***Disciples

Colossians 1:21-23

COL-161***

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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."

Mark 7:6: "And He said to them: 'Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites. As it is written, this people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men, neglecting the commandment of God. You hold to the tradition of men. But blessed are your eyes because you see, and your ears because you hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and, to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Please open your Bibles once more this morning to a consideration of Colossians 1:21-23. Our subject is "The Reconciliation of the Colossians," segment number six.

**Disciples**

This congregation is now about to be discipled by the pastor-teacher of Berean Memorial Church – discipled in faithfulness and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Greek Bible, the word "disciple" is "mathetes" M a t h e t e s. This word means "learner." It connotes one with thought from information accompanied by action accordingly. A disciple is a learner. It connotes one who has received information, and then acts accordingly. The learner disciple is taught by the teacher. The Greek word for that is "didaskalos" d i d a s k a l o s. A disciple is one who lives by the teachings of a teacher, and is thus a follower of the teacher. In Scripture, the teacher disciples a person only one way. In the Word of God, a teacher disciples a person in only one way. And that is by teaching him the precepts of Scripture (doctrinal principles) to enable him to have the mind of God, so he can live his life in the will of God. This enables the disciple to be a follower of Jesus Christ, by living according to the spiritual principles which are taught in Bible doctrine. These two always go together when you talk about the subject of discipling. A teacher and doctrinal instruction – that is discipling by the biblical standard.

This is demonstrated many places in the Scripture. And I want to walk you through a few Scriptures, and I'll tell you why in a moment. By the way, needless to say, Berean Memorial Church is one of those places where it is worthwhile bringing your Bible. We're all interested in "gravitas," dignity, and one of the ways to grow in dignity is to walk in here with a Bible in hand. The reason that's an act of dignity is because it shows great respect for God. It shows what your focus is; how you walk; and, why you can.

So, here we are: Matthew 9:14: "Then the disciples of John." And you know right away that those are learners taught John – followers of John: "Came to him saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?'" These are followers of John the Baptizer there.

Then move over to Matthew 20:15-16: "Then the Pharisees went and counseled together how they might trap him in what he said. And they sent their disciples (the ones that the Pharisees had taught, and who were learners of the Pharisees – the doctrines of the Pharisees have taught them), to him (Jesus), along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are truthful, and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one, for you are not partial to any.'"

In John 9:27-28, we have discipling; teaching; and, following your teacher: "He answered them, 'I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples to, do you?'" This is a man who was born blind. And the Pharisees said, "'Tell us again who is this man? How did he open your eyes?' And he said, 'Do you want to become His disciples?' And they reviled him, and said, 'You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.'" What were they saying? They were saying, "We are taught by Moses; you are taught by Jesus, and you are following your teacher by what he taught you. We are following our teacher Moses by what he taught us.

John 6:66-68: "As a result of this, many of His disciples (disciples of Jesus) withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore. Jesus said, therefore (and there you can see that a disciple is one who follows the teachings of his teacher), to the 12: 'You do not want to go away also, do you?' Simon Peter answer Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.' They were His disciples because He gave them the Word of God. The two always go together.

So, don't go around talking about disciplining somebody unless you are teaching that person the doctrinal principles of the Word of God. You will be discipled this morning by the instruction that you will receive from this pulpit, which is the only way that discipline can be done.

John 8:31-32: "Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him: 'If you abide in My Word, then you are truly disciples of mine, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'" Here again, Jesus said, "You are My disciples because I have taught you the Word of God, and you have believed it, and that is going to set you free spiritually. You are going to be in the know.

John 13:34-35: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." How is the world going to know that you are a follower of Jesus Christ? By the fact that you have mental-attitude, "agape," no-ill-will love. You have mental-attitude, goodwill love toward everyone: "That is the new commandment. I give it to you. I've instructed you. Those of you obey, you're My disciples."

John 15:8: "By this is My Father Glorified: that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples." Here again is bearing spiritual fruit – divine good works. How can anybody do that? There is only one way. Someone has taught you the principles of doctrine, and you have said "Yes" to it, and the Spirit of God, because you're in temporal fellowship, now takes that and guides your life so that you are producing divine good works. "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so you prove to be My disciples. People who are bearing divine good works are not the disciples of Jesus Christ. They may be Christians. They may be all kinds of things, but they are not the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Acts 6:7: "And the Word of God kept on spreading, and the number of disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem." Do you see the connection? I told you that the teacher and doctrinal instruction always go together, introducing disciples. If they're not there, you can't produce a disciple. And the Word of God (there's the doctrine) kept on spreading, and the numbers of disciples continue to increase. It was spreading because people were teaching it. And the result was that: "Disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith." And here, the word "faith" means not only faith in Jesus Christ, but it means the body of faith, which is contained in doctrine. The word "faith" is used sometimes to represent the totality of doctrinal instruction.

So, how did they become disciples? Someone taught them Scripture. Acts 14:21-22: "And after they had preached the gospel to that city, and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, saying, 'Through many tribulations, we must enter the Kingdom of God. Continue in the faith.'" There you have it again: "Continue in the body of doctrine," Paul says, "that we have taught you. Stick with it, and stand by it. You will go into heaven, but it will be through tribulations.

Acts 14:28: "And they spent a long time with the disciples." Here are Paul's associates. They're spending a long time with these disciples. What did they do? Well, they went to Six Flags over Texas for fellowship. They had parties. They ordered pizza in. They went on special tours to Canton, and they did all these things. They spent their time, and made these disciples. They had all these social things so that they would become disciples of Jesus Christ. They socialized here, and they socialized there. They went rappelling at the Wichita Mountains, and they did all these things that made these people disciples of Jesus Christ. No.

When they said, "We spent a long time," they meant: "We were telling them what God thinks by teaching them the principles of doctrine. You can see how on-track we are in the Berean Youth Clubs, when we say, "We're trying to make these kids be disciples of Jesus Christ." We have a two-hour meeting, and 30 minutes of it (25% of it) is devoted to biblical instruction of doctrine, because that's what it's all about. You can't make them disciples if they haven't been instructed. They will be nothing but religious fools if we did not teach them that.

We have one more in Acts 15:10 and 11: "Now, therefore, why do you put God to the test, by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear." This has to do with trying to get the early Christians to live under the principles of the Mosaic Law. And Peter is refuting this concept, following his experience of finding, seven years after the Pentecost, that gentiles, suddenly, in the House of Cornelius, are also part of the new era of the church, the body of Christ: "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in the same way as they also are." He said, "We have been saved by grace, not through the Laws of Moses."

It is very important to understand two concepts here that he just touches on. I just want to mention this in passing. A person is saved apart from works of any kind: your works; or, anybody's works. You are saved by grace as a gift from God. And how do you become spiritual? Paul says, "You become spiritual also by grace." In another passage, he said, "Were you saved by grace? And now you're going to become spiritual by the Law?" You don't work to be saved, but how many Christians think they have to work to be spiritual – to be walking with God in a godly life? Do we serve? You betcha. Are we service as the Most High God? You betcha. But that does not make you spiritual. You do not become spiritual by your works. You become spiritual by the same principle of the grace of God, because you've learned doctrine; you use 1 John 1:9; you stay in fellowship; and, the Spirit of God moves you along into a life of significance and of eternal consequences.

A disciple is not only a pupil taught doctrine by the teacher. He is also an imitator of this teacher in his life (in the disciple's life). He was taught, and he imitated. John 8:28-29: "Jesus therefore said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He. And I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.'" Notice the end of both verses: "I speak the things as the Father taught me. I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." What an amazing statement! Here we have the Son of God declaring that in His humanity, His Heavenly Father, taught Him. And He, as a Disciple of His Heavenly Father, obeyed him, because what the Father taught Him was the Word of God, and the Word of God is to be obeyed.

We can expand that a little more if we go back up to John 8:25: "And so, they were saying to Him (to Jesus), 'Who are you?' Jesus said to them, 'What have I been saying to you from the beginning? I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you. But He Who sent Me is True, and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak in the world.'" Jesus went out and discipled people too. He had a lot of them. He had a core of 12. And how did they become His disciples spoke? He spoke to them the Word of God. They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father.

Then Jesus said the two verses, which we just read: "The Father taught Me, and I followed Him. I'm His Disciple. In My humanity, I imitate Him. So, I am His Disciple.

Now, I'm saying all of this to you this morning because it has become fashionable in church circles to speak about discipling people. That is a really cute term now – "discipling people." And some Christians, who have had their ups and downs and instability in the Christian life, are carried away by the fact that somebody comes along and says, "I'm going to disciple you." And they get all sweaty and woozy, and think that they have come upon something really wonderful that's going to solve all their problems. This is common practice now – widespread discipling people, supposedly, when in fact the teacher is not teaching doctrinal principles, but he's acting as a therapist, trying to resolve a personal problem. They're acting with sympathy. They're acting with good advice. They're giving time. That's exactly what a therapist does. That is exactly what psycho-babble, psychology therapists do. They are, in fact, nothing more than what Dr. Laura Schlessinger does on her radio talk-show, in giving out advice to resolve conflicts. Dr. Laura's program is the most widely listened to talk-radio show, and the most popular second only, of course, to Rush Limbaugh. But Dr. Laura (I think she's Jewish) is married to a Roman Catholic, so I'm not sure she's saved. But she is a great example of what happens when even an unbeliever operates on biblical principles.

What made the Roman Empire so great in its early days as a republic? Because it was a pagan nation, but it lived by the rules that we have in the Bible. There were no abortions; respect for the family; justice; and, fairness in the courts – the whole bit. And God could not help but prospering and blessing and empowering the Roman Empire because of that. When they degenerated from those principles, then he wiped them off the face of the map.

This woman (Dr. Laura Schlessinger) operates from biblical principles, and she is feisty for righteousness. I'm amazed. I listened to her when I'm in the car driving, so I can learn how to approach a lot of things that she does, because she puts people in the right perspective. She is a true discipler because she gives them truth – true truth.

For example, one lady called in, and she said, "I'm thinking about having this relationship with this man because I'd like to get pregnant. I'd like to have a child." She asked, "Are you going to marry him?" The lady said, "No, no, no. I don't want to marry him. I just want the child." So, Schlesinger says, "Did you have a happy relationship with your father?" The lady said, "Oh, yes. He was terrific." Dr. Laura said, "Great. You enjoyed him. Was he helpful?" The lady said, "Absolutely, yes." Dr. Laura asked, "As you grew up? She said, "Yes." And Dr. Laura said, "Well, then why would you deny your child a father?" She said, "Oh." I can't believe there's anybody dumb enough to call in and ask a question like that. Yeah, I can.

I received the same kind of call. There was this Christian lady who called me, and she's instructed in the Word of God because I know her. She said, "Dr. Danish, I've met this guy." That's the word she used: "guy:" "And I really like him. And I think I'd like to have sexual relations with him. I wonder what you thought about that." And I thought, "You're asking me in the same way as what I think about spitting on the sidewalk in public." And I'm trying to put this together. Has she gone wacko? And yes, this is the person I know. I said, "Well, if you do it, you do it against, as you know, the principles of the Word of God, and it will turn to ashes in your mouth." Finally, she decided not to do it.

Well, another girl called into Dr. Schlessinger, and I had another demonstration of how this woman disciple's with principles of the Word of God, and appropriate implications of Scripture. She said, "I have a sister. She had a child out of wedlock pregnancy some time ago. And she is now pregnant again by another man." And Dr. Laura said, "Is she going to marry him?" And the lady said, "Oh, no, no. She doesn't think he'd be a suitable husband. She doesn't care for him." Dr. Laura asked, "Well, what's your question?" Well, all of our family wants to have a baby shower for her, and I don't feel comfortable about that under the circumstances. What should I do?" She said, "You don't want to do it?" And the lady said, "No." She said, "Oh, if I could come through the radio, I'd kiss your toe. You are so right. You are so on-track. Why would anybody want to dignify immorality? Why would anybody want to dignify what is heartless to begin with – to do something like that to a child?" And she said, "You're right. Your family is wrong. You may extend kindness, and send a gift quietly on your own, but don't make a party of it. And you don't have to feel intimidated because your conscience, which is on track with right principles, does not wish to be party to the event."

Now, all of that obviously is a good kind of advice. And all Dr. Laura was doing was being a therapist. She was not being, basically, a disciple, or leading people to follow Jesus Christ. She was just trying to get them to follow good, sensible ideas – things that were good judgments. But the same technique, unfortunately (this counselor-therapist technique) is what crops up all the time in good operations, and is in Promise Keepers, What they are being told, and what is being followed by the Promise Keepers movement is really a therapy counselor operation. There's no great drive in this operation for men to go and learn doctrinal principles, or to find an expository pastor-teacher to enable them to be a disciple, a follower of Jesus Christ, so they can live right according to the seven principles of the Promise Keepers. There's no way they're going to keep those seven promises when the hullabaloo and the hoopla is over – no way.

The result is going to be disappointment and questions and doubts about God and His word. In these meetings, there is a lot of inspiration to do right. But there's little pastor-teacher discipling with doctrine to enable them to do the right thing. And when they got home, one of the reports from the last meeting here in Washington was a man who got up in the bus and said, "Now, if we go home and nothing changes, all of this has been for naught." He's right. But when they got home, how many of them found waiting for them a pastor-teacher, explaining the Scriptures to them, and laying out for them, in summaries of doctrine, how God thinks, and how God operates. Not many, because most of those pastors aren't even equipped to be able to do it, let alone to have the courage to do it.

So, they're going to go home, and they're going to get right back into their little cutesy-pooh, touchy-feely, church operations. The seven promises are going to go out the window. And these men are going to be humiliated and crushed. If you're going to ask your troops to grab the flag and charge up the hill, you better do what Ephesians 4 has provided in giving them the equipment to be able to do the battle.

I've observed that people who love this one-on-one therapy, discipling after it's all said and done, remain unstable spiritually, and messed up in their lives. They are very self-centered. They're concerned only about whining about their problems and their needs, and they don't care about great things that are happening in the world, and spiritual impact. And they're always dependent on their therapists to be on-call. But God's way of discipling is the way that works. It is very nicely summed up in Ephesians 4:11-16, in this list of gifted communicators that God has given to the local church: "And He gave some as apostles and some as prophets." We don't have those anymore. We have the next two: "And some as evangelists, and some as pastor-teachers (a combination communicator gift), for the equipping of the saints (to prepare them for battle); for the work of service (for Christian service); to build up the body of Christ (to be the ambassadors of Jesus Christ), until we all attain to the unity of the faith (the unity of doctrinal summary); and, of the knowledge (Uh-oh, the Greek says, 'epignosis' knowledge (full knowledge) – knowledge that you have been taught, and you have shouted, 'Amen, Lord,' and it has been stored in your human spirit so that the Spirit can use it) – the knowledge of the Son of God to a mature man, to the measure of the statue which belongs to the fullness of Christ."

Now, that is discipline. That is taking somebody, and giving him the equipment to serve God, and not to be a casualty in the devil's world – to be able to achieve his mission in life; to execute his calling; and, to be a mature Christian man and woman. That kind of a disciple will result in verse 14: "As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, to be carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, and by the craftiness and deceitful scheming." And that's the kind of discipling that's going on in the church today.

In missionary enterprises, the missionary has the word "indigenous" that he has to describe his objective with the people that he's ministering to – to put them on their own feet, so that they are capable of knowing the Word of God, and they are capable of following the leadings of God. They are capable of having spiritual leaders rise up among them – an indigenous mission point. There are a lot of Christians in this country who never get indigenous. They're the ones that are suckers for the people who come around and say, "I'm in the discipling business. You and I will work one-on-one." And what they're giving them is a therapist's treatment: "I'll be there when you call. Call me in the middle of the night. I'll be there. Call me whatever your situation is: I'll be there." And they're giving them good counseling advice. They're like Dr. Laura Schlessinger, dressed up in mens' clothing.

"But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, Who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body, for the building up of itself in love. That is what the church ministry is all about: getting Christians to be built up with a framework of love on the basis of the mind of God.

2 Peter 3:16: "As also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and the unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures to their own destruction." He is speaking about the epistles of Paul. And Peter says, "Paul has some things that are so deep, that it really takes some explanation, and it really takes some help to understand. And people who don't get the help, twist the Scripture and just started. That's all your relatives who have all those dumb ideas about spiritual matters, but who think they're such great authorities, because they got a pretty good IQ, so they can figure it out.

What's my point? The only legitimate discipling is the divine setup of the local church with its pastor-teacher to instruct in the Word of God, so that the learners know what to do and how to be able to do it. They become disciples then of the Lord Jesus Christ, not of the therapist counselor. I'll tell you what these disciples do also (these therapist / counselor types of disciples) – they make the people dependent upon themselves. More and more, their eyes are not on the Lord. Their dependence is not indigenous Christians, working with God. They're depending on the counselor. They get into a problem in life, and they say, "Hey, Sam, I have this problem here. Can we get together?" "Yeah." That's exactly what you do with your psychological therapist that you pay. What does he do? He sits back; you lean on the couch; and, he says, "Tell me your troubles." And you talk to him. And he says, "What do you think you should do?" And you say, "Well, I think I should do this about it." He says, "That sounds good. How do you feel? Do you think you should feel that?" And you say, "No, I don't." And pretty soon, you've answered all your own questions. You pay him $50 or $100, and you leave. Me? I'm discipling you here. There's not one person who is going to tell me anything this morning.

Some time ago, for many years, we had a man here that every time he shook my hand at the end of a service, he'd leave a dollar bill in it. He was the only person I looked forward to meeting on Sundays. It was his way of saying, "Thank you, personally, for the instruction in the Word of God." And, of course, he was right on target, wasn't he? If you don't get anything out of the service of biblical instruction and expository teaching, you shouldn't put anything in the offering box. But if you, you have a huge obligation to go to the limit. The only legitimate discipling is by teaching the Word of God. And the best forum for that is the one that God established in the local church operation. The result then is that the cycle is able to stand on his own feet as a genuine follower of Jesus Christ otherwise. Otherwise, he's going to crash, sooner or later, and the devastation will be enormous. He will crash sooner or later.

So, what about all these churches all around us who are disbanding Sunday evening church services, or getting them as early as they can to get them out of the way, and minimizing them? They're substituting by creating little discipling groups, by which they mean social clubs: a little coffee; a few cookies; and, talking about the Bible. They have a leader who has something to say – mostly touchy-feely kind of stuff. What are they doing? They're guilty of destroying the flock of that congregation. And they're making believers putty in the devil's hands. This is the result of pastors who are disoriented to their mission, and members who have itching ears who want to hear certain things, and who want to be told certain things. And that's what the guy who looks for discipline, and the discipling technique is looking for. He very often wants confirmation to make him feel good in what he's doing that's wrong.

Christians, we must always remember, belong to God the Father, and therefore, we are to be His followers. And all discipling must point to Him. We are admonished in the Word of God to follow godly living according to principles of the moral code of God. And we are to seek to live in His service, above all else in life. I'm going to say it again, and I'm going to read it again, because I want to be sure that you understand this – how God expects you to conduct your life. And even if you say, "I don't like it," and even if your teenager says, "I don't want to do that," or if your friends say, "I don't want to do that," at least you will say, "Yes, I know that this is God's way. I can't deny that. I don't want to do that." OK, that's the freedom of grace.

However, here is God's way. Matthew 6:33: "But seek first His kingdom, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." This is talking about all the things of life that you think are significant, and that you want, whether they are material, social, marital, or whatever it is, "Seek first God's Kingdom." And let me tell you something. Don't ever forget that that word "seek" is imperative mood. Does anybody have enough education to know what imperative mood means in grammar? It's a command." It is not an invitation. God is not telling you, "I would like you to build your life around Me." God is saying, "Build your life around Me. And that's an order. It's a divine command in the Greek. So, if you ignore this (young person, or older person), you do so at your own peril: "Seek first (number one) God our Father, and all the things that pertain to His kingdom, from the church moving out into the kingdom, and His righteousness (seeking to be the godly person who operates on the reconciliation that has been given to you), to the standard of absolute righteousness. You have been adjusted to be able to live the standard of God, and all these things, whatever else in life there is that you think is important (good grades; fun; or, somebody to marry), they're all going to be added to you."

Well, another way to translate this Greek word "added" here is: "provided." You're not going to have to hustle for it. God is going to give you these things. Talk about a pattern for success!

This commandment of life focuses upon the will of God, and our life with God above anything else, and that's what we're talking about – this number one priority is reinforced in other Scriptures. In Acts 20:28, the apostle Paul, in saying "Goodbye" to the Ephesians elders, says, "Be on guard for yourselves, pastor-teachers, and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseer's to shepherd (to feed) the church of God, which he purchased with His own blood." Wait a minute. If somebody buys you, you belong to him. Has God bought you? You betcha. You don't belong to yourself. You belong to Him. So, where do you get off saying, "Here are my plans; here is what I'm doing; and, here is my life, without taking into account His business first? Even a 12-year-old Jesus could say to His mother, "Do you not know that I should have been about the things of My Father first – His business? And that's why I stayed behind here in Jerusalem?"

Now, Romans 14:7-8 is another version of the same subject: "For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself. For if we live, we live for the Lord. If we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." Got it? You don't belong to yourself.

Let's close in a little more with 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Pay attention carefully to these. This is the first step toward magnificent personal dignity: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom you have from God, and that you are not your own. For you have been bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body. And we have previously seen that the price with which we were bought was the blood of Christ when He died for us. When He saved us, we switched from being the slaves of Satan to being the slaves of Jesus Christ; from being the slaves of using our bodies for evil, to being the slaves of using our bodies for righteousness: "You have been bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God with your body.

Now, that's pretty interesting, isn't it? How am I going to glorify God with my body? By where you are? That's how you glorify God with your body: by where you are. I will not add unnecessarily to corruptive bad thoughts in your mind by describing to you all the filthy lowlife places your body could be, or your body could be engaged in, or the trivialities of life where your body could be. That's just as bad. There is so much triviality, and so much insignificance that your life can be used up on. Glorify God with your body by where it is.

Add to that 1 Corinthians 7:23: "You were bought with a price. Do not become the slaves of men." You say, "Oh, but I have to go to this social thing. I have to go to this thing." Who's in charge? Men. Are you're going to be a slave of man? When God says, "Here you have this duty. You have this opportunity. You have this calling here." Are you going to go with men instead of with God? You're a slave of God, but are you going to let yourself be enslaved to men?

Well, we can always count on the apostle Peter to come through with a good punch line. 1 Peter 1:17-19: "And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon this earth." There it is. That's all I'm trying to tell you. Be very much concerned how you spend the time of your daily life. Start back with our Matthew 6:33, seeking first the things of the Kingdom of God. That is where you spend the time of your life on earth. Verse 18: "Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood as of a lamb unblemished, and spotless, the blood of Jesus Christ." He bought you. He owns you. And Who better to own you?. Whose better slave to be. What a better master could you have Who will now conduct your daily life, and the daily investment of your activities, and the time of your life as you use it up?

In our faculty prayer meeting, we're reading through the book of Job currently. Job was written 500 years before the book of Genesis. There are tremendous theological concepts in the book, that far back – the first book of the Bible written. And one of the things that Job says is: "Everybody has an allotted lifetime. And when you've used up your months, it's all gone. You are immortal up to a certain point. Whatever they checked out by divine arrangement, and divine decisions, when you took your first breath, they clicked in to the heavenly computers when you're going to check out. Until then, no matter what Satan may do, in buffeting you, as demonstrated by Job, you're not going to go down. But why? In the meantime, you can maximize the value of your life for eternal rewards – your service to Him, and your life for God (Who is your Master) comes number one. You don't thumb your nose at your master.

2 Peter 2:6-8: "And if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter; if he rescued righteously Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men." And we previously said: "Don't be a slave of men, because you're a slave of God." But here's Lot, who what would Sodom and Gomorrah: "For by what he saw and heard, that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds." Anybody who moves in association with the world has to, sooner or later, feel a great sense of humiliation as God our Father is degraded by what people say, and by what people do. And the corruption is flowing out there. You young people should know it.

One of the good programs, I thought, on television was "Diagnosis: Murder." It came with a new season, and it had a big two-hour special this past week. They have an actress on there who's character is Amanda. She's a Black lady. She's a doctor. She's a very good actress. And this has been a very clean-cut, interesting, mystery-story program. And I'll be – what should happen. Well, along comes an FBI agent, and they're on a case of a crashed airplane, and they suspect some kind of terrorism. And in the process, this black FBI agent and Amanda, the doctor – they meet, and they're not friends at first. Then they warm up to each other. And pretty soon, they're stepping over the bonds of kissing in an intimate way. And in the next scene, there they are in bed. And I'm standing there, horrified. A good program like this was corrupted and degenerated? For what purpose? Well, television does thing things for only one purpose: for the money. It's to draw the viewers. And I say, "This is what has to be done in America today – that a program that was clean-cut should have overnight become so degrading and so corrupt? Talk about the lack of dignity! There was the lack of dignity to hop into bed with a stranger, virtually, and to degrade oneself. And then, when it was over, they went their separate ways. How do you feel about that? Many people say, "Oh, it's OK. I'm sympathetic. I'd like to be kind to them." Why don't you discuss that with Dr. Laura, and see what she would say is the attitude you should have toward condoning evil? Better yet, why don't you consider consulting with God your Father – what He might feel about your being so open-minded that your brains fall out, and you have no sensible thinking anymore to condone evil?

I want to close with that same segment. Revelation 5:9-10 is where we're all going to end up. Here is the glorious termination of it all: "And they sang a new song, saying, (these are the 24 elders in heaven, praising Christ), 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals.'" He's about ready to break the seven seals on the book about which Daniel said, "Seal up until the end times:" For You were slain, and are purchased for God with Your blood men – from every tribe; tongue; people; and, nation, and you have made them to be a kingdom and priest to our God. And they will reign upon the earth." That's you. That is you people. And how should you act? "How should you then live," to use a scriptural term, in view of that kind of a destiny? Whatever your age, live with the dignity that befits a child of the royal family of God.

**Sunday – The Lord's Day**

So, what does that mean? I belong to him. Sunday is declared in the Word of God to be the Lord's Day, because it is the new day commemorating the new age and the new work of God (in contrast to Saturday, the Sabbath day) commemorating the church age. It is the Lord's Day, and it is set aside, as we have found in Scripture, for the explicit purpose of feeding upon the Word of God, and for Christian fellowship expressed in the Lord's Supper, such as we will have tonight, and in prayer, such as we will have Wednesday. And I say that, on the basis of all that we have seen this morning, and on the basis of this principle (this being the Lord's Day, for a special purpose), it is not a day in which priority is to be given to anything else beside the Lord first. Whatever else you're free to do, you're free to do a lot of things on this day. But first of all, you are obliged to focus your life, and to form it around Him. Let nothing interfere, if you are free to choose it, with your being here, in the presence of God; angels; and, this assembly of believers, for the instruction in the Word of God as the Lord's Day.

Acts 2:42 is our guideline: "And they were (the believers) continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching ('doctrine' is the word for 'teaching), and to fellowship in the form of the breaking of bread (the Lord's Supper), and to prayer: Then the writer of the book of Hebrews, in Hebrews 10:23-25, clinches it by this statement. Where am I on Sunday morning and Sunday night, if I have a choice to be there: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope, without wavering, for He Who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and to good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more, as you see the day drawing near."

When you are here in these church services, you encourage everybody else by your presence. People walk in, and they look around here, all over this room. I see people. I know their names. You know their names. They're not here. I hope that they're not failing to be sitting here by choice, but by choice, to have said, "I'm taking over the Lord's Day because I have some things I want to do." What am I saying? I'm saying do not be absent from the church services. Do not be absent from the Christian education events of Sunday school and Training Union. Do not be absent from the Berean Youth Club meetings. Do not be absent from prayer meeting, or for anything else in Satan's world society. Do not substitute for these things with something that makes you an agent of men instead of an agent of God. Do not do not stay home from a church service for visiting guests. They'll soon learn what you think of God, and what you think of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many years ago, I had a lady whose husband would not come to church. Well, come Sunday, he wanted her to stay at home. She said, "No, I can't. I have an obligation. It's the Lord's Day. And I have to be in church. That's where He tells me to be. And she was faithful to that in a very nice way, and he was willing to agree. And finally, he came with her. He got the picture; he got the Word; he got the gospel; and, He was saved. And then he stood up and said, "The thing that saved me was that my wife was not just a bigmouth about her religious life. Her devotion in attending the church services, even though it was uncomfortable for her because of my objection and my lack of cooperation, made it clear to me that what she had there was real. This was not just something she could blow off.

So, if you get visiting guests, you don't stay home from church so they can see how you can readily blow off, and how little you think of them blowing off the Word of God. You don't stay home from youth clubs, or from any of these activities just because you have schoolwork. Do your best to get it done in an orderly fashion. What you can't do, your Master says, "I'm waiting for you at the meeting." Do not use the Lord's Day to absent yourself from bad weather. Do not absent yourself for not feeling like it. Do not absent yourself because there are people in the congregation who irritate you. Boy, how many would we have on that account? Do not absent yourself because you have a big social event you need to go to. It means not sleeping in. It means not sports. It means not entertainments, substituting. It means not for anything. You don't put the things of God second to anything in your life. "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," and everything you need (good grades, or whatever) will be added unto you.

The Christian service activities I had when I was at Baylor University sometimes made me nervous, because I couldn't get all the kind of schoolwork done. Sometime I needed to needed to push it to the line. I had papers to write. And I was going in all direction. I was double-majoring in Bible and education, and double-minoring in English and history. And I had to do all of them. And I was trying to really make good grades – the best I could. And bingo! When it was time for Christian service, that's where my heart was. And finally, the tests came for graduating with honors. I had to go and take the big exam. I took the big exam; turned it in; and, never got any word. Graduation day came, and I was sitting in the auditorium at Baylor, and I picked up the program, and they're on the back, it listed those who were getting a Bachelor of Arts degree with honors. I was interested in the "D" section, and I ran my eye down, and found my name as one of the ones who graduated with honors. I didn't know it until that very moment. I was dressed in my black gown. . . I was hoping that the printer wouldn't make a mistake.

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteous." You're going to get it all. Everything that's worth getting, you'll get it. So, nothing stands in the way of being at church being and at these activities. And if you have a church ministry, dear friends, a responsibility – please, have the dignity to be on hand to do it. Don't have a responsibility of being in the nursery that you're so valuable to us in, and then forget to be there. Don't have the responsibility of teaching in all the different areas of Sunday school; Training Union; and, clubs, and then not be on hand to do the job, or be prepared to do it. Don't be in some music ministry, and when it's time for choir practice, don't be all someplace else. If it's time for band practice, don't be off someplace else – not if you want to walk with God, and not if you want to be a winner. Do not do anything for man, or for man's activities, in this world system that substitutes for the things of God. That's being very short-sighted. I've given you plenty of Scriptures so that you understand that you don't belong yourself. You're bought by the Lord Jesus Christ, and He has commanded you to build your life around him. Campus maintenance? Promises unkept? Do the job that God has laid on your heart, and let's pull everybody in. Every one of us has that spiritual gift. Use your spiritual gift. Use the spiritual gift you have. Do not let it lay dormant. You will account to God for it. And you will regret the fact that you had these spiritual gifts, and you didn't use them. Don't make us have to run after you to get you to use your spiritual gift that God has given you – the ability, and the means, and the talent, and the time to do.

It is essential that we Christians, therefore, do not fill our lives with many things by choice, such that we push out the things of our relationship to our father. He forbids it. Just don't do some things. Just don't belong to some organizations. Just don't engage in some activities. Just cancel out some things, and give God the time. Don't be giving Him the back of your hand, sitting at home, and saying, "Oh, hey, man, we have to get the church. Well, it's too late. We'll stay home today."

**Occupation with Christ**

Schedule your life to make God your priority. That's called occupation with Christ. And you're never too young to begin that. Fit things into your life, and around your life, with God. Don't work God into what's left over after you have chosen a life. And that's the problem. So many Christians already have a life such that they have no room for the best life. And they even have a good life, but the best life is the one that God has for them, but they can't respond to His calling because they already have a life in the world system. And what is that going to be worth? Jesus is coming again – sooner than we think. Then what about the life you've lived?

I close with 1 John 2:15-17. It's worth repeating. Here we have imperatives – the commands of God: "Do not love the world." Just don't be on good terms with the world. Be a testimony. Be civil with the world, but don't be camaraderie with the world. Do not have a mental attitude goodwill toward the world, because it's a system of organization of Satan, and he runs it: "nor the things in the world." What good is it for you to accumulate all the things you have, and all the improvements on your house, when you are dirt poor with eternal rewards in heaven with God, and your life is a Fig Newton of nothing? "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." So, don't be a hypocrite. Say, "I love the world. I love Satan's system more than I love my Father." Demas did. And he said, "I'm out of here, Paul. I'm going to Thessalonica. I really love that life better."

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh (the sin nature), the lust of the eyes (the covetousness) and the boastful pride of life (the arrogance of the sin nature) is not from the Father, but is from the world." That is the arrogance of human viewpoint: "And the world is passing away, and also its lusts. But the one who does the will of God abides forever."

Dear father, we thank You for the Word of God, clear and to the point.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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