***Contiguous Dispensations

Colossians 1:24-29

COL-198***

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2 Timothy 3:16: "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."

2 Timothy 3:13-15: "But evil people and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Romans 1:18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."

We continue in our study this morning of Colossians 1:25-29. Our topic is "The Mystery of the Church," segment number 13.

The apostle Paul makes this dramatic statement in Colossians 1:25: "Of this church (which he has been referring to previously), I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed upon me for your benefit." The apostle Paul, in this verse, identifies himself to the Colossian Christians as a minister, or servant, of God, relative to a special stewardship that has been tailor-made (particularly granted to him), to which he was called to fulfill. The Greek word for "stewardship" is the word "oikonomia." The word "oikonomia" is also properly translated as an economy or an administration, and more specifically as a "dispensation" (the common term for this Greek word).

This word is used in Ephesians 3:9, where the apostle Paul says, "To bring to light what is the administration (the dispensation) of the mystery, which for ages has been hidden in God, Who created all things." We're going to be looking a little more specifically, as we go along to what Paul is referring to. But what he has in mind is a special dispensation – the dispensation of the church. He calls it a mystery because that Greek word, "musterion," was a secret. It was never revealed in the Old Testament. It came out of the blue to people. It was brand new. They had never had seen it, and they had never thought of such a thing – a terrific, brand new age in which people were related to God in a very special way.

God has decreed the progression of human history as a chronological series of time periods. This is what Paul is referring to by the word "dispensations," which is used several times in the New Testament. Each of these time periods is given a distinct way of life by God, which is revealed in Scripture. That's what's important about them. Human beings do not live in every time period in the same way. God has a different set-up; a different way of life; and, a different order of doing things in each period of time. If you do not understand that, you won't know what's up from down in the particular point in history in which you were born. And the loss can be enormous to you eternally.

Each of these epochs of time has a distinct way of life which is clearly revealed in Scripture. And each dispensation has a steward who is responsible for that period in history as God's representative. That is referred to as the "oikonomos." All of these words, relative to a dispensation, are right out of the Bible. This is not something being tacked on by theologians. God ordained specific responsibilities to an administrator of each of these dispensations.

This is referred to, for example, in the 1 Corinthians 4:1-2. The apostle Paul says, "Let a man regard us in this manner: as servants of Christ, and "oikonomos" (stewards) of the mysteries of God." The mysteries of God refer to the secret features of the church age. In this case, moreover, it is required of a steward ("oikonomos" again) that one be found trustworthy.

So, there are two things to understand about a dispensation: a segment of time (an epoch) chronologically, beginning with the first one, which was the time in the Garden of Eden; and, then progressing down through history to the end of the last one, which is going to be the kingdom of the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ upon this earth. Each of these periods has a way of life by which people are to conduct themselves, and relate themselves to God. And each of these periods has a steward who is responsible for carrying out that particular era. God ordained specific responsibilities for the steward to carry out in each dispensation. The failure of man to live up to God's way of life for dispensation, eventually, terminates that period in history.

All of you are sufficiently acquainted with the Bible such that you can start at the first, and you can see how that happened in the Garden of Eden. That was a wonderful dispensation; a wonderful way of life; a wonderful way of relating to God; and, perfect in every way. But once man failed, then the dispensation came to an end, because God had proven a point that he was making, and a new era began.

**Man's Failures**

So, a new dispensation, after the failure is established, is instituted by God, with some previous regulations retained, from the dispensation before; other things of the previous dispensation are annulled; and, then there are some new features added. Each dispensation always ends in failure by man in his effort to obey God and to live up to the standard of absolute righteousness. And that's the point of these periods of time – to give people under absolutely every conceivable kind of condition, to say, "I can do it. I can, by positive attitude and thinking, I can please God, I can make it with God. I can make myself acceptable to God." And God says, "No, you can't. You can't do it when you are perfectly innocent with no sin. And you won't do it at the very end, when I'm on this earth, in my capital city of Jerusalem, on the throne over Israel, running the whole world, and all nations are under My authority – you won't be able to do it then. Each dispensation always ends in failure. Man cannot make it into heaven on his own.

God's purpose in each dispensation is to reveal the glory of His Own Perfections, and the total depravity of man. Under varying conditions of life on earth, man can never, by the best of his efforts, attain absolute righteousness required to qualify him for heaven by his own efforts.

The doctrine of the dispensations enables a person, living in a specific era of time, to orient himself to the will; to the plan; and, to the purpose of God for his life in that particular point in time. You have to understand the doctrine of the dispensations, and you have to understand where you are living.

The apostle Paul, here in the book of Colossians, is dealing with the Colossians Christians whom he has never met, but concerning whom reports have come to him of their being taken off into Greek philosophy, and into Gnosticism, which was exalting man – that man is potential deity himself. The errors were coming in, and the apostle Paul is preparing to say, "No, that's wrong." We've been studying the whole chapter, and you can see how far it's gone. And now what he is doing is saying, "I want to make it clear to you that what you do have is a wonderful, spectacular way of life that has great potential for you. It's never been true before in history. It'll never be true after the rapture event, when the church is taken out of this world. But I want to explain to you that I am particularly qualified, Paul says, "to explain this dispensation (this stewardship) to you."

That is because: "None of the apostles were given the information I was given. I was personally taught by Jesus Christ, concerning the church, which had been a secret, all in the past. Now, I'm going to lay it out for you." And that's what he's getting ready to do as we go into the book of Colossians.

So, Paul is making it clear to these people: "You don't know how to live. You don't know what to do with your life. You don't know how to capitalize on life now for an enriched eternity someday when you get to heaven, unless you understand the principles of the dispensation of the church age. Here's a definition: a dispensation is a distinct way of life in some period of time, in the outworking of God's plan for the ages. A dispensation is not just an epic of time. Yes, it is a period of time, but it's more than that. It is also a way of life within that particular period. It is an epoch of time with specific divine revelation which are pertinent to that era.

These consecutive epochs of time reveal the unfolding plan of God for mankind. A dispensation, then, is an era in human history, from God's divine viewpoint. These are the realities that pertain to a certain point in time in the human being's relationship to God.

This concept is very nicely illustrated in the gospel of Luke. Please turn to Luke 16:1-2: "Now, He (Jesus) was also saying to the disciples, 'There was a certain rich man who had a steward." This word "steward" is the Greek word "oikonomos:" "And this steward was reported to him as squandering his possessions. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your "stewardship." Here it is: "oikonomia." Those are the words in the Greek for the "steward" and the "dispensation:" "You can no longer be a steward."

Here are some important features that illustrate the concept of the doctrine of the dispensations. Always have two parties that are basically involved. The one who delegates the duties, which in this parable was the wealthy landowner. What this parable is illustrating is that God is the one who delegates the authority. God is the one who is in charge. And He is the one who sets up the stewardship (the dispensation). Then you also have another person who is the steward, who is responsible for carrying out the owner's plan, which is mankind carrying out the plan of God. These are the stewards.

Now, there are specific responsibilities that these two verses illustrate. The duties are known, but they are ignored, and the owner’s goods are wasted. Now, thereby, the steward also loses out. God's goods (or estate), entrusted to mankind, is the world, under a certain way of life. A steward is called to account for the discharge of his stewardship – how he handles this responsibility. God clearly outlines the duties of mankind in any particular dispensation. Dispensationalism views the world as a household which is run by God through human agents.

So, in this parable here is this household. This man has turned over his wealth (everything he has) to the steward. He says, "This is my stewardship – my dispensation to you, and you're in charge. And you will do it this way, this way, this way, and then you will account to me, and you'll report back. And he gets bad news about this man. The guy is stealing. The guy is squandering. The guy is doing everything that he was told not to do.

So, the result is that the stewardship is terminated, and this steward is removed. Failure in managing one stewardship leads to the termination of the office. As failure in each dispensation of God occurs, God terminates the steward, and establishes a new dispensation with a new steward. All the dispensations demonstrate that, regardless of what arrangement man lives under, he's an utter failure without God doing it for him. In the previous dispensation, of the one in which we live (the dispensation of the Law – Judaism, under the Mosaic Law), they had all of these regulations. They had an enormous number of them – hundreds of specific guidelines, so that a person, if he could do all those things, he'd be as perfect as God. He would demonstrate that he was qualified to go to heaven on the basis of his absolute righteousness. And, of course, he never could do it. Man, even when he was told exactly what to do, has a nature in him that says, "No, I want to do it the opposite way. I know what's right, but I want to do what is just the opposite. I want to do it my way.

So, the dispensation then goes on with certain qualifications. A new dispensation is established, and it will continue certain of the ordinances from the previous one. They are carried on. Certain other things are annulled. After Adam and Eve failed in that first dispensation, people were no longer told that you have to avoid eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That was finished. That was jerked out. That requirement was no longer there. The place was closed off, and you can't get to that spot today. Other new features were then added (new principles and new regulations) which previously had not been in effect.

So, God says, "I'm rearranging the furniture in my household, and here's the way we're going to move around in this house now. Here's the way we're going to do things. A new dispensation has begun. A new steward is in charge."

Now, the doctrine of the dispensations is enormously important. Many people go to church year-after-year, and they never even hear the word. They never even hear the concept. In fact, in most religious groups (Christian circles), the doctrine of the dispensations is ridiculed. The more ignorant you are spiritually, and the more ignorant you are biblically, the more cocky you are about ridiculing the concept that God has an orderly progression of epochs (a time in which he establishes ways of doing things) relative to those who live there.

Any believer who tries living in the devil's world, during the dispensation of the church today, without understanding the divine grace enablements for doing so, has only one place to go. If you do not live by the power of the word of doctrine and the Holy Spirit who indwells you, the only way thing you can do is that you'll try to make it with God in this dispensation – you go to emotionalism. Therefore, your feelings will guide you to what you think is true, and what you want to believe. And you will fall into legalism (taboos). You'll be legalistic up to your eyebrows: "I don't smoke, and I don't chew, you and I don't go with girls that do" will be the guiding principle of your life. That's what you're going to invent. You'll be so pleased with yourself because of all the things you don't do that are bad, that these other people do. And you think that God is going to be pleased with you.

Today, I heard a very famous person who was asked in an interview: "Do you believe that there's an afterlife?" And this person replied, "I have to, because I need a second chance." Well, I'll tell you one thing about every dispensation. One of the things that goes from Eden to the Millennial Kingdom – one principle that is never changed is salvation by the grace of God. Nobody gets to heaven by works or a second chance after you die. Salvation is by trusting in Christ, because He said, "I've covered your sin."

There is no sin problem in the whole world. You can be the lowest lowlife of the lowlife in your moral habits. You can be a barnyard animal to the core. That is not an issue with God. What is an issue with God is that Christ has died for that sin. He has covered it all. And He asks you to trust Him to take you to heaven, because if He lets you help, you'll spoil the system. God says, "I can take you to heaven by grace," which means a gift: I cannot take you to heaven if you help Me. If you help Me, that's works, and then you have neutralized the grace. And while an omnipotent God can do everything, He cannot be untrue to His character. Salvation has to be a gift from God.

Now, that's one place where every dispensation is the same. That has not changed. But there are other things that have changed. The Old Testament people tried to live by 613 rules. But they couldn't make it. They blew it, left and right – the best of them. So, God said, "OK, I've demonstrated that, even when I tell you exactly what to do, you can't do it. And I'm going to tell you something else. I'll do it for you. I'm going to provide salvation. You're not going to try to cover your sin. I'm going to do it all for you. There won't be any problem between you and me. My justice, which demands death for sin – I'll cover the death in your place through My Son. But after that, you're going to have to trust Him. You're going to have to accept that He did it, and I raised Him from that tomb. He is alive. That proves that My justice has been satisfied, and I have no problem with you. The only problem I'll have with you is if you turn your back on Him, and refuse to accept Him as your personal Savior.

So, if you don't understand that, and you don't understand how to live by the principles of grace that are pertinent to the church change, the only place you'll go is to legalism. And people go to church every Sunday, and are never taught doctrine – they have no capacity in their minds to have the mind of God. That's the only way you get the mind of God. It is through the principles of doctrine. If you don't know that, you don't know how to control your emotions, and you have no capacity for controlling your will from making a fool of you.

These people suffer from emotional domination of the soul, instead of the stability of objective doctrine in the mind, which will then control your emotions, and will control your will. When was the last time you made a fool of yourself emotionally? It was when you were out of touch with God the Holy Spirit (if you're a believer). If you're not a believer, then being a pool is the norm for you.

These kinds of emotional slaves are easily manipulated by Satan, even if they are Christians. That's why you have vast denominational groups that are structured on emotionalism to the core. And the devil has a heyday chasing them after rabbits; after supernatural gifts; and, after everything under the sun that does not exist, and is not the purpose of God in this dispensation. They are easily manipulated by Satan. Therefore, they're easily defeated. They waste the potential of their lives for earning treasures of rewards in heaven at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

This is the common practice in church bodies, because preachers are afraid to do the job that the Word of God commands them to do" "Preach the Word." And pastor-teachers preach the Word. That means explain doctrine, in season, when everybody says, "Hot dog, I want to learn it." Or out of season, when they say, "Don't bug me. I'm tired. I don't want to even come to church to listen to you" – in season and out of season. The faithfulness of preaching the Word – that's the only thing that's going to preserve a believer from becoming a spiritual casualty. You can go ahead and try changing all the things you want about the Word of God. But it's not going to work. You can go ahead and give us all of your rational reasons why you think something is OK; and something else is not OK. It's not going to work. It is the sovereign God who sets the pattern for each dispensation. And you are not going to come up with changes because they seem appropriate and acceptable to you. If you try to live rightly, by keeping the rules of the Mosaic Law, and various human taboos, you're going to end up being defeated by the old sin nature.

I told you before about being at a dinner with some friends. And this man had married a young woman who was into legalism up to her eyebrows; up to her mascara; and, right up to her brain cells. She had been reared like that. She was hardcore legalism all the way. And she said, "You can't marry me unless you accept my viewpoint, and the church group that I'm affiliated with." So, everything got reversed there. Instead of his being spiritual leader, she was. And she led him right down; put the ring in his nose; and jerked him right into legalisms.

So, we're sitting there, and they bring out this vast array of all kinds of meat. It was really a banquet setup. There was duck on there, and there was some sausage on there, and there was some pork on there. And he looked at that, and he said, "Now, what is this meat?" And he turns to me like I'm a butcher or something. And he said he said, "We live under the dietary laws of the Old Testament," even though Jesus said, "They're not in effect anymore. All things are free for you to eat – all things, when you receive them with thanksgiving. That means that you sit down and you thank God before you eat.

I've had an experience recently of eating meal after meal where people never stop to pray, to thank God for the food. That's kind of creepy. But the Lord says, "Those rules aren't in effect. You may eat anything that you wish." Some things are not good to eat. High carbohydrates – that's bad. Lots of protein – that's very good. Fat – very good. And sugars is really bad; pasta is terribly bad; and, cheese is wonderful. There are all kinds of things that will put you physically into a good condition, so that the temple of the Spirit of God is operating. So, that's the way it was designed to work.

So, you have to not eat certain things because they are bad. A rat sandwich would not be good. Don't be don't be stupid and say, "Oh, we can eat anything then." No, God says, "The restrictions aren't there, but you don't check out your brains in the process." You do eat everything that's nutritious.

So, I had to tell this poor man, "Well, that's pork, and that sausage is there. I'm not sure what's in that. But that's duck. He said, "Oh well. We can eat the duck, but I don't know if that's on the list or not." He should have brought a printed list with him of what he could eat from the Old Testament Laws. So, any time he was at a restaurant, he could check it out. So, he said to his wife, "We're not going to eat any of this." So, they sat there eating the potatoes. And they put the gravy on, which had all that pork juice in it. I didn't tell him that.

Do you see where you get when you do not have doctrinal guidance? There is nothing like a spiritual fool who has not been taught the Word of God. And yet, they're the most arrogant and the most sincere of the bunch. And this is a really nice man. You could not have had a more moral man, or a more genuinely sincere man. But he's looking to his wife for spiritual guidance, and the Bible says, "That'll never work – never in a million years.

So, here's the issue. If you do not live according to the principles of the age of grace, which are much different than any other principles, you'll go right back down to legalism and to emotionalism. That's how you will decide things. You will make decisions for God as to how you think God should conduct Himself, and what He should approve, and what He shouldn't approve.

So, why the whole Bible has a common standard of righteousness, various dispensations have certain common ground. They have a certain unity. For example, the terms of salvation, as I've indicated, is always by the grace of God in Christ as Savior.

One of the things that these people, like the amillennialists (who hate dispensation), do, is that they try to say, "Well, you're suggesting that salvation is different at different periods of time in history." No, you've said that. We never said that. It's always the same, from start to finish, it was the same. For Adam and Eve, who had to look forward by faith for the Savior to come, and for the rest of us, who look back to the Savior, Who has already come. That's always the same. The divine code of morality is the same. The expression of the righteousness of God is exactly the same in every dispensation.

The Ten Commandments express the righteousness and perfection of God. And they're exactly the same, except for one. And that's the Sabbath day. You don't keep Saturday anymore. That's the Jews' identifying day. And this is very important to God. Identifying days with specific groups of people is very important. That's why you cannot say, "I go to church on Saturday," because the Scriptures make it clear that the church's identifying day is the day of the Resurrection of Christ – Sunday. That is called the Lord's Day. Now, you either had the Sabbath day or you have the Lord's Day. You can gather for a Bible class on Saturday, but you can't say, "I've gone to church." You can only say that that's when the saints gather, because that's God's identifying day. That's the Lord's Day. And that is a very special day, because that's the day He brought His Son back to life, and salvation became a reality.

So, the morality of God is expressed in every dispensation the same. Even the Sabbath day has a moral principle that a person should have one day when he's really resting – one out of seven. Every society that is against the Word of God, as in communism, one of the first things they went after was that there's not going to be one day off during the week. Every day is going to be a workday. So, Sunday should be what it is – the Lord's Day. I do the things that are pertinent to the Lord's Day, and I don't let anything stand in the way of the main thing of the Lord's Day – the gathering of the church-age believers in worship on that day: morning; noon; and, night, whenever they do it.

However, each dispensation, while it has these many common features, also contains clear differences, which distinguishes them from other epochs. Yes, man walks on two feet, and so does a baboon. But in the case of most people, there's a great distinction. It's a great difference. Similarities do not prove identity. But the anti-dispensationalist is always going to argue that to you. It's the distinctions that are important, that show us suddenly that something has been rearranged by God in an epoch of time.

While the whole Bible is for the believer's learning (the Scriptures tell us that) the whole Bible does not specifically apply to a Christian in the church dispensation. That's the difference. The whole Bible is for our learning. We learn a lot of spiritual lessons. But the whole Bible does not literally apply to us, who live in this age, any more than it what happened in the Garden of Eden literally applies to us today. It is now different. The church, therefore, is not spiritual Israel. It does not assume Israel's role of bringing in the kingdom of God on this earth. That's the problem. If you are not a dispensationalist, you're going to be running around trying to make the world into the kingdom of God.

The church is called to building up the body of Christ, the church. Christians have much better spiritual assets than Israel ever had under the Mosaic Law. We have the whole Bible. And that means that we've got the full revelation. Furthermore, we who live in this age, have with no human being ever had before – God living in us, the hope of glory. We have Christ in the hope of glory. The Holy Spirit lives in us permanently, so it never leaves us. For what purpose? So that we do right. It is that transformation of the indwelling Holy Spirit, with the full guidance of doctrine, that gives you a position that no saint ever had in any other period of time.

Now, if you don't understand how to live by that principle, you're going to be just like the rest of the people of the world, groveling around, bringing in the kingdom – bringing in the legal way of life of Israel into the church age. And that simply brings spiritual defeat, as it did to the Old Testament people.

Christians are not called to political activism. They're not called to spiritualize (Christianize) the institutions of Satan's world system. That's going to be done by the Lord in the millennium. We Christians instead have something totally different. We have been called to be ambassadors to this world.

2 Corinthians 5:20 points that out to us: "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us, we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." You are here as the ambassador of Jesus Christ. You're being sent to deliver God's message of grace salvation, and the power of the Spirit of God to bring you to the prime of your spiritual life: super-grace living.

2 Corinthians 5:21: "He made Him (God the Father made God the Son), Who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." You have absolute perfect righteousness, positionally, that was given to you at the point of salvation.

So, what is your status in this age of grace to the world in which you live? Well, the Lord, in His high priestly prayer, in John 17:8, dealt with that very thing in a part of His prayer. He says, "For the words which You gave Me, I have given to them (to the believers – to those who followed Him), and they receive them, and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You did send Me. I ask on their behalf. I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me – they are Yours." Jesus does not pray for the world. He does not pray for the institutions of the world. He does not pray for restructuring the world. What is He praying for? He's praying for the believers, who are in the world, to do their job of ambassadorship – telling people how to go to heaven, and telling people how to rise to maximum spiritual maturity, so that something else can happen, which I'll point out to you in a moment: "And all things that are Yours are Mine, and that are Mine are Yours. And I have been glorified in them. And I am no more in the world. And yet, they themselves are in the world. And I come to You, Holy Father. Keep them in Your name – the Name that You have given Me, that they may be one even as we are one.

Jesus says, "I'm going back to heaven. I'm leaving them behind. They're going to be in this world. I pray that they may have a unity." On what basis? John 17:14: "I've given them your Word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of this world, even as I am not of this world." A Christian who stands up and proclaims his ambassadorship will be hated. You start giving out those gospel brochures. Just give out one of those that Berean evangelism brochures and see, as I often see: those eyes open, and they look at me suspiciously. They look at that title "Heaven or Hell, Which Will it be for you." And boy, right away there's a recoil; there's a wall; and, there's an indifference. And I smile. I know what's happening to them. And they understand that I'm not part of their team.

Verse 15: "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one." That's called Christian separation. That's called, "I'm in the world: "I'm not part of this world. I'm the voice of the ambassador. My citizenship is in heaven. I'm not going to try to fix up your world. I'm not going to bring in my troops to straighten out your country. I'm going to tell you what the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords has to say, so that you can straighten it out. They are not in the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in Your truth. Your Word is truth."

If you don't have doctrine, which is the truth of God, you cannot be separated from the world: Never, never, never. That is what, gradually, the more you come to know the Word of God, and the more you come to have the mind of God, the more you discover that you are the voice of God. You are not the player on the field. You are the voice of God. The Holy Spirit is the activator on the field.

John 17:18: "As You did send me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes, I sanctify (I set apart) Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified (set apart) in the truth." That's very clear to me that we, in the dispensation of grace, and not running around whitewashing the world. We are not here for politicizing spiritual things. We're here to proclaim the Word of God. Then you may do with it what you like. That's one of the beauties of coming to Berean Church. You don't even have to pay attention to the preacher. All you have to do is listen, and then blow him off, and do your own thing if you want. That's the grace freedom of this age. Just be sure that he's wrong, and that you're right when you do that.

"What our call is, brethren, is to enjoy the blessings allotted to each of us at salvation as our personal inheritance from God the Father. You may have missed this, but something dramatic in heaven is done at the moment that you believed in Christ. At that point in time, the computers in heaven clicked out, by divine sovereign decision, blessings that were going to be poured out upon you on this earth (your inheritance). You already kicked in the first one when you were put into the royal family of God in. You have that. But now the inheritance; the treasure; and, the rewards of living on this earth are ready to be poured out. An infinitesimal smattering of Christians ever get what God says: "This is what I've got for you." And the younger you are, in this age, the harder it is to get on track with God so that God can keep filling your cup. Psalm 23: "My cup runneth over." You can't have a cup running over until you have a cup. You have to have capacity to receive something. And this is what doctrine and the leading of the Holy Spirit give you, to receive what? To receive all the things that God says, "I'm going to enhance your life with; embellish your life with; give you great joy; great prosperity; great physical well-being; great purposefulness; and, great focus in life. And while you're doing that, and enjoying what God is pouring out from heaven. He is recording it back up there in heaven for rewards for you to enjoy for all eternity, when you stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Please notice Ephesians 1:3. You may have never connected these together. Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" – every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies through Christ Jesus. Drop down to Ephesians 1:18: "I pray that the eyes of your heart (your mind) may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling; what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" – the riches of the glory of the inheritance that the saints possess.

In our book of Colossians, a little later, we will come to chapter 3. Look ahead to Colossians 3:23: "Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve knowing." Go back to verse 23: "Whatever you do, do your work heartily as for the Lord, rather than for men." Whatever you do when you go to your employment, that's divine good when you do it as unto the Lord. That is your calling. That is part of serving God. And you do it heartily as unto the Lord, not for men: "Knowing that from the Lord, you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve." A reward is given to those that have earned it, on the basis of living by the standards of grace pertinent to the principles of the church – doctrine and obedience to the indwelling Holy Spirit.

That opens a magnificent vista of life, separated from the world: a true ambassador sounding for the Word of Truth. And when you stand before the world, and you do your job, the Father in heaven is just pouring out blessings on your life: the hard times; the good times; and, your cup is flowing over. Most Christians will never grasp that concept. They will still grovel around as if they were back in the Old Testament.

I have discovered that the Lord had 12 apostles (12 disciples), but he had an inner circle of three. Peter, James, and John were out there with capacity that the rest of them never had. They had they had a rapport with the Lord that the rest of them never had. They could grasp the things that the rest of them didn't. And they were all blessed, but not like those three.

When you understand the dispensation of the church and the principles by which it functions, you are going to be something tremendous in your personal experience, and will your family ever love you for it! We are sent to deliver our message as ambassadors, and as we do that, in separation from the world system, the blessings of God come pouring out upon us – the blessings that He's reserved specifically to give you. Most Christians are going to come up, and they're going to say, "What is all this here?" God will say, "Well, that was your blessing. When you were saved, I said, "Give them this, and this, and this. These are tremendous things." Look at all those things you'd like to do in life. Here it is. It will enable you to do it. There is a place that you'd like to go. Here it is. I've already set it aside for you, but you couldn't learn to live in the grace age under the knowledge of doctrine, because nobody ever taught it to you, and the power of the Holy Spirit, because no one ever taught you 1 John 1:9 – how to say in fellowship with Him, so He could function. And therefore, you never could build a cup. You couldn't build the capacity so that God had something in which to pour all of these marvelous things that He has ordained for you to enjoy.

So, go ahead: keep groveling around; struggle around; scrape together; and, do it on your own. It's nothing like what He's ready to give those who live faithfully by the principles of doctrine. We Christians live as outsiders to this world, because we are citizens of heaven. We're strangers and exiles. We're not bosom buddies. This is the devil's world (his Cosmos Diabolicus), and it will remain so until Jesus comes to this earth again to take it back. So, let us, as Christians of the church dispensation, so live as to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ – not ruthlessly and arrogantly striving to reform, and to Christianize the world system of the devil. Put yourself in a position, instead, where all those blessings that have been put on hold in heaven for you, can just come showering down. Talk about showers of blessings today?

Dear God, our Father, we want to thank You for the Word, and for the understanding of here we are in history, in the magnificent age of the church in which we live. It's very hard for us to know how to relate ourselves to it.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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