***The Plymouth Brethren  
  
Colossians 1:21-23  
  
COL-159***

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2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is 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."

1 Peter 1:23: "For you have been born again, not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable; that is, through the living and abiding Word of God."

2 Timothy 4:2-4: "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."

2 Peter 3:18: "But you grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

Our topic this morning is "Reconciliation of the Colossians," segment number four in Colossians 1:21-23.

The outdoor sign of a very large church, here in the city of Irving, recently listed as the pastor's Sunday sermon: "What People of Irving Need Most." The Scripture text which was listed below the title indicated that what was most needed was the gospel for salvation. Every week, at that particular church, the gospel is the main topic of the sermon. And this is then followed by an invitation to walk the aisle and to join the church. The focus, thus, Sunday-by-Sunday, is on recruitment of new members. Many Christians indeed would find no problem with such a top priority for the citizens. In fact, this is a very important item: how to have eternal life in heaven. However, the title is deceptive because what is really needed most by the people is the Bible explained to them verse-by-verse – the pastor-teacher engaging in expository preaching.

**Morality has been Deregulated**

Sometimes I've had people indicate to me that they find a little bit of irritation when I point that out – expository preaching as the way that God deals with His local congregations. But that is the biblical way. What people need most, in fact, is to be given an enormous respect for the Bible as the very inerrant Word of God, and thus the very mind of God. Yet, in our day, the Bible hardly comes into any discussion. When people want to talk about morality in any public form, who mentions the Bible? *Morality has been deregulated.* There is no basis of rules. And the reason for that is that people do not respect the Bible.

The Bible is much more than a book of virtues like Benjamin Franklin's maxims: "A stitch in time saves nine; a penny saved is a penny earned; a house guest, after three days, is like a dead fish – it stinks;" and, so on. All of these which are great truths – significant little pithy sayings, but that's not what the Bible is, that some clever man put together and invented. It is the Word of God. But you're only going to find that out by expository preaching – being exposed to what is in this book: really in this book, by having it explained to you. And if people are given a sense of dignity for the Bible (a sense of respect), and they are exposed to expository preaching, what's going to happen? They're going to get the gospel. They will know how to go to heaven. And the saved would learn what the Bible calls "the full counsel" or "the full purpose of God," pertaining to the church age, to qualify them then as ambassadors of Christ witnessing to mankind. Expository preaching does it all. It's not just getting the gospel, and stopping there.

**Teaching Bible Doctrine**

Bible doctrine, taught in its full gamut of truth, was clearly what took place in the New Testament churches. And that's why we say that this is God's way. We're not just saying this is our opinion: that it should be explaining the Scriptures to people. That is all they did in the New Testament church. How do we know? We know it by Acts 2:42. The context there shows that it's talking about people who were recently saved: "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to the breaking of bread, and to prayer." What were they doing? They were gathering for the apostles' teaching. And the word "teaching" there is the Greek word "didache" (did-akh-ay'), which means "teaching" or "doctrine" – "the apostles' doctrine." And this is the word that is often translated as "doctrine" in Scripture. And that's what you have here.

**Fellowship**

Then they had, secondly, fellowship. And the way the Greek language runs here, we know that the next two words explain what fellowship was all about: the breaking of bread; the Lord's Supper; and, prayer. Now, how's that for a church program? Christians should gather, and they should have a pastor-teacher qualified and put in authority by that congregation to explain and teach the Word of God – the apostles' doctrine. Then that group should have fellowship with one another – fellowship through the commemoration of the Lord's Supper, and probably, behind that, because of the custom that they have, a social gathering of a meal together. Very often that came before the Lord's Supper. And then they had prayer. That's fellowship.

I need not explain you how perverted *that* word has become. When you say "fellowship" to people, that usually means: "Oh that's something social. We're going to gather down there, and we're going to play volleyball. We're going to play table games. We're going to have a time of recreation." But that isn't what the New Testament church meant by "fellowship."

So, there's no way that you can have a church of this nature unless somebody is, week-by-week, explaining the Word. The pastor-teacher of a church needs to feed the flock of God, which is under His care, and under His authority. And He needs to feed them the full counsel (the full purpose) of the Word of God – not just the gospel which they preach. And that's what is the trouble with the church sign.

What the people of earth need most is not just the gospel. That's only the starting point. What they need is the gospel, and all that pertains to their privileges in the church age. But before they're going to know that, and be interested in that, they have to have a respect for the Bible itself. That is our problem today. How many of your children have a great respect for the Bible? How many of your friends have a great respect for the Bible? How many other Christians do you know who really have a respect for the Bible? Don't be too quick to say, "Yeah, I respect the Bible," because, if you do, then you have to treat it as what it is – the mind of God, through the Word of God. Therefore, what that Word says, you have to do it. That's very irritating to the sin nature.

In my very first year (I've told some of you before) at Berean Church, some 43 or more years ago, I had a lady in the church who indigently said to me, "When you preach, you make us feel like that's the way it has to be." Well, yes. That's right. Now, if I were giving you my opinion, then it doesn't have to be that way. If I were giving you my preferences, it wouldn't have to be that way. But if I explain to you the Word of God, and I toss a Greek or Hebrew word up here to show you where the idea comes from, that it really is the Holy Spirit's thinking, and then that is the way it has to be.

What a pastor is supposed to do, on the basis of what we see in the book of Acts, is feed people spiritually. And you cannot feed them with inspirational talks. You cannot feed them with challenges. You cannot feed them with cute experiences. You have to feed them with the only spiritual food God has ever provided, and that's His mind – contained in the Scriptures. So, you feed them by teaching them the Word of God.

In 1 Peter 5:2, Peter says to the elders (the pastor-teachers): "Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God, and not for sorted gain, but with eagerness." If you are in a position by the act of God, of being a pastor-teacher, then that is the will of God for you. You are in that position in that particular church by the will of God. Therefore, don't resent it. Don't act under compulsion, but voluntarily say, "I choose to do what God wants me to do." Now that's no different for anyone else, and that's the problem. But if the Bible is indeed the Word of God, and respected as such, then we are going to be willing to do what is the will of God. And anytime you do the will of God, it will not be the will of society. It will not be the will of the shakers and movers of our world. It will not be the will of God of most of the people that are your peers. It will not be the will of the people who you associate with in your employment, or your social life, because that's a different will. It's the will of this world. 1 Peter 5:2: "Feed the flock."

Acts 20:25-28 is a rather tender passage. Paul is leaving the group of Christians who are the pastor-teachers in the various house churches in the city of Ephesus. He will never see them again. And he wants to tell these elder pastor-teachers to be faithful to their calling: "And now," Paul says, "behold, I know that all of you among whom I went about preaching the kingdom will see my face no more." Paul preached the Word of God: "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I'm innocent of the blood of all men."

A lot of preachers cannot say that they are free from being guilty of blood loss. When you lose your blood, you die. It's a suffering. And many Christians have, by this poetic analogy, lost something. Something has died for them – something eternal in rewards and justice that God would've given to them because nobody taught them, and because nobody followed Acts 2:42 in the local church with expository preaching. But Paul could say, "I want to testify to you before God in all clear conscience, so nobody's blood is going to be on my hands because I failed to inform you."

That's not only salvation. That's the full gamut of the Christian life. That is the business of the pastor-teacher to keep warning you that: "This is what God says. This is His way. This is His principle." But you are free to say, "No." You are free to go your own rebellious way. That's what's known as grace. But you should at least know that you've turned your back upon God, and that you've chosen the good in place of the best.

Acts 20:27: "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." The King James says "the whole counsel of God." What did he tell them? He told them the full gamut of doctrinal principles. So, he says to these pastor-teachers, "Be on guard for yourselves, and for all the flock which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" This is another word for "pastor" – "to shepherd." The Greek word there is "to feed the church of God" which He purchased with His own blood. That's pretty clear what the pastor is supposed to do. To feed. That's what a shepherd does: To feed the people of God with the Word of God.

In Ephesians 4:11-13, what do the people of the city need? They need a respect for the Bible, and someone who explains the full counsel of what it teaches. Here are the agents (the communicators): "And He gave some (Christ gave some) gifted men apostles; some as prophets; and, some as evangelists." Apostles and prophets we no longer have. But evangelists (missionaries) we do have: "And some as (a combination) pastor-teacher" in the Greek. It is one office. Why? "For the equipping of the saints." The evangelist equips them first by giving them the gospel to be saved. The pastor-teacher takes over, and he equips them with doctrine so that they can live their lives. For what? For the work of service so they can serve God with divine good instead of human good activity. For what purpose? "To build up the body of Christ," so that people can be one and matured in the body of Christ.

This is when you give your time, your talents, and your treasures. This is the great enterprise in which you're engaged. You're building up the body of Christ. There is no greater service, and no greater honor than that.

Ephesians 4:13: "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge." And this particular Greek word, interestingly enough – the knowledge is the "epignosis" (ep-ig'-no-sis), E P I G N O S I S [note: G not pronounced] that you're acquainted with. This is the full knowledge – the knowledge of what is stored in your human spirit because some pastor-teacher taught you a principle of doctrine, and in your mind, you said, "Amen, Lord. I'll do it." That is to be your positive volition response to doctrine. You have that kind of knowledge.

Isn't it interesting? He didn't just use the word for "knowledge." He used that big hyper word for knowledge. The "epignosis" – the full knowledge. A lot of Christians have knowledge, the "gnosis" (gno'-sis), G N O S I S, [note: G not pronounced]. It's up in their head. But the "epignosis" knowledge is operational usable truth that is down in the human spirit, and it governs your life.

"Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the full knowledge ('epignosis') of the Son of God to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." He is our role model. How are you going to get acquainted with that role model? How will your children know Christ as a role model? Only through the Word of God.

Titus 1:9: "Holding fast the faithful Word which is in accordance with the teaching (the doctrine), in that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine, and to refute those who contradict." Here again the pastor-teacher is explaining the Bible so that the people of God are not a bunch of ninnies. When their children want to do something, they know they shouldn't do it. And they'll be able to say, "No, on the authority of the Word of God, you can't do that. No, on the authority of the Word of God, you can't go there. No, on the authority of my good judgment, based upon the Word of God, you can't say that." And your life is governed by sound doctrine. And you will refute those who contradict.

Our nation today is filled with people, from the highest echelons of power down to the garbage collectors, who refute the Word of God. Why? Because they have no respect for the Bible.

Then there's 1 Timothy 4:6, in pointing out these things to the brethren – the things that they should be as believers, Paul says, "Timothy, if you point these things out (the words of doctrine) to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith, and of the sound doctrine which you have been following." Nothing is important in life except sound doctrine. That you must have.

1 Timothy 4:13: "Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture; to exhortation; and, to teaching." Read the Bible in church. Exhort people in various ways, relative to what the Bible says, and teach them the principles of Scripture.

1 Timothy 4:16, "Pay close attention to yourself, and to your teaching (your doctrine). Persevere in these things. For as you do this, you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."

These passages of Scripture go back and forth in translation between the word "doctrine" and the word "teaching." It's the same thing. The original had "didache" (did-akh-ay'). It means doctrine. It means teaching. There is another word, "didaskalia" (did-as-kal-ee'-ah), which means "what you taught." But it's still referring to what you taught doctrinally.

**Preaching**

There's one more to guide the pastor-teacher. 1 Timothy 5:17: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching." This is interesting. It says that if you have a pastor-teacher who works hard in two directions: one is preaching. Interestingly enough, that's not the usual word for "preaching" here. It's the Greek word "logos" (log'-os), L O G O S. This is the idea for a concept or a principle. Jesus Christ is called the "logos" of God. He is the concept of God. He is the principle of God. He is the reality of God. So, here the preaching is not what people usually look at preaching: pounding the pulpit, and getting people all hipped up emotionally. That's called preaching. What the Scripture says about preaching is: "works hard at the Word." He studies. He prepares. Sometimes he prepares with years of background of preparation, and then intensive study week-by-week, like somebody having to write a college term paper every week.

**Teaching**

Then from that comes the teaching. And we're back to our word "didache" again – the teaching as the result of his intensity of hard work with the Word. He gets up, and what he does is proclaim the Word. He proclaims the principles of truth. That's why Dallas Theological Seminary has the motto, "Preach the Word." That's it. That's all what it's about. And anything less is robbing the people of God.

Now, American society today desperately needs to return to viewing the Bible as a book which God has written. Therefore, if God has written this book, it is without a mistake. Therefore, it is trustworthy, and authoritative in what it literally means. The Bible, thus, is the very Words of God, conveying the mind of God. What he thinks and demands is not negotiable. It's not open to human revision. And because people do not respect the Word of God, and treat it as such, they're revising it. They're always changing the Word of God to suit themselves. People sit in this church service, and they will hear things from the Word of God, and then they will have mental reservations about that.

I got that last Sunday because a person gave me his mental reservations. And you get kind of startled; and, you get taken aback. But if you know a person well enough, you know what the problem is in their life as to why the mental reservation is there. But Psalm 119:89 says "Forever, Oh Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven." It's on the front of our communion table. There is no changing from the Word of God. If you don't like it – fine. If you want to revise it – stupid. You're not going to get away with it. God is not going to be mocked, and the Bible says that too: "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven."

Psalm 138:2 says, "I will bow down toward Thy holy temple and give thanks to Thy name for Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth, for Thou has magnified Thy Word according to all Thy name." What does that mean? It means according to everything that You are as God – according to Your character. The name stands for the character of the person. And God says, "I have magnified My word above anything else that is associated with Me. This is the epitome of what I am and what is of value."

So it's no small thing for us to realize that, in American society today, the Word of God is not respected. Because there is no respect for the Bible as the Word of God and the mind of God, there is no fear of violating its precepts. And yet it is the basis for all of life. Putting God first on the basis of the Word of God. That is dignity. And we've been talking about dignity recently. And the more I think about it, the more I see how often there's no dignity among Christians. The point of putting God first. I gave you the Latin word: "gravitas." And I said that that means something that has substance to it. It has some weight. It has some significance. Therefore, it's translated as "dignity." "Dignity" means that you're not just a little twit. You're not just a hollow, empty-sounding, nothing. You have some substance to you as a person. You're not just a piece of frivolity.

**The Plymouth Brethren**

I got to thinking recently that I remember, in Dallas Theology Seminary, I used to read some of the writings of the Plymouth Brethren. The Plymouth Brethren were a group who began studying the Bible in Plymouth England. And some of the great names like John Darby and others who were associated with them (Jennings), – they discovered that there was something very seriously wrong with what the reformers had put forth relative to the area of prophecy. As they studied the Word of God, it was a return to the Bible study movement. It was almost like the second kick of the Reformation. The Reformation established that the Bible is the source of all knowledge for God. It is to be dignified above everything else.

**The Church vs. Israel**

The second stage was clearing up exactly what the Scriptures taught. And they unraveled the whole concept that Israel was one work of God, and the church was something else. That was a bombshell. Up to then, people kept thinking that Israel had been bad, and God had sent it out to the woodshed, and pounded on it, and they were through; and, He brought in a nice new fella named the church to replace him. And suddenly, they realized that Israel has eternal promises. It has a future. The church is a brand new thing begun on the day of Pentecost. It has totally different promises, and a power system in the Spirit of God and doctrine that was never enjoyed by the Jews in Israel.

So, out of there, they began a great Bible study movement, and it just picked up steam. And they established (crystallized) the pre-millennial dispensational view of Scripture. That was one of the things that had been lost from the early church during the dark ages of the medieval Roman Catholic Church.

However, I used to notice that these men who were obviously on target spiritually and biblically, and were great expositors – that they kept talking about levity, and condemning levity in Christians. And when you and I think about levity, that means having a little fun and enjoying life. And I used to think that was too bad that they had that attitude about levity. Too much fundamental Christianity has been very blue nose and very, very grim. And the Christians weren't supposed to have fun. And I thought that that was too bad that they had that attitude. I couldn't understand why.

However, when I decided to really research the word "levity," I found that, in the dictionary, "levity" means "lack of weight" or "lack of substance." Bingo! They were talking about "gravitas." Bingo! They were talking about dignity. What they were talking about was Christians who don't have dignity because they don't look upon the Bible as the Word of God, and consequently build their lives upon the Scriptures. And no one has any kind of dignity if the Bible is not the basis of your life.

I realized then that the thing they were talking about was manners and language which are inappropriate. That's the definition of levity: speaking and manners which are inappropriate. How true of Christians! We're not the world. We shouldn't talk in a certain way. We shouldn't have certain manners. We shouldn't have a certain lifestyle. It's inappropriate. That's undignified. It's an act of levity.

Well, here's the problem with Christians. Even Christians have the problem today of accepting the Bible as God's rulebook and God's guidebook to lead them into separation from the world.

As I grew up as a teenager, we heard a lot about the business of separation. The word "separation" was a commonplace word for us. It was a household term: separation from the world. And it became sometimes too explicit, because of attitudes that the intentions were well, but in separating from the world, the fine line was not drawn between what is evil that the world does with something that is good.

So, suddenly, you couldn't go to a movie because the world had taken a wonderful invention and done evil things with it. Suddenly, you couldn't wear makeup because the world had taken it, and some very evil woman wore makeup. One gal named Jezebel was an all-time great in that. And the Bible explicitly talks about her painting your face. So, if you're going to be a godly woman, you don't paint your face. How about now? Well, they went to an extreme on separation because they understood it as separation from certain things you do and don't do. That's not separation. Worldliness is first of all a mental attitude. That mental attitude is that the Bible is not the authority in my life, and I don't have to pattern myself according to its principles. I can do the things that my society does, and that my peers do. I can be just like them. And even if the Word of God casts a question about my conduct, it's okay, because society accepts it.

However, separation is unto holiness; separation unto the will of God; and, separation unto the authority of Scripture. That's what we mean by "separation," and that is legitimate. Just observe how amenable Christians are today to Satan's world system which is governed by evil people of Satan's choosing who are going to spend eternity in the lake of fire, and they are operating on principles which oppose the Word of God, but which are taught by Satan. That's the world – "the cosmos."

We can't get off into a lot of study of that right now, but the cosmos is what Satan has created. It's society organized for his purposes. Because why? Because he runs the world. All the kingdoms of the world belong to him, and Satan is free now to put in authority (to put in power) whomever he wishes. And right now he is putting everybody into power in all the nations of the world, especially the most influential ones, that are going to rapidly lead to world government, and to socialism worldwide economically, and set the scene for the arrival of a world ruler – the antichrist.

Matthew 4:8-10 says, "Again the devil took Him (Jesus) to a very high mountain." This is on the Lord's temptation in the wilderness after 40 days of fasting: "And showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in their glory, and he said to Him, 'All these things will I give you if you fall down and worship me.'" Now, some people read that Scripture and say, "Ah, what a liar. He doesn't have those kingdoms." That's wrong! He *does* have those kingdoms. He could have done exactly what he promised Jesus: "Jesus, You came to be the King of the world, right?" Jesus said, "Yes, I did." And Satan said, "Well, I control the world. I am the ruler of the world." Jesus could have said, "Yes you are." And Satan said, "Well then if You'll worship me, I'll make you the King of the world right now. You will come to world government under Your authority:" "Then Jesus said to him, be gone Satan, for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only." The Lord Jesus Christ did not think that the world system that Satan had organized in all these nations was a good thing for him to be part of. But do Christians worry about that? Christians can't wait to be part of the world system. They can't wait to imitate the world, no matter how degrading it might be to them personally.

Ephesians 2:1-2: "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." Paul says that the Ephesian Christians: "Don't forget that you once were part of Satan's world system. You were once part of "the cosmos diabolicus" (generally used to suggest an orderly or harmonious universe). You were once part of living according to the lifestyle of this world – according to the prince of the power of the air. The "prince of the power of the air" means that he's in charge of whatever is under the air. He's in charge of all the nations of the world. This is the spirit of Satan which is now working in the sons of disobedience. And that's the spirit you join when you turn your back upon the Bible, and when you turn your back upon the principle of direction of Scripture, so that you can be part of the world. You do things Satan's way instead of God's way.

Now, just go home and take a look at yourself in the mirror, and see what you look like, and how much there is even externally attached to us which is the devil: his world; his system; and, his hatred of God, your Father. Take a look at 2 Corinthians 4:2-4: "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus, as Lord; and ourselves as your bond servants for Jesus' sake. For God Who said, 'Let light shine out of the darkness is the one who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." He has given us the knowledge of the glory of Christ which is shining out of Christ. He is our pattern, not the world system.

Let's look at one more, in John 12:31: "Now judgment is upon this world. Now the ruler of this world shall be cast out." Satan is the ruler of this world. And Satan has been defeated, but he is still in charge, running things. And it is so sad when we see Christians who get on his team. That should not be so.

So, the lifestyle of Satan's wicked worldlings are willingly and eagerly followed so often by Christians, making them hypocrites, and making them, as James 4:4 says, "Friends of the world and enemies of God."

The previous generation of Christians, therefore, were very serious about this business of separation from the world system. They just didn't go along with what Satan has put together. They didn't consider that the will of God. That is not in style now. What do Christians do now? They're immersed in entertainment of the world. They're immersed in the materialism. Christians will do anything to get some more money. They'll go anywhere to get some more money. I don't care what their status in life is – they'll go someplace to get some more money. Materialism is the god that they pursue.

Liberalism is what the world loves and pursues with a vengeance. The brutality of liberalism is in that article by Dr. Dobson, where China not only aborts children before they're born, but if they manage to live, then they practice infanticide. And if you're a Christian, you sit there with your tears and your pain and your suffering of what they're doing to their child, because you live in a country where an elite group decides what people should do, and should not do. Anytime a nation allows the government to get into family matters, and into family institutions, you will have tyranny brought upon you, and your rights as a parent will be undermined sooner or later.

There is moral compromise today. There is nothing but the pursuit of religion. Unfortunately, no matter how many times you call the attention of Christians to this, they just cannot seem to be true to 1 John 2:15-17: "Do not love the world." Don't love the 'cosmos.' Don't 'agape' the 'cosmos.'" Now, that should tell you a lot. The word "agape" for love means "have a goodwill – have a receptivity." "Agape" love means that you have no bitterness, and no resistance. And "world" is a word for what Satan has done in organizing nations under his authority: "Nor the things in the world." What Christian can really say: "The things of the world – man, that's not what holds me." Christians cannot just keep from itching to go get some things somewhere in the world far beyond what they need, and far beyond what they can use or seek for the Lord's work. "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world (this is what Christians don't believe), the lusts of the flesh." The whole world is expressing the sin nature lust patterns: "The lust of the eyes." The whole world is covetousness of every kind: "And the boastful pride of life:" "I want to look like the world. I want to dress like the world. I want to have all the ornaments of the world on me:" "Is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away." Fine, Christian, go ahead and forget those passages. Just remember that the world is passing away, and also its lusts. You'll have a good time. Sin is a lot of fun. But like great Moses – Hebrews 11:24 says, "He did not like the pleasures of Egypt for a season." He went with the people of God. 1 John 2:17: "And the world is passing away, and also its lusts, but the one who does the will of God abides forever."

Now, how can you do the will of God if you don't have a respect for the Bible so that you know what the will of God is? That is what dignity is – the will of God. That's the only dignity. That's the only "gravitas" that a Christian has. If you don't have that attitude toward the Bible as the Word of God, and subjection to its precepts, you don't have dignity. All you have is the sorry pattern of life in the world.

So Christians will actually separate themselves from a place like Berean Memorial Church, because we call people to the respect for the Bible as the inerrant Word of God. That's the authority. And we believe it should be explained to people, and that's what we do. Therefore, we tell people that they are strangers and pilgrims in society: exiles; and, aliens.

Now, there are probably people here, or who will hear this on tape, who recoiled right then: "Gee, I don't want to be an exile and an alien in society. I don't want to be a pilgrim and a stranger. I want to put my arms around these people. I want to be like Lot down in Sodom – doing business with them: laughing with them; socializing; having a lot of fun with them, and enjoying the good things of life. I don't want to be standing and looking at this crowd that is passing me by and saying, 'I'm a prince of God. I'm the princess of God. I'm on a pedestal. And I'm not going to get down to your ground level groveling in the dust before Satan.'"

Now, if you and your children don't hear this kind of instruction, you'll be just like the rest of the sorry world that has captivated most of American society. We *are* exiles, and we *are* aliens, and we didn't make that up. It's the way it has to be. Why? Well, Hebrews is the chapter reviewing the great heroes of faith in the past, and he's been talking about Abel, and about Enoch, and about Noah, and about Abraham and Sarah. And Hebrews 11:13 says, "All these died in faith without receiving the promises (the promises of a new city and a new land), "but having seen them, and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth." You're going to become the leading nation of all the world, Abraham. Your posterity will be like the stars of heaven, and the dust of the earth, and the sands on the seashore. And you're an exile and a pilgrim?

1 Peter 2:9-12: "But you are a chosen race (speaking to Christians) – a royal priesthood (thus, you're a royal family), a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." You are the people of God, and America is God's client nation. Isn't that sad? "That you may proclaim the excellencies of Him Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." You're going to proclaim the excellencies of the God who has called you." Not if you're part of the world. And if you don't accept the Bible, you will be part of the world: "For you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God. You had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you, as aliens and strangers, to abstain from earthly lust which wages war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentile, so that in the things in which they slander you as evildoers, they may, on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation:" the day of the rapture; and, the day of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

These people who have held you in contempt; and these people who have refused to recognize that you're right and they're wrong – they're going to get their comeuppance at the Judgment Seat of Christ." And when they see what happens to you, with the respect of God, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the world will gets its comeuppance at the great white throne judgment.

Ephesians 2:19-20: "So, then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household." You're no longer strangers and aliens because you're no longer part of this world. You are now part of God's country: "Having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone."

Philippians 3:20-21: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly await for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has, even to subject all things to Himself." What are we waiting for? We are waiting for the honorable return of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is going to transform our mortal bodies into immortal bodies conforming to his body: sinless; and, totally perfect. Now, when He comes, how do you want him to see you? Do you want Him to see you as a citizen of this world, or do you want Him to see you as a pilgrim and a stranger in this world: an alien and an exile – one of His own, waiting for Him, conforming to His glory. Got it? Conforming to His glory.

We have one more in Colossians 3:1-2, "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." Is that what Christians are doing? No. They're seeking the things down here. Their minds tomorrow morning are going to be down here: "What can I do down here?" They're not going to be thinking about what's up there. They're not going to be thinking, "What can I do here to prepare myself better for up there?"

"Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth." Now, how can that happen with Christians? Because the Bible is a cutesy-pooh book for them. The Bible is not authoritative. The Bible is not the food that they yearn for. People leave Berean Memorial Church, young and old, because the Bible is not the Word of God. It's a nice book, like Poor Richards Almanac by Ben Franklin with a lot of pithy ideas. But it is not the mind of the living God. Therefore, they do not have the will of God. People look at me very oddly when I say that God; church activities; and, service for Him should be the priorities in life.

Tonight, I want to tell you what the young people do to me. I want to tell you what youngsters do, even in our own midst, when I look them in the eye and I say to them: "On the basis of the authority of the Word of God, church activities and your Christian service responsibilities should have first priority in life. God comes first." And then I look at them, and I see their lack of dignity. They have no "gravitas." They recoil: "You're asking me to step out of society? You're asking me to separate myself from all these sweet people of Satan's world? And then you weep. How little dignity there is among the young people, let alone the adults! Please join us tonight in the evening service.

Father, we thank You.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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