day of the church. In John 14:20, He describes a whole new relationship between human beings and God: "In that day, you will know that I am in My Father, and you in me, and I in you. God is dwelling within the body of a human being – the believer of the church age. This is the magnificence of what God has done for us. And this is the introduction now to the doctrine of the church.

There are many more things in this doctrine that we're going to bring together. And what we're doing is just walking right through the whole thing. So, when we're through, you will have a total picture of what it means to be a member of the body of Christ. Don't forget that God never asks you to do something without giving you the Spirit of God that enables you to do it. That's why it's such a serious matter for you to hold back when the Lord says, "This is My work. This is My need. This is what I'd like you to do.” And you say, "I don't see how I could do this. There's so many things that I'm not sure about.” If the Spirit of God guides you to that, He's also going to carry you through to the execution. You've got nothing to worry about. Do you have that much faith? Those of you who have the gifts of faith, you'll do better. Some of you that can walk out on God with full confidence.

I saw a cartoon recently with pirate ships at sea. They'd put a plank out, and have somebody walk the plank. There were a bunch of GOP elephants standing behind on the ship. And out in front of them, they had pushed House Speaker Newt Gingrich. They're making him walk the plank. And he walked the plank; came to the edge; and, kept walking. He didn't fall. And they all stood there and said, "How does he do that?" That's what you're going to say. God says, "OK, here it is. I can't tell you what's out here. I want you to walk the plank. I want you to be a young person and walk the plank in the face of your peers." You say, "OK, God. But it sure is a long way down there. It is really scary." And that is the case, especially over water.

In the military, they sometimes teach you how to jump off of a ship that's sinking. I mean, that thing may be almost as high as this building. And you look over there, and you have to follow certain procedures, and be able to jump over you, and get down in the water, and come back up. And it's tough to say, "I can do that." Well, here God says, "Here's the plank – out over nothing. That's faith. And I want you to walk. When you get to the end, just keep walking." And everybody will look and say, "How does he do that? How does she do that?" It's called "faith" in the power of the Spirit of God.

Father, we thank You that we are a magnificent people in You, and we are nothing without You. We ask You to bless these words that we have brought together of the doctrine of the church. We pray for Your blessing the next time as we continue. In Christ's name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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