***Getting out of Reversionism

Colossians 1:21-23

COL-171***

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Our subject is "Reconciliation of the Colossians," segment number 16 in Colossians 1:21-23.

The Lord Jesus Christ, on one occasion, indicated that His return to earth from heaven would be as unexpected to mankind as was the Noahic flood. He pointed that out to us in the gospel of Matthew 24:36-37: "But of that day (referring to His return from heaven – the Second Coming) and hour, No one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." Christ in His humanity did not have this information: "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah." Well, what were things like in the days of Noah before the flood came?

People in Satan's world are going to act exactly the same way, as they did back then, relative to the Second Coming of Christ. They will be, as they were before the Noah flood, preoccupied with the normal pursuits of life, while their smug and happy in ignoring God and ignoring Scripture. Matthew 24:38 says, "For as in those days, which were before the flood, they were eating and drinking. They were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark." Everything went on. They listened to the preaching of Noah. They did know that something was coming as far as Noah was concerned. He gave them ample warning, and he declared that what he was saying was the Word of God. He was a spokesman for God. He was preaching the Bible to them. He was doing expository preaching. And they said, "No, you're not. What you say is not true." Or they said, "That's nice, but we don't think that is important."

So, mankind, in the future tribulation era, will continue to live lives which are dedicated to Satan's evil principles, and they will be oblivious of the imminent judgments of God which are coming upon them. Matthew 24:39 says, "And they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away. So shall the coming of the son of man be. They did not understand. No more tragic words could be found in the human language than that. They did not understand. And yet, they should have. Yet, they could have. Yet, they had every opportunity. This is the problem that we Christians face today. We did not understand. And there's going to be a great deal of that, I guarantee you, at the Judgment Seat of Christ: "Oh, I didn't understand that. I didn't realize what I was doing. I didn't understand that I should have not taken this course; that I should not have had this attitude; that I should not have accepted this; that I should not have played ball here." And yet, they should have.

The moral conditions of the pre-delusion world of Noah are increasingly and widely being duplicated in America today. That's one of the scariest things about the time in history that we are living. Jesus said, "When it gets close to My return to the earth itself, it's going to be exactly like things were in Noah's days." Well, what were the like?

Genesis 6:5: "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." That's what it was like. Everything in the mind of man was devoted to how to do something evil. Is there any better description for what is our society today, and all of the institutions that influence out thinking?

Drop down to verse 11: "Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God," because it was Satan's organized life system. It was his world system. It was not functioning on God's principles of doctrine and righteousness: "The earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence." That is an apt description of the world today. The world is filled with violence. The grossest, most unbelievable acts of violence that the human mind can imagine are now commonplace: "And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. Behold, I'm about to destroy them with the earth." The violence that was in the earth was the direct result of what men are by nature – the sin nature.

Now, this pertains to us as Christians because we Christians today are tempted to become part of this world's evil lifestyle. We are tempted to become part of the world's system. This was the sad story about Abraham's nephew, Lot. He chose to play ball with the world system, and he went to live in Sodom and Gomorrah, a place of enormous, abominable evil. In Luke 17:28-30, we read, "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot. They were eating, and they were drinking, and they were buying, and they were selling, and they were planting, and they were building, but on the day that Lot plot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all." It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

So, here is the same picture again. Life was going on as usual. People were engrossed in the vilest, most corrupt kind of evil as they were in Sodom and Gomorrah, and totally ignoring God. And notice that the thing was that life was good for them. They were enjoying the good life, and prosperity reigned. Therefore, they didn't care about God.

Because of the prosperity of our country today, in large measure, our people no longer care about God. They don't care who, in the highest echelons of authority in this country, lives an abominable life. It doesn't make any difference to them, because for them personally, times are good. But Jesus said, "God is going to sweep it all out. Judgment is coming, and man does not mock God.

2 Peter 2:6: "If He (God) 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, and if he rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men." Lot knew what was going on. He was a born-again person, and his soul was oppressed by the vileness around. Yet that's where he chose to live: "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. Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment. God knows how to protect His own. But why would Lot choose to do that?

Well, you're probably getting tired of hearing me stress to you that the world system in which you live is not your friend. It seems innocent enough. It seems there shouldn't be any problem for you to participate in the activities of society and its institutions. Yet, I'm warning you that the Word of God says, "That is a great deception. That's the way the devil has set it up. And you must understand that you are a pilgrim (a stranger), passing through this scene. You are here for one thing, and one thing alone – to sound off to the truth of the Word of God. You were to be a lighthouse. The tragedy is that most Christians don't even have a bulb to turn on, let alone the power of the Holy Spirit to give any illuminating judgment to the world.

For the Christian, this sudden judgment of God, and the temptation to be part of this scene of destruction, means falling into the status of carnality. When the sin nature takes over and runs the life, then you're following exactly the course that Lot did, and you're following exactly the course that the whole pre-flood civilization did until there was no return for them. Then you fall into revisionism, where your spiritual maturity is completely destroyed, and you are no longer walking by means of the Holy Spirit. That is the concern. I don't care what your age is. Our daily concern must be: "Am I walking by means of the Holy Spirit.

**Reversion**

This is the condition of reversionism, and this is what is described in our passage in Colossians 1:21: "Although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind (engaged in evil deeds)." Here's the way it used to be for the Colossians in their pagan lifestyle before they were saved: "Although you were alienated (meaning estranged from God in the mind – mental attitude sins), and you were hostile in mind (meaning you were against God's divine viewpoint thinking relative to His moral laws. You were in rebellion and negative volition. And "engaged in evil deeds" means that what you liked (your emotions) went for sins and human good, because you were emotionally dominated in your soul. This is what happens to the average Christian, because the average sermon tells him to operate on how he feels about things, and to operate by his emotions.

I'm amazed to see what resentment there is when we caution people and say, "Wait a minute. Your emotions will run amuck. How you feel about things, unless they are governed by the Word of God, will be emotions of Satan. The result will be that instead of following God, you'll be following Satan. So, Paul here says, "This is the way it used to be, folks. And when it was like that, your soul was hardened toward God; toward His morality; and, toward His service.

Now, the conditions of the world's evil lifestyle, which once characterize the believer when he was unsaved) is now removed by reconciliation. God has now become the standard for us. He is our absolute righteousness. We are now adjusted away from the world's values to the values of Christ. Spiritual reversionism, however, is possible. That is the problem – to fall down from where you are, as a spiritually mature believer, to where you're absolutely nothing but another worldling. The descent into spiritual revisionism is serious, and we have looked at it in detail Ephesians 4:17-19, which expands on that same concept. The apostle Paul gives it in more detail. And we have seen how the steps gradually lead us down to a total spiritual breakdown.

Turn back to Ephesians 4:20, which is a reversal. Let's get back out of this hole of living in spiritual breakdown, even though we know better. Ephesians 4:20: "But you did not learn Christ in this way." That means that they did not receive doctrinal instruction in order to become victims of their sin nature as described in verse 17-19. Paul says, "I didn't teach you so that you could do what happens to any pagan (to any unbeliever). You were instructed in the Word of God to be something far different. They were taught the need for daily spiritual food. They had to feed upon the Word of God, and they have positive volition to it.

This is more than reading the Bible. People like to say, "Well, here's what you need. You need to read the Bible." Well, reading the Bible is nothing unless you have a frame of reference of understanding. If you don't, you'll have it all mixed up. And that's why the Bible is challenged as being a book that has inconsistencies in it, and that has mistakes in it, because people don't know how to separate Israel from the church. They don't have understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in this age, over against what He did in past ages. There are all kinds of things you have to understand. Then you can read a passage of Scripture, and you'll understand it.

So, what's the solution? Well, God is yelling from heaven, "I've given it to you. It's called a local church with a pastor-teacher who does his job of expository preaching. You stay with that long enough, and you know your way around in spiritual things, and you'll not be a sitting duck for Satan.

**Counseling**

So verse 20 says, "I didn't teach you," Paul says, "these things so that you could be brought down by Satan." Christians have been taught the principles of doctrine, and those Christians don't need counseling. They don't need counseling to be told what they should do, and how they should act. What they need to do is to choose to do God's right ways that they have been taught, which is what counseling and discipline is all about. You can't counsel a person. You can't disciple him to Christ (bring him to Christ, and make him a follower of Christ) unless he is taught the principles of doctrine.

So, you could go out and pay somebody. And there are some Christian counselors who will do exactly what happens here in this auditorium – principles of doctrine explained. But when you know those, there's something more to say to you. And this is what Jesus told the Pharisees. He said, "Now that I've explained to you that righteousness is not by doing the details of the Mosaic Law, but by keeping the purpose and the meaning of that Law, which reflects Me and God's salvation through Me, now that you know that, and yet, you rejected, boy, are you in trouble! Your situation is worse. It would have been better if you had stayed home from synagogue, and never been instructed in these things. Now, I told you, and you will be judged like you can't believe it."

There it is with the Christian. He knows. He's been taught in the Word of God. And then all of a sudden, he blows his life apart: Well, what do you need? Well, let's get a counselor. We have a fella over here. This is his expertize. He's a counselor in this. He'll tell you. He'll explain to you how to get over stealing cars. Here's a guy here. He'll counsel you to help you to get over buying those lottery tickets that you're buying." The state of Texas is in a panic – 10% lottery ticket buying. A Christian counselor the other day said, "If people who buy those lottery tickets regularly, would invest in something, you'll get this much return. In ten years’ time, you'll have made everything you want to get on the lottery. I'm not buying another one.

I mean, I need a counselor to tell me these things? All of these things of life – we already know from the Bible what our contract should be. "Let's have a counselor in prison so we can teach you that you shouldn't kill people." Do you need a counselor to explain that to you? These things that we know on the basis of the authority of the Word of God or the legal system of the nation (of our society), we don't need somebody tell us not to do that. That's about as useless as a doctor that you go visit, and you say, "Doctor, every time I left my hand like that, it hurts." He says, "Well, don't do that anymore. You can pay my nurse on the way out." That's the solution. Counseling of that kind is useless. If you already know the Word, it's your negative volition that's the problem.

Now, I must confess: I hate to be faced with somebody who knows the Word of God, and is acting against it, and people want me to counsel them. I don't know what to say. I just say what the doctor says: "Don't do that anymore," because it will hurt you if you do it. And God says that He will hurt you if you do it. I don't know what else to tell you, because I don't know how to change a person's volition from negative to positive. I know I'm right as rain, because God is true. But I can't make him know it in his experience if he refuses to accept it as such.

I don't think that Lot's wife was really a bad girl. She probably was a lady who was fastidious in her home. She probably was very, very happy in her social life. And that was her problem. She just loved Sodom and Gomorrah. She loved all the evils of that society. And the Bible, for all these centuries, makes a special point of pointing out how here's a classic example of a person who could not leave the world. And she was told, "If you look back, you'll die. Get out of the city. And don't look back. Because if you look back, that shows that your heart is still back there." So, she look back, and suddenly, she turned into a pillar of salt. In time, the animals came along and licked her to pieces, and she was gone. So, much for the good life of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now, all this seems quite evident, but I've seen this happen too many times. Good Christians are knowledgeable about the Word of God, and they blow up their lives because they refuse to separate themselves from this world scene. They want to be part of it. And the worst part of this world scene, folks, is the religious scene. That is the worst. And the worst of the religious scene is not the liberals. We know that they're jerks. We know they're off-key. We know where they're coming from. It's the church that stands up with the Bible. It's the Christians who are proclaiming the Word of God, and who are speaking to people who don't know that the guy is sitting up there, and he's manipulating all the keys of their emotions. They need to stop, and think a while, and look back and say, "You know, he just played my emotions the whole service. He never talked to my mind once. I don't have anything to take out of here, because as soon as I'm out the door, I'm cooled off. I'm going to have to go over to El Chico's or Papasito's and get something really hot to get warm again. Once I walk out here, it's all gone, because he's played my emotions. And that's what we mean by emotional domination of the soul. It's the mind of Christ that's been given to you with the Word of God to control those emotions. And if I could get people just to believe that, what a lot of grief they would save is in their own lives.

So, in Ephesians 4:20, Paul says, "I didn't teach you these things so that you could break down and fall into reversionism; act just like the world; and, then you need somebody to help you find your way back. Well," Paul says, "you do need to find your way back. And what you need is to be reminded that you already have the way back." And that's what he's going to do now. A Christian who has been fed by a pastor-teacher, who has prepared his sermons via the HICEE technique of expository preaching – that Christian knows better. He does evil by choice. But unfortunately, he'll often do that evil with the enticement of others: people who are close to him, but are out of the will of God; people who are carnal Christians; or, people who are nice kids that you go to school with, but they do not know Christ in the mentality of their soul. It is amazing to me – this absorption and this carrying on with the world, when we know that soon when we're in the Lord's presence, all this is going to be a losing thing. How sad that other Christians are the influence. But I must remind you that all of us are influences upon one another, even in a small circle like ours here. We are constantly influencing one another for divine good or for human good, one way or the other.

This is why the writer of the Hebrews made such stress in Hebrews 10:24-25 on this, when he said, "Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and to good deeds. Now, you're going to do it. You're going to stimulate each other to hatred, and to bad deeds, or to love (a mental attitude goodwill), or to good deeds. You're going to do one or the other. That's inevitable. You cannot associate with one another, and not be influencing each other. Then verse 25 says here's the way that it has to be done: "Not forsaking your own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day of the rapture dawning."

So, we have a big influence on one another. And it is so sad that people who are in a position of authority over others, like parents over children, are not calling the shots for them to help them to understand that the world is their enemy, and that the Bible category of the religious world is the most dangerous territory of all to tread. It will fool you, especially if you see somebody getting saved in the midst of that. And you will never stop to think: "You know, this is the devil getting people saved. Then these people are thrown out. They are literally, spiritually aborted, and they go the rest of their church lives without any food, until the day they die, and stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, as poor as a church mouse, because nobody ever told them what they were as Christians. The devil says, "Let's get them saved, and then let's starve them to death."

The world is wrong in its ways, and it is an enemy of God. Now, if you can't accept that biblical principle, and separate your lifestyle from that of the worldly people, including the religious gang, then you are going to be disloyal to the Lord Jesus Christ, and be disloyal, worst of all, too, perhaps, to others who are near and dear to you. And you must decide where your best loyalty lies.

I can understand why the apostle Paul had tears. I can relate to that very well, as he looked at people like Demas who had been so significant in God's work. And all of a sudden, Demas showed disloyalty to Jesus Christ, because you know what happens when you show disloyalty to Jesus Christ? You choose the world. You'll choose the world every time. If there's a conflict between some activity in the world system. And I'm not talking about your employment in your life, and these legitimate things. I'm talking about things about which you have a choice. You'll go with the world every time. And parents do not alert their children, and say, "Hey, you have an activity here at school, but this thing is scheduled down at church. You can't do the school activity." The school has authority over you, and is entitled to your time during the school day. It has no authority over your Saturday, weekends, evenings, or other activities. They have no call upon you, and they can't call upon you. And you can say, "I'm with you, and I'm in the program. But when it conflicts with the work of God, or some church activity, I have to go with the church activity, because I'm a follower of Jesus Christ."

Now, everybody in this room is a fanatic. Everybody here is a fanatic. And what that means is the first three letters of the word. If you're a fanatic for football, that means you're a fan. You're an enthusiast for it. Everybody here is a fanatic for Jesus Christ, or you're a fanatic for the world system. That means that you're enthusiastic for one of the other. And what I see is Christians struggling, tearing themselves up, because they have one foot out here in the world system, and one foot here back in the church, and they're trying to go back and forth. They don't want to cut off from the church thing, but: "Boy, these things of the world are so fun, we have to do this, and we have to do that." Yeah, but you're doing that after school. Yeah, but you're doing that on God's time. You're doing that on the life of God. You shouldn't do that. You should do the things of service. You should do the things to support God's work, when those are on deck. When you're in school; when you're in business; when you do other activities; or, in your social life, then you're loyal to those things. But you can tell your own personal attitude of whether you think that the world's lifestyle is anti-God or not by the choices you make. It's the easiest thing in the world.

You go home, and you look yourself in the mirror and say, "I had the choice. I could say, 'No, I'm sorry, I can't do that because we've got a big thing down at church tonight. I need to be there to support.' Or: 'I'm part of it. It is part of my service,' or whatever. God has to come first." Why? Well, you'll get some bad remarks, and you get some bad looks, but that's about as far as it'll go. And if it's more than that, then you stand with the Lord. And I guarantee you that He'll never forget it. And He won't ever forget the fact that you went with the world, and left Him and His people standing at the corner by themselves, while you got on the bus with the world.

This is the issue that the apostle Paul is saying about Christians influencing one another to do what is right, and that right is to put Christ first: "So, let us walk with each other, with the Lord, in the light of His Word." And you do that by being in your right church with your right pastor. Do not talk about walking with Christ, if you are in your wrong church. Do not talk about being walking with God if you're with your wrong pastor-teacher. I don't understand the mind of Christians who can't grasp that simple elementary concept. God is a God of order. He puts things together. He calls people to His eternal life. He chooses those who are going to be in, and He leaves some out of that salvation. And then, when He chooses the elect, He appoints them a place of training. He doesn't just throw out say, "Here you are. Just go where you want to go." He's going to take care of you because you're His child. There are too many places out there that you could go that would be disastrous for your Christian life, and that would be disastrous for your spiritual wellbeing. And He knows your temperament. He knows your personality. He knows your attitude. And He knows that there's a certain kind of pastor-teacher, in the HICEE technique category, and there are all kinds of them. They have their differences, and you are compatible with this one, or you're compatible with this one, for your maximum spiritual forward progress. And God pity (all of us pity) the Christian who is not in his right church with his right pastor-teacher. He will never be loyal to Jesus Christ. He will never have a life of abundance spiritually. We're going to find out someday who was right and who was wrong on these things. I guarantee you that the Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be flowing with tears, as people discover that they turned their back upon their best spiritual days and opportunity.

It's even worse if they once had the right place, and then turn your back on it. This is what Paul is talking about. He said, "I didn't rear you to turn your back on the realities of the Christian life. And I have been your teacher because I've been the right one that God has appointed at this point in your life for me to lead." So, if God changes your local church place, He will give you a change to your right next local church place, because He is advancing you in your Christian service. He doesn't say, "Well, that preacher said something that just made you so hot. Let's forget it. Let's go down the street. Don't listen to him anymore."

It's like the person who did this recently. I know that people do this, and yet it shocks me. And you know me well enough that I don't put on airs. And I don't think I'm something special. But to be told recently that I'm reading something into Scripture just somewhat took me aback at the moment, because I know that that is what Scripture says. And it happened to be a matter of the relationship of the mother to the home, and so on. And I'm getting jumped on when they say, "Oh, the Bible doesn't say that." As soon as I got a chance, I went right back to my study; opened the Bible up; and, I looked through every one of those Scriptures, and, boy, there it was: home; mother; children; and, the whole bit. I don't care what you do, but to have the insolence and the arrogance to tell the pastor-teacher that he doesn't know his bananas – that's pretty dangerous ground to walk on. You better have yourself a real dummy before you're ready to do that.

However, you are your own priest, and grace means that you can shoot yourself in the foot. That's the wonderful thing about grace. Always remember that. That's the doctrinal principle. God says, "Grace means you can shoot yourself in the foot, if that's what you insist on doing." It's better not to. It is better to be able to walk tall and straight. But you can have it either way: "Let us walk with each other in the Lord in the light of His Word." Paul says, "That's why I taught you."

In Ephesians 4:20, what is emphasized there is the communicator of the Word. Paul is emphasizing himself there. He said, “You know that I've counseled you, and what I've discipled you to do, and I did it the only way it can be done – I taught you the Word of God." And that stresses his role.

Now, in verse 21, this stresses the role of the receiver of the Word of God, the hearer – the individual believer that he's taught. And it says, "If indeed you have heard Him, and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus." Now, remember what we're looking at here is how to get back out of revisionism. First of all, he calls our attention to the fact that should not have been in it. It was their deliberate, negative volition that brought them into it. They had all the opportunity to do better.

Now, verse 21 is the next step. He says, "If indeed." There are four class conditions of the word "if" in the Bible. This is class number one. The "if" number one means it's true: "*Since* you have heard Him." What the Ephesian Christians have done is that they have heard Jesus Christ. In the grammar, this is what the Greeks called the aorist tense. That means at a certain point in time they heard Him. That point in time was in the church service when doctrine was explained, which we now hear through the Scriptures. In the church service, they were given that scaffold upon which their own study could now build. It's in the active voice, which means that they got it because they were there. They got it because they actively chose to hear. Those who are not here this morning, their chairs do not have receivers. Maybe we should do that.

I went to a Mexican restaurant the other day, and they gave you a little square box. There were a lot of people there. And you sat down and waited, and when they were ready for you, the thing started flashing. That meant for you to check in. And we got the message.

**The Grace System of Perception**

I wonder if there's a way for every chair that is empty, such that we could put something there, and a receiver back wherever they are, that gets right into their brain, so they get the information. It just flashes in? No, I don't think so. You have to be here. That's the Greek active voice. You can't be a no-show on Sunday, and have something to show during the rest of the week. This is a statement of fact of fact of their positive volition to doctrine previously. "If indeed," and you people certainly did. You have heard. You have been instructed, and you heard this instruction under the filling of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to understand the doctrine being taught. That's called part of the grace system of perception. The perceptive mind grasps the teaching. . . .

The pastor-teacher instructs, and the perceptive mind (the "nous") gets knowledge. The Bible calls it "gnosis" – just plain information: "Yeah, I understand this. The Holy Spirit has taught me. I'm in fellowship with Him. I understand His doctrine. I understand what I'm supposed to do as a man with my family. I understand what I'm supposed to do as a woman with my family. I understand what I'm supposed to do in my personal life."

I had a man call me one time for counseling and advisement. He didn't need it. I had already given it to him in church. He said, "You know, it just occurred to me that I have so much on my credit cards. I figured it up. If I declared bankruptcy, I'd wipe out my credit cards, and I could then carry on my business very successfully. I'd have enough to get by on, and really build the business. Do you think it's all right for me to declare bankruptcy?" Well, what would you have told him? I mean, this is exactly this classic case. I'm sitting there, dumbfounded that this is being done. I said, "Well, if you did it, you would certainly be cheating somebody out of what you owed them, wouldn't you. You're a Christian. You've been counseled. You've been discipled. Do you need to go to a financial Christian counselor to tell you: 'Don't do that anymore?'"

I saw an ad on television. It said, "We can cancel your credit card debt. Brown, Green, Sam Jones, and Cheatham." The last guy's name was Cheatham." I thought, "How appropriate!" But if I'd have been part of that firm, I'd have kept his name out of it. And there it was: "We can help you get rid of your credit card debt," the last lawyer's name is Cheatham.

Well, don't sell the sin nature short in the Christian that's out of touch. He's not here in the glowing warmth of the fellowship of the people of God, as the Hebrews passage told us: "Encourage one another. And help each other. Advise one another. Admonish; caution; alert; and, the whole bit.

Then there's a potential. But he said, "You have heard, and you have been positive. You listened to it. The Spirit of God taught you. This is a fact of the Christian life. And into your mind has gone the information. Now, what are you going to do with it?" Then it says, "You have been taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus." Here again, this is at a point of time. You understood the truth because you are filled with the Spirit, and you said, "Amen, Lord." Bingo! By faith, "gnosis" became "epignosis." Knowledge became full knowledge.

Suddenly, you have doctrine that you live by. The reason some of you people will take a thing of the world, and you go to that, and you'll skip some duty you have to Christ and to Christian service, is because all you've got is knowledge in your head. And you make exceptions, and you make compromises, and you blow it off. But when it is "epignosis," that works. God the Holy Spirit knows when you are faced with: here's the thing I have to do in the world, and here's the thing I have to do at church, and they're in conflict. The Holy Spirit kicks right up, seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Bingo! You know exactly what to do. You don't have to sit and think about it. It's a no-brainer. And the more "epignosis" knowledge you have in the human spirit, the more that functions. All you have to do is short-circuit here by negative volition, or unconfessed sin, and you're out of it. Then all of the knowledge in your human spirit is meaningless. It won't work. And if you stay there long enough, as Paul is warning these people, you'll go to reversionism. And then we will weep for the sins that you will commit. And we will weep for the starvation to which you will place yourself by abandoning your right church and your right pastor-teacher, and all the other things that follow from that.

However, here he says, "You have been taught in Him, just as the truth is in Jesus." And what he is saying by this word "taught" is that the human spirit has been taught, because we were receptive to the Word, and it has been stored, and God the Holy Spirit has been able to take what the pastor-teacher explained, and make real in your life by storing it in your human spirit. You learn what Jesus thinks, and you learn what Jesus commands. This hearing of the Word of God, by God's arrangement, is done in a group, such as this one here. That's the local church. That's to respect your privacy. That's to respect your priesthood. That's to enable you to (yes) shoot yourself in the foot. That's to enable you to say, "Boy, is he off his rocker this morning! Has he missed the point there!" It gives you the privacy to say "Yes" or "No" to everything you hear. And it's up to you to be a true Berean, and to check it out with the Word of God. Match it up. Does it say that, or doesn't it?

**Falling from Grace**

That is because you can fall from grace. You can fall from the grace of the Word of God. You can fall from the blessing of God (Galatians 5:4). That's what the people of Galatia did. They all went back to the Mosaic system. You have been severed from Christ. You who are seeking to be justified by the Law – you have fallen from grace. Nothing is such a wonderful life as the freedom which grace gives us. But that freedom can be used to hurt yourself, or to ennoble and to bless yourself. You have been taught the truth – the truth as it is in Jesus; that is, the truth that Christ has taught us, and which is now recorded in Scripture. Since Christ is in heaven, our information now comes from the Scriptures, through the teaching ministry of the pastor-teacher. This again is the truth which is in Jesus – the truth which is according to Him. This is again the reason that we should be loyal to Him – the reason for uncompromising loyalty to Jesus Christ, and obedience to the Word of God: Christ living in us. Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself up for me. When I accepted Him as my personal Savior, in the eyes of God, I had been crucified for my sins, and I paid death in Christ. I was up there with Him on that cross.

Now, in His resurrection, I have His resurrected life in me. And the power of that resurrected life is the power by which I live. I am not a dog. I'm not a pig. I do not live on some lowly fashion. I am now a prince or a princess in a family of God. And the life which I now live in my body, I live in the Son of God, Who loved me and delivered Himself for me. You don't think that He should have your loyalties?

What is He asking you? What is it that Paul is saying that the Ephesians learned, if indeed you have heard Him? Yes, you did. You were taught, and you have been taught in Him. Yes, you received by positive volition. You did put in your human spirit the truth. You were receptive, just as the truth is in Jesus. What are the truths of Jesus? His commandments.

We close this morning with what Jesus had to say about His commandments, like the one I just gave you a moment ago: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Put Him first before anything else in life that you have a choice to do otherwise. And most things you do. Then everything else that you think is important will come to you.

John 14:15: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." If you say, "Lord, I don't know Your commandments," then He will say, "Then you can't love Me. If you can't love Me, you'll go for the world every time. You'll go for some activity in society every time if it conflicts with an activity of the Lord's work.

John 14:21: "He who has My amendments and keeps them." It is not just having them, but he keeps them: "It is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him. I will disclose myself to him." That's not just a poetic expression. How many times during the day do you find yourself looking for something; trying to solve a problem; or, trying to do something, and all of a sudden: you find it; you know what to do; and, the thing is resolved. Somebody calls, or somebody comes in. How many times do you start talking to the Lord, saying, "You're right, Lord?"

I was looking for something the other day. I couldn't find it anywhere. And then I had a thought pop into my mind intuitively, "Look there." And I said, "Is that where it is, Lord?" I walked over and looked. I said, "You're right, Lord. It *is* here. This is what this verse is just talking about – that He will live, and guide, and speak to you. There will be this compatibility between you and Christ: "I will disclose myself to the Christian who keeps My commandments. He takes me first, and thumbs his nose at the world."

John 15:10: "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My father's commandment, and I advise in His love." What greater place could you have than to be in the love of Christ, and to be under His maximum care; His maximum blessing; and, His maximum guidance? What good are all the trivialities and the associations of life that substitute for him? Nothing. Choose Christ every time. That's the smart way to go.

Dear God, our Father, we thank You for the Word of God. It's alive, powerful, and significant in our experience. And how we thank You that it is so easy to understand what You have said. It's not complicated. The Spirit of God is our great teacher. And when we have the system explain to us – how it works, we know exactly how to handle doctrine that we've heard; it has come into our ears; we're mulling it over in our minds; and, we make the decision. And then we keep it or we lose it. And then as we walk in the light of Your Word, as the Spirit of God guides it up to our thinking, our emotions are controlled, and our decisions are right. Father, help us to get to be a little more loyal to You and to Your Son. We ask in His Name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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