***Spiritual Maturity
and the HICEE Technique

Colossians 1:21-23

COL-169***

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Our subject is "Reconciliation of the Colossians," segment number 14 in Colossians 1:21-23.

We have been reviewing the apostle Paul's admonition to the believers in the city of Colossae in Colossians 1:21, after reminding them that they have been readjusted in their lives to the divine standard of absolute righteousness, so that they should now live in a totally different lifestyle than they ever knew before. And verse 21 says, "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind (engaged in evil deeds)." That is a small summary statement of what is expanded in considerable detail in Ephesians 4:17-19. And we have covered those verses in detail – the horrible degeneration that is possible for every believer in this room, and for all those who will hear us later.

Now, there is an occupational hazard in what we are telling you that, you should be aware of at this point in time. You take this instruction seriously. You keep readjusting your life to feeding upon the Word of God, and never giving up for a moment. You refuse to sit anywhere where you are not instructed in the Word of God. You refuse to put your money in the offering plate or the offering box where you have not been benefited spiritually so that your mind (not your emotions, and not your volition, but) the mentality of your soul has been fed the Word of God, so that your emotions will be controlled. And your volition will be the will of God being performed in your life. You get serious about that, and you pursue that kind of a lifestyle, and you're in for big trouble by . . . the devil. I see it all the time.

Christians who are floating along, not posing too much threat to the devil's kingdom, don't have any trouble. But along comes a Christian who suddenly says, "God has enabled me to do something. God has burdened me to do this. This is part of my mission. And I'm going to go for it." And indeed, it's a response to a leading of the Spirit of God that enables the Word of God to be communicated, and to be proclaimed. That person is going to get hit. That's why the prayer factor is so important. You must go through your day as 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Scripture says: "Pray without ceasing." It doesn't mean at certain stated times. It means all day long, as the issues of life come up, as the activities that you're going to be engaged in require God's protective care.

If the devil had his way, none of you would get home alive tonight. He is a murderer from the beginning, the Scriptures tell us. And the only reason you're going to make it is because the grace of God has you under protective custody. That's why it's very dangerous to get out into carnality and reversionism, because then you are no longer under the protective custody of God. If you follow what's happened in Ephesians 4:17-19, you have hit the slippery slope down to total deterioration spiritually. And you are no longer under the guidance of God, and under the wisdom of God. The only mind you have now is the mind of Satan working through your sin nature.

So, you should be aware that, if you're going to be serious about the Christian life; if you're going to view the world for what it is – our enemy; and you're going to view all those sweet friends you have and all those kids at school who know not God, and who will like to be like the world – they are your enemies because they are the Father's enemies. And if you do not take that seriously, then the devil won't bother you. But if you say, "I'm for the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm going to be loyal to Him. He is my true love, and I'll not be unfaithful to him." Then the devil's going to come right in, and he's going to give you trouble. He's going to hit you in all kinds of ways: emotionally; intellectually; socially; and, spiritually. He's going to bring problems into your life. He's going to bring financial problems; he's going to bring physical problems. He's going to bring all kinds of reasons to dissuade you from not living like one of the pigs of the world, but like the prince or princess that you are.

**Super Grace**

Every Christian can go from babyhood spiritually, which is where he is at the point of salvation, to spiritual grace maturity, which is the highest point in the spiritual life – to go from babyhood spiritually to the highest point of spiritual grace maturity, which is the prime of spiritual life. Not too many Christians ever get up to super grace level. Most of them don't even know the verse in the Bible that promises that, let alone to get to it, and how to get to it.

However, what the devil is trying to do is to keep you always in a reverse direction, so that you'll be following Ephesians 4:17-19 on that downward slope. He does not want you to be climbing that upward path to the mountain top of experience. Please remember that to be spiritual is not something how you act, or even how you think. To be spiritual means that God the Holy Spirit is in charge of your life.

So a baby Christian, who doesn't know schmaltz about the Word of God, is able to be a spiritual person, and thus, to grow in the knowledge and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. A person at super-grace level is also a spiritual Christian, because he's controlled by the Holy Spirit. But something terrible happens when that spiritual maturity Christian (that super-grace Christian) gets sloppy, and steps out of temporal fellowship. Immediately, he is on the downward path. The Christian life is never static. It's always up or down. And a line in the old spiritual song is not too well taken: "Sometimes I'm up, and sometimes I'm down, but always I'm heaven-bound." Well, yes, you're always heaven bound, but you should not be sometimes up and sometimes down. Down is bad. Always, it is up. You don't have to the super-grace level of your spiritual maturity, and then conk over, and slide down again.

The super-grace level is the prime of your spiritual life. That is promised to us in James 4:6, "But He (God) gives greater grace." The Greek word for "greater" is "megas." That means "greater," or "super-abounding" grace. "Therefore, he says God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble." The proud is the carnal Christian. The humble is the spiritual Christian. The proud Christian is the one who is very sloppy about his temporal fellowship. The humble Christian is very sensitive about that, and very careful to maintain it. And God, to the humble Christian, who is walking by means of the Holy Spirit, who's walking in temporal fellowship with his heavenly Father, and who can't wait to do enough for him, that is the Christian who keeps moving up to super-grace level of living (super-abounding grace). What a promise!

**Agape Love**

But it does bring up the question: how do you get there? And at this point, some honky-tonky preacher is going to start playing the emotional line with you, and start getting you all oozy and touchy-feely, and try to play that game with you, to make you think that that's how you're going to get close to Jesus. The only way you're going to have an appreciation which is an emotion for the Lord Jesus Christ is the way He said you're going to have it: by obeying His commandments. And the only way you're going to obey His commandments is because somebody has taught you those commandments (those principles of doctrine) from the Word of God – not from your English Bible or from your opinions, but from the words of the Holy Spirit in the original languages. Then you'll know the commandments of God. Then you can be obedient. Then the mind of Christ will be functioning in your mind. And then you will have the greatest love you can imagine for Christ. That will be an emotion that is so overwhelming and so generous in its expression, and so powerful, that you will know what real love is. And that same love is what will be expressed toward your husband or your wife; toward your Christian friends; and, toward that unsaved world. You can't crank this up. It's part of the fruit of the Spirit – mental-attitude, agape love.

So this is the prime of life. It's promise in Scripture. This is the level which is reached by the use of the grace system of perception for storing doctrine in your human spirit. I'm not going to go through the diagram again. You should know it well now. The grace system of perception means that no matter what your IQ is, you'll be able to learn doctrine, as well as the person with the most brilliant IQ. It's a very strange thing. And almost every time I say that, somebody comes up to me and says, "You know, I knew this fella. He was really retarded, and it was very hard to deal with him. But when he talked about the Bible, he just knew everything, and he was very sensitive to the Lord." That is because it doesn't matter how smart you are. But it does matter that you're able to enter a local church, and you're going to sit down, and there's a pastor-teacher who's going to explain the mind of Christ to you from the Word of God. It comes from God. It goes through the Bible, and from the Bible to the pastor-teacher, if he does his work properly, by the right technique. And then it goes to the local church assembly, and the local church service as in Acts 2:42: "They gathered for the apostles' doctrine." That's what a church service is all about.

**The Spiritual Maturity Structure**

Then you'll be able to store the Word of God, because you say "Amen" to what you're taught. It gets stored in your human spirit. That is the grace system of perception. As long as you're in temporal fellowship, the Word of God in your human spirit is going to come cranking up into your mind when you need to know it. The Spiritual Christian at super-grace level is a fully developed, spiritual maturity structure Christian. That's what super-grace is. And what that means is that there are five facets. This is laid out for us in 2 Corinthians 12:10. We can't get into that tonight. It uses different words, but for teaching purposes, we Paul thanks God for these five facets, because when he has them, he is strong spiritually.

**Grace Orientation**

These five faces include: grace orientation – to know how to live by the grace of God. Oh boy, how people don't know how to live by the grace of God! A taper who called me this afternoon was distressed over how people were dealing with that life (the personal life of this individual) – butting in to that person's privacy and that person's priesthood, and intimidating this child of God. And I had to remind this person what it means to be oriented to grace. And when you're dealing with knuckleheads around you who are not oriented to grace, especially the religious crowd, you blow them off. You don't let them bring you down. Grace orientation, the whole church age is grace, grace, and grace.

**The Mastery of the Details of Life**

There is the mastery of details of life. This is the person who knows how to be in poverty and still walk with the Lord, and serve the Lord. What he has doesn't make any difference. Like Job, who, after he lost it all, he was still at super-grace level of his spiritual life, because he knew God, and he had God. And here is the mastery details of life.

There's the issue of personal prosperity – when God makes you wealthy, and when God brings financial resources into your life. Why in the world would any Christian, who knows anything at all about the Word of God, ever forget the story of the rich man who says, "Now I'm going to build a bigger barn? Boy, do I ever have a nice retirement fund! Have I ever have a security for my future! "You fool," God said, "you're going to die tonight. You're not even going to make it home. Then whose will be all that?" It is a wonderful thing to be able to be a spiritual godly person when you're in poverty. And then when you become filled with great prosperity, it doesn't change anything. You still know that prosperity is godliness. And you have that whether you're poor, broke, or whether you're flush.

**The Capacity to Love**

Next is the capacity to love: the agape capacity of love, which is part of fruit of the Spirit.

**The Relaxed Mental Attitude**

Then there is the relaxed mental attitude: taking life in stride, and having an emotional love. That's what a relaxed mental attitude is. You have such an emotional love that, even the Christian, who irritates the fool out of you, you treat in grace. The Christian who is a real wacko, you treat with a relaxed mental attitude.

**Inner Happiness**

Then there's that inner happiness which the Spirit of God gives you. It's not dependent on circumstances, persons, or things.

Well, what this is, when you build this spiritual maturity structure of the soul, is really a container. And when it is at the super-grace level of development, with these five facets at maturity level, now the grace of God pours in from all sides, and it just rises and rises and rises and rises. And pretty soon, your cup runneth over. As Psalm 23:5 says, "My cup runneth over." This is super-grace living. You cannot contain the blessings that God brings you. And the more you do for Him, the more he does for you.

Why would a Christian want to live in any other way or at any other level? For most of them, it's because they never heard of this. They never heard the word super-grace. They never heard the James passage explained in its technique. It's one thing to know a doctrine, but then you have to know the mechanics on how you get there, and what's to be done.

While a Christian is at super-grace level in his life, he's in temporal fellowship, he has a very wonderful life of walking with God, and of divine good service. He's enriching himself in time and in eternity, and his cup is running over with the blessings of God being poured upon him.

So, you wanted the kids here tonight. What is a kid? Well, we have to go to the Bible. The Old Testament, fortunately, gives us the age when you stop being a kid: age 20. At age 20, you're now responsible for what you do in your life. And up to then you are not a child, but you are a youth. What a tremendous blessing to know what you've heard tonight. . . .

You're living at super-grace, and God's blessings are just pouring over because the container you built can't hold them any longer. You're not going to be living the life of some immoral dog. You are not going to be violating your relationship to Jesus Christ, and being disloyal to Him. You'll not lack appreciation for your parents, and for those who have cared for you. You will not be attracted to the world. You will watch television, and you'll have a doggy bag to throw up in. You will not just sit there watching and say, "Ha ha ha ha." You will say, "That's disgusting, and that's revolting. And you'll not want to be like all the rest of the kids around you at school, unless they too are walking with God. Then you put your arm around them, and they're your bosom buddies.

If you learn this system, and if you learn the importance of storing that Word of God in your human spirit, you'll go through your whole life piling up blessing upon blessing in this life, and what you send ahead to heaven. That's the life that God has designed for us. The super-grace believer can, through lack of spiritual nutrition, however, fail to feed upon the Word of God, and fail to maintain his temporal fellowship with his known sins confessed, and he can rapidly deteriorate spiritually. And this is the problem with prosperity. It's so much easier to walk with the Lord when you're poor. But as soon as you get some real dough, then you think you have really become one of the elites. Then you become very self-confident. Then you become something significant. And I have to remind you that people who consider themselves the upper crust in society are nothing but a bunch of crumbs held together by their own dough. They are zilch and nothing.

**Reversionism**

So, don't be impressed by the people of the world. But it is an occupational hazard of the Christian life that those who live at super-grace level can deteriorate sometimes almost overnight. Just let down your guard: "Let him who thinks he stands take heed, lets he fall." And (bingo!), the devil comes in at some point, and gets between the armor, and you come down. What happens is that you go into carnality. Now the sin nature controls, and is in charge of your life as a believer. If you persist in carnality, and do not confess, do not get back on-track, the result is reversion. You don't go into reversionism immediately. The old term used to be backsliding. Well, you begin reverting from super-grace level. And your calloused soul will take you through the steps of Ephesians 4:17-19 that we have looked at in great detail, until you're right down there at the bottom of the pile. Persistent reversionism will, at some point, bring you to the place of no return. Somewhere along the line, persistent reversionism brings you to the point of no return spiritually, and at that point you may experience the sin unto death. At that point, the calloused believer is simply taken to heaven. God has no more use for you on this earth. And off you go to heaven, the poorer for it in eternity.

All the while, however, be sensitive to the fact that God our Father is going to jerk your chain on your way down into carnality. He's going to try to get your attention. He's going to try to bring you to repentance. He's going to try to get you to be restored to spiritual maturity, and to divine good service. He's going to jerk your chain. So, when things come into your life that are not very pleasant, you ought to ask yourself, what does this mean?

**Undeserved Suffering**

Yes, sometimes a Christian experiences undeserved suffering. Job is a classic example. But more often than not, the suffering is what we have brought upon ourselves, and God is trying to say something. Conviction of sin is when you say, "Yes Lord, I am out of line," will enable the defeated sinning carnal Christian to begin the process of rebuilding the spiritual maturity structure in his soul. That process begins by getting sensitive to God. Now, you're in reversion, and, as we saw in our Ephesians 4:17-19 passage, you have become calloused toward God in your soul. You have a hardness of your mind toward Him; a hardness of your will; and, a hardness of your emotions. So how are you going to start having a sensitive walk with God?

When I used to play the baritone horn, the thumb was through the ring just above the valves. And because I used to play it so much, both at school and practice at home, gradually, a large lump developed on the inside of this thumb. And it was hard as a rock. It was a callous. It was from that constant rubbing against that ring. There's just a little left, I think. You can come up and feel it tonight if you'd like to see what it was like. But it was just horrible. There was this big lump, just as a hard rocky callous there from that ring. And I couldn't decide, "Gee, that looks funny. I might hold hands with a girl sometime, and she might feel that. I think I'll take that off." But, I couldn't. It had to come back off, layer-by-layer, the way it was put on there. And as the time came when I wasn't playing the instrument that much, that's what happened. The layers peeled off, and peeled off, and it got back down to its normal sensitive condition.

Now you can't just remove the callouses from your mind; from your volition; and, from your emotions that have made you insensitive to God, just because you decide you're going to get better. That's what the con artists out there do by playing your emotions: calling you to come to the Lord. Sometimes, they'll ask you to come forward down the aisle.

When I first became pastor of the Berean Memorial Church, we used to meet in the library, and my predecessor had a bench down front. It was covered with an army blanket. It was the mourner's bench. And every service, we'd call people down to get on their knees, and mourn in front of the bench. But nobody ever knew how to get back to the Lord. Nobody ever mentioned about confessing sins. Nobody ever mentioned what repentance was – to cease and desist. Everybody just came, and had a little jag, and then went home and watched Sid Caesar. But there was nothing spiritually accomplished by manipulating people's emotions in that way. You have to remove these callouses. The process for restoration, and the happy end result of being back to super-grace level, with your cup running over, is explained for us in Ephesians 4:20-24. And we pick it up there.

Verse 20: Here's the Christian's resource, "But you did not learn Christ in this way." What is he referring to? He's referring to Ephesians 4:17-19, that degenerative, gradual step down, down, down into total carnality and total reversion. All solutions for our spiritual problems must come through the Word of God, the Bible. The mistake is often made by bypassing the learning of doctrine, and positive volition to it, in meeting a spiritual breakdown. What is happening in this auditorium right now is that I am counseling you, and I'm discipling you. I'm discipling you for the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm attaching you to Him. There's only one way that that can be done. That is through your intake of the word of doctrine. That is the only way that you can be discipled for Christ. That is the only way you can be counseled. Laura Schlesinger can give you counseling therapy. And she has a lot of brains, and a lot of sense, and a lot of good advice. But it is not the Word of God. And it is the Word of God, which is alive and powerful, that makes great changes in the human mind.

So, this bypassing of the only way that a human being can be changed, which is by the Word of God, is Satan's greatest victory. What are all the social problems of our society today? How are they dealt with? A government program. Does that government program include salvation; the Word of God; and, the knowledge of doctrine principles? No. And yet that's the only thing that's going to solve any problem, whatever it is – any evil of society. You and I know that because we understand how God works. If the physical body breaks down from malnutrition, the solution is to get proper food to it. Get a food supply. Exercise alone is not going to help your body. When you're suffering from malnutrition, you have to get the nutrients there. Exercising isn't going to fix anything.

In a spiritual breakdown, you lack spiritual food. That's what brought it about: either through your negative volition; or, through your failure to be in church, to be instructed. And so what do you do? You have a spiritual problem. You have a problem in the family. You have a problem in some area of relationships. You go hustling around. You go playing emotional games. You hustle around in religious activities of one kind or another, thinking that if you do things for God, you're going to become a strong Christian. But you don't. You can't physically get to be strong without nutrition. You can't spiritually get strong without spiritual nutrition. They're both exactly the same. And if anybody else plays a game to try to suggest to you otherwise, they're lying, and they're deceiving, and they're playing you for personal benefit.

A Christian is led astray by proposed solutions from a psychological nature – a psychological frame of reference. That'll maybe give you temporary relief. People get high emotionally on anticipation, but there is no sustaining foundation from the Word of God. God has the answers, and yet church services are so often nothing more than getting people on an emotional high, and they go out, and on Monday morning, they're all backed down to the bottom again.

The interpretation and the learning of doctrine is the key to all of life. And the local church (guess what?), is the primary place where that is supplied. That's why we have a local church. So, you should understand how much is at stake for you personally, that that organization (the local church) is functioning in its proper divine calling. Otherwise, you're in a heap of trouble.

Ephesians 4:20: "But you did not learn Christ in this way:" "You believers (you people), who have degenerated according to the pattern of verses 17-19, that is not the way you were taught Christ," Paul tells his Ephesian Christians. That is not the way you were led to him. This is not the way you learned him. And here's the Greek word for learning. It's "manthano" (man-than'-o), M A N T H A N O. "Manthano" means "to learn from a teacher." Here, you did not learn Christ, from what teacher? Here it's specifically Paul who is acting as a pastor-teacher. And he said, "This is not the way you learn to function in the Christian life (in the life of Jesus Christ). What he is telling us here is that there's a way for a Christian to learn about Christ, and about the Christian life. That is to learn doctrine from a teacher.

**The HICEE Technique**

Now, this teacher (which will be the local church pastor-teacher) – if he is going to teach you the Word of God, he has to do it by the only method that'll work. We have called it expository preaching. Or we call it the HICEE technique: Hermeneutics; Isagogics; Categories of doctrine; Exegesis; and, etymology." Preachers hate this. They hate anybody to even be told this, because if you go up to them and say, "Do you teach by the HICEE technique," they won't know what you mean, and you can say, "I can explain that.

**Hermeneutics**

First of all, do you deal with hermeneutics? Do you prepare your messages according to principles of teaching? That's what hermeneutics is. It is how you teach principles of interpretation, more specifically. And all of you can tell me the number one principle for interpreting Scripture. The number one principle is literal interpretation to Scripture. That's it. The Bible says what it means, and it means what it says.

Now, if some preacher is symbolizing, and says that there's not going to be any return of Jesus Christ; there's not going to be any rapture; and, there's not going to be any 1,000-year earthly kingdom, that person is not interpreting the Bible literally. That is the fundamental hermeneutical principle – literal interpretation of Scripture. There are many others that guide interpretation.

**Isagogics**

Secondly is isagogics. That means the background of the time. When it says, in the book of Ruth, that she appealed to Boaz to be the kinsman redeemer, so that she could have a husband, what was the meaning of all that? It's meaningless to us. But it was the custom of the time. It was the Jewish order of doing things. When a husband died and left no offspring, and his name would now be lost to all history, God provided a way to preserve that family name. And you have to understand how the whole background to know why Ruth went in that night and slept at Boaz's feet on the threshing floor. It sounds kind of bad at first. I'm going to tell you about that very shortly in the future, in a few Sundays. But you won't understand that if somebody can't say, "Here's how they did things in those days. Here's the geography, here's how things were done." And Scripture won't be so significant.

You may not know that big Goliath here and little David here, playing on his harp, and getting ready to face Goliath on that field of battle, had to get five stones. Here's the brook. He had to walk toward him. You know the geography. He stopped at this brook, and picked up five aerodynamically smooth stones, and then walked across. Then he came up close, and shot the thing right in the middle of the guy's forehead, and dropped him down. While he's out cold, he cuts his head off, and Goliath wakes up dead. The significance of this is isagogics: "So, that's how it was. That was the condition. That was the geography. Now that Scripture comes to life. That was a pretty courageous thing to do – picking up your ammunition on the way to the battle."

**Categories**

Then there's Categories. Always be suspicious of any preacher that never, once in a while, says, "Now the doctrine of the deity of Christ in 15 points. Number one. . ." He hasn't brought together from all over Scripture the basic truth about a single doctrine: "The doctrine of the deity of the blood of Christ in 25 points. Point number one. . ." And he brings everything that the Bible has to say, in a major way, about that doctrine. Because, when you get that brought together for you, now you read the Bible and you say, "Oh yeah, I know that doctrine. Yeah, I know the hypostatic union of Christ. I know what the hypostatic union is about. I can talk about it down at the temple with the rabbis, if they knew anything about it. I know about the union of the human and the divine natures of Christ. That's called a hypostatic union. I know that the two natures never mixed. I know the two natures were always separated. And I know that Jesus lived by the human nature, not by His divine nature when He was here on earth. How did He live? Well, He field-tested the program of God's power dynamic system called "the doctrine in the human spirit" and "walking in temporal fellowship."

At the age of 12, He showed how much doctrine He had in His human spirit, and because he had no sin nature (He was always in temporal fellowship), He never could be brought down by Satan. He never sinned once. And by telling you that, if you have appropriate doctrine in your soul, and you are walking in temporal fellowship, you can virtually say "No to the devil every time," that's right. That's another point in Scripture: "Resist the devil, and He will flee from you, just like you did Christ in the wilderness of temptation."

**Etymology**

Then you have to have etymology. Etymology is the meaning of words. How do we know what God says unless somebody says, "Here's this Greek word, and I can tell you what it means. Here's this "if," and I can tell you what kind of an "if" this is. Then the Word of God suddenly becomes significant to you. I can open the book of Genesis in the Bible, and there I find, in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning Elohim (God)." What? Elohim? God – in the plural?

Note: A Hebrew word in the English Bible ending with 'im' is a plural ending.

Does that tell you something? "In the beginning 'Elohim' 'bara' (baw-raw') created." He spoke something, and it came into being. This was a God who was omnipotent. "Elohim" was the first indication of the Trinity – that God is One in essence, but Three Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in relationship. Well, when you know the meaning of those words, that's a significant passage.

Oh, the Jewish people – they squirm on that one, because they don't believe in the Trinity. They don't believe that Jesus was deity. And they have a terrible time with that, along with some other passages like even the Shama (~Deuteronomy 6:4): Hear, O Israel, the LORD is one God. The words there give them a real problem: what kind of a one that is? But when you know the words, suddenly all that has meaning.

**Exegesis**

Then the final is exegesis. That means grammar – how things fit together. What is the subject? What is the object? What is the verb? And how things are all put together so that you have meanings. Now that takes some going to school to learn, right? But when you have it, then you can explain the Bible to people. Without it, you can't do anything.

So, it's not some small thing to say, "If you're going to 'manthano,'" as Paul says: "This is what happened to you people. You didn't learn Christ in this way, that you should live in this terrible consequence of reversionism. What you were given was on an authoritative basis of the HICEE technique." He didn't call it that, but that's what he was doing. And here you have a prepared, expository preacher. That's the only way you're going to get him. And if he's not doing that, or capable of doing that, he's going to go for your emotions every time. He's not going to go for your mind.

You know that, in this ministry, we go for your mentality, because that's where the Word of God says that is where the devil goes. The devil goes for your mind. That's where he brings you down.

"You did not learn Christ in this way." This word "manthano" (man-than'-o) ("learn") is in the Greek aorist tense. That means a certain point in time. At a certain point in time, doctrine was communicated to the Ephesians. They were under the leading (teaching) of the Holy Spirit. There were functioning under the grace system of perception: God; Bible; pastor-teacher; the filling of the Holy Spirit; and, positive volition to what they heard. Then that was stored in the human spirit. The system worked to a "T."

And Paul says, "You didn't learn so that you could be deteriorated spiritually. This word in the grammar is active. It says that you did this yourself. You exercised positive volition. You came to hear me. You sat for the instruction. Your mind was focused. And the result was that doctrine was communicated to you, and you said, 'Amen,' with no mental reservations. It's just a fact of the spiritual life."

So, as positive volition to doctrine prevents the condition previously described as building calluses on the soul, so too, this is what peels them off. You go right back, and you do what you should have done in the first place that put the hardness there. You start getting tenderized by doctrine again. And, it took a while to build those things up (that hardness), and it'll take a little time to take it back off.

"You did not learn Christ in this way." This is not how you were brought to Jesus Christ. Furthermore, let me give you a little more translation. In Ephesians 4:20, the Greek says *the* Christ (Note: the *the* direct article is not translated in the English Bible.) Is that significant? Always. It is *the* particular Christ, the Messiah, who is related to the church as her Head; her right Man; her king; and, her Lord. To Israel He is the King. To the church, He is the Lord. You did not learn Jesus Christ in some relationship that would lead to evil. You learned Him as the one who is your Lord. You learned Him as the one who is your Head. Now what does the head do? The head thinks. The head has the brain. And Jesus Christ is the one who thinks for you. That's how you learn to be related to Him. And what He thinks is now in Scripture. Bible doctrine is "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). There's no other way to get it in the church age. You will not get it through touchy-feely playing of emotions.

You learned Christ through the Word of God that was authoritatively explained to you. Therefore, you learned to be associated with Him like a woman would be with her husband. And I need not tell you how gross it is to have a wife who is disloyal to her husband; who disgraces him; and, who shames him. And you ask yourself, "Where did she ever learn to treat me like that? Where did she learn to live like that?" And that's what Jesus is asking here: "Where did you learn to live like Ephesians 4:17-19 – that horrible, degenerative condition. Where did you learn that? You didn't learn it from doctrine. You didn't learn it from real instruction. You learned it from somebody else. That has come from Satan, because your sin nature has been placed in charge of your life: whatever the reason; and, wherever your breakdown is. Maybe God blessed you with too much prosperity. Maybe He gave you too much fame. Maybe He gave you too much authority, in some realm. But someplace along the line, you got to thinking you were significant, and forgot that all that we are is because of the grace of God.

Now, if the apostle Paul – that great, and terrific, wonderful, marvelous man), who made such an impact upon the kingdom of God, could say, "I am what I am by the grace of God, who are we to say that we can be anything less than by that grace.

2 Timothy 4:3-4: "For the time will come when they (Christians) will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires (their own sin nature desires), and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths." People who want to be accepted by the world – this is what those Christians do. You kids who want to be accepted in the circle of your friends at school who are not oriented the Word of God – this is what you do. You want your own desires. And you want to readjust the Word of God, and you want to re-adapt what God has said, so that the other people can be brought in.

Somebody recently talked to me about the problem of having unsaved relatives, or relatives who are totally out of the picture in carnality. And there are times when they want you to come over (special holidays). They want you to go and do things with them. Well, they have done things with you. Now, they want you to go to their life. I said, "That's a problem." All of us; some of us; or, most of us have had that all of our lives. And sometimes, we find that those nice religious relatives become a great burden. And how do we deal with them? We have to be true to Christ first. And we have to realize that even our very closest family members may be those who are really close to us. We didn't learn Christ that way. And we won't turn aside to myths, and to be compromising with these people just because they're family.

We close with 2 Timothy 3:5-7: "Holding to a form of godliness." These are the reversionist believers. "Holding to a form of godliness. Although they have denied the power, avoid such men as these." You may say, "Oh, I can't do that. I'm in school. I'm in a school organization. I belong to the Latin Club with them. We do things. We go places." It says, "Avoid such people as these." Do not get socially involved. Be a witness, and move through the world, but don't get involved with them on a social basis: "For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women, weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses (emotions)." Here they are, plying their trade of deceit on women who are inclined very often to be pliable in their emotional; their tenderness; and, their feelings. And they play on that aspect, and lead these women into sin.

Now, if it's a Christian wife, and she's married to a Christian man and she's led off because that man has not been caring for her spiritual life, that's why he wakes up suddenly and realizes she's a shame and a disgrace to him. And she should realize that the man that she may have married, if he also is out of thinking with the Word of God, he's going to be a shame and a disgrace to her.

What are these people? 2 Timothy 3:7: "Always learning, never able to come to a knowledge of the truth." Dumb, Dumb, Dumb. They're dumb to start with. They're always listening to this preacher; reading this preacher; going after this religious leader; and, looking into this new idea. And like the smart philosophers on Mars Hill, they're dumb, dumb, dumb.

In Acts 17:19-22, the Scripture says that they only lived to find something new. Along came this philosopher named Paul: "Tell us about what you teach." And they were glad to listen to him, and they nodded their head: "A very wise boy." And then he talked about a God who raises people from the dead. Paul knew what he was doing, because at the core of all Greek philosophy is that once a human body dies, it is dead forever. The one thing that cannot exist after death is life. That was it. That was heart of all Greek philosophy, and all thinking was done on that basis. And this little twit named Paul talks about a God who can raise people from the dead. At that point, they arose, and drew their robes around them in self-righteousness, and said, "Very interesting, my boy. We'll come and listen to you another time."

However, on the fringes of that crowd (Acts 17:34), were some men and women who listened intently. And the Word of God was received by them with positive volition. And they said, "That is so true." And they believed in this God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would someday raise their dead bodies. And the Bible tells us they switched gears from paganism, and they followed Paul. Why would you go back to that horrible life in the world from which you were once saved? Only you can answer that if that has been your pattern.

Father, we thank You for this Your Word. The Word of God is always alive, powerful, and active.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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