***What Christianity Is

Colossians 1:25-29

COL-207***

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Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

1 Corinthians 2:14-15, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for their foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is understood by no man."

2 Corinthians 2:16, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."

We direct your attention this morning to Colossians 1:25-29: "The Mystery of the Church," segment number 22.

It is not unusual, for people who visit Berean Church Services, to react afterward with some amazement, as one person did recently: that the preaching instruction has such depth to it. It goes in such depth into the Word of God. That is not expected in a church service. It is not expected that the people of God (the sheep of God) are going to be treated as if they were capable of understanding the deep things of the Spirit of God. And that is exactly what we are called to give the people of God, and to let those who want to be shallow and trivial and idiotic, to find themselves a context, for that is what is given.

So, we make no apology for the fact that we are in a monologue, and we are in an academic setting, because, in Isaiah 28:13. the prophet of old said: coming to an understanding of the mind of God means "precept-upon-precept;" "line-upon-line;" and, "here-a-little and "there a little", which is the Old Testament explanation of expository preaching. Anybody who is in church this morning, anywhere in this big metroplex, who is not an expository preaching is being robbed blind, and the preacher in the pulpit is guilty of violating the trust which God has given to him.

So, be prepared for something that will cause you to have to think a little bit, and to enter objectively into the things of God– not on the frothy emotion that will quickly blow away, and will make you a sitting duck for his majesty, the devil.

The current dispensation of the church, which we have been studying, and to which the apostle Paul is referred to in Colossians 1, began in human history on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, Acts 11:15-18). And the dispensation of the church will end on the day of the rapture, when the church is caught up to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). This is common knowledge to anybody who has ever read the Bible, and who has ever had a modicum of biblical instruction.

The church never existed in the Old Testament. It is a brand new work of God's gathering a special group of saints who have spiritual assets that are unimaginable, even to those who possess them. During the dispensation of the church, God deals with believers on the basis of super-abounding grace from the point of Salvation to the point of magnificent spiritual maturity. The grace lifestyle of the church age provides believers with the means and the power to live a godly life in victory over the world system; over the sin nature; and, over the devil. That was virtually unknown and un-thought of in the Old Testament system. They had no such capacity for doing right, and for living the godly life.

No previous era of human history has enjoyed the closeness to God; the personal prosperity on earth; the capacity for divine good works; the storing of eternal treasures in heaven; the knowledge of doctrine, and thus the mind of God; and, the power of the Holy Spirit to enable a person to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a magnificent way of life.

**The Unique Features of the Church Age**

The distinctive, unique features of the dispensation of the church we have touched upon:

1. Every believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation into union with Jesus Christ, making him forever a child of the royal family of God, and so, positionally, like Jesus Christ in God's sight. Once you have been baptized (which happens automatically) into Christ, you are forever a child of God. Everything that He is (all of His perfections) are now credited to you.
2. **The Indwelling the Christ**

Every believer in this church age is permanently indwelt by the Lord Jesus Christ, for the imputation to you of absolute righteousness, which you need to go to heaven, and to secure all of His spiritual assets to conform the Christian to the image of Christ in his personal sanctification. It is a heady thing to realize that I can walk and live like Christ in His humanity, because He is in me. The life that I now live, I live by the power of the Son of God, the apostle Paul says in Colossians 1:27. And that is because Christ lives in us. He is our hope of eternal glory, but He is our means to glorify Him now."

1. **The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

Third, every believer is permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit as God's temple to receive power and guidance for a life of holiness and divine good service through the filling of the Holy Spirit. The Christian who is filled with the Holy Spirit is one who is controlled by the Holy Spirit. When you are controlled by the Holy Spirit, you live the life of Christ. When you are controlled by the Holy Spirit, you have the ability to live right, and to do right, and you have the ability to serve God with divine good works for which He will reward you. Most Christians fritter away their lives with human good activities that come out of the sin nature, and so are tainted as evil.

1. **Priesthood**

Next, every believer is a priest representing himself before God's throne of grace, and offering up spiritual sacrifices. That is our great right. That is our great privilege. As priests of God, we go directly to His throne of grace. We do not go through any intermediaries as they did in the Old Testament. And we offer up sacrifices that are of a spiritual nature, but sacrifices which are just absolutely as important and required of us. And you should know them as any animal sacrifice of the Old Testament.

1. **The Canon of Scripture**

Next, the believer is the possessor of a completed canon of scripture – both Old and New Testaments, inerrantly recorded, under the divine inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, to provide doctrine as the mind of God for the believers' divine viewpoint frame of reference in living his life. The only way we know how to have a frame of reference that is the mind of God is through scripture. Most Christians sadly live their lives on the basis of human viewpoint. They don't know anything but what comes out of their sin nature. And what does their sin nature respond to? They respond to the world about them: to everything they hear; to what's on TV; and, to what important people say. And all you have to do to see how shallow and pointless life is for these people, is to just supervise sometimes – just look through some of these programs that are on television day and night, and that young people look into. And you wonder how anybody with any substance of soul could tolerate sitting there for five minutes to watch the nonsense and the triviality. But that's human viewpoint. And that's the life that Satan has for his world.

We Christians have a divine viewpoint frame of reference. And the younger you are, the more you want to remember that, and develop that frame of reference, and not ask the people around you for their thinking and what they believe is okay, but to ask God and His word: what should be your guide?

1. **A Supernatural Way of Life**

Next, every believer has the power of God the Holy Spirit to live a supernatural godly life: a life of integrity; functioning on divine viewpoint; imitating the Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity; and, walking in separation from the world. Nothing makes some Christians more angry than to suggest that they should not walk as people who are compatible with the world. That friendship with the world is to be an enemy of God. And there are people who are not sitting here this morning, under the instruction of the Word of God, because they're hopping mad because they've heard the suggestion that walking with the world is not walking in the will of God. And yet, the Word of God clearly calls upon us for a life which we could not live – a supernatural life of righteousness. And as only grace of God can bring us to salvation, it is only the grace of God that can enable you to live the life of Christ.

1. **The Filling of the Holy Spirit**

Finally, in the distinctives of the church dispensation. We have the filling of the Holy Spirit, enabling the believer to develop spiritual maturity; to fulfill his divinely appointed mission of Christian service; to enable him to pray effectively; to be able to witness to the world; and, to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. The filling of the Holy Spirit, upon confession of known sins, makes a spiritual Christian capable of meeting the devil, and defeating him every time.

**Positive Volition**

Now, the key factor determining the Christian's blessings and happiness, under all of these special assets of the church dispensation, is the believer's positive volition to the plan of God under grace. This is what James refers to as: "Being not merely a hearer of the Word, but being a doer." To be merely a hearer of the Word means that you have negative volition to what you hear. And if you are not a doer, which indicates your positive volition, then it will not affect your lifestyle. God's plan, however, will prevail, and He will impose His justice and His righteousness upon us. And the negative children of God face the ultimate judgment of the sin unto death. The key factor in learning the Word of God is positive volition – your choosing to do it.

There is a lot of complaining; a lot of self-pity; and, a lot of whining among Christians, for circumstances in life that have come crashing in upon them, when they themselves have brought this about by their negative volition to the instruction of the Word of God – where God says that this is the way it should be, and this is the way things ought to be, and you choose to say, "Well, it doesn't have to be that way." That is constantly the issue at hand, and it begins at the point of salvation. The unbeliever has to make that decision. God says, "This is the way it's going to be. You can't save yourself. I'll give it to you as a gift, if you'll accept it by trusting in My Son to carry you into heaven. And the unbeliever says, "That's not intellectually satisfying to me. It doesn't have to be that way." And God says, "Fine. Then we'll have a place for you in the lake of fire." God's plan will prevail.

That's why it is so important for you to understand that it is a very serious matter to contaminate the church dispensation: "To whom much has been given (as in this magnificent age in which we live of possibilities of serving, and living for God, and making your life significant for all eternity, and enhancing the joy, and the treasures, and the enrichment of your eternal place in heaven), with that kind of assets, then more is going to be required of you." And we will be judged accordingly at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And when you don't understand these distinctives of the church age, so that you know how to live in the way that is appropriate to now (and not to some past dispensation. like the age of the Law, which is a favorite, then you have created a deadly mixture.

Understanding dispensational distinctions will keep the believer from trying to follow a way of life which is not pertinent to his dispensation. God has created, for today, the distinct church dispensation of grace, with unique spiritual assets, and the means to utilize them in a wonderful life. We have spiritual means of meeting every human problem. And if you know the divine provision (the means), you can meet every spiritual problem. They didn't have that in other ages. We do have it today, and that's why it is such a distinct, special age.

**What Most People Think Christianity Is**

*Most church people today think that Christianity in the church age is a blend of the Mosaic Law ten commandments; the Sermon on the Mount; the golden rule; Old Testament rituals; holy days; and, doing your best to be a good citizen.* That's what people think Christianity is today. And when you listen to the ignorant people who are in powerful places in our society today: in government; and, in entertainment, this is what they think Christianity is all about. And they are the blind speaking for the blind.

People lack the knowledge of New Testament church-age doctrine as the basis for an objective relationship to God. And when you don't have a basis for an objective relationship to God, then there's only one other place to go to try to relate to Him, and that's on a subjective emotional basis. And when you resort to a subjective emotional basis to relate to God, where do you get the information? Where do you get the stimulation? You get it from the sin nature. And that's the difference from one Christian group to another. Those who find their joy; their satisfaction; and, their significance in life from the objective understanding of how to use the principles and concepts and human problem-solving techniques of the church-age (which work) over against trying to relate in an emotional way to God (which has no content) – when life comes upon a demand, like whether I should be moral or immoral, the emotion doesn't carry you. But the objective knowledge of the Word of God, and the control of the filling of the Holy Spirit, will cause you to do right.

**Jesus Christ**

How do I know? Because that's the way the Lord Jesus Christ lived. He did not live on this earth in His humanity, by calling upon the powers of His deity. He lived in His humanity just the way you and I live in our humanity. He had one advantage. Yes, He did not have a sin nature. But He had all the other temptations. He had all the other appeals to Him that you and I have. And yet, because of the combination of doctrine, and being filled constantly with the Holy Spirit, the devil could never bring Him down.

You and I, certainly, are never going to stand up before a group of people and say, "Does anybody want to accuse me of ever doing anything wrong?" But the Lord Jesus Christ was good. And he wasn't speaking as God. He was speaking as a man. We cannot be as perfect as He is, but we can be a whole lot closer to it than the people of the world; and, sadly, than most of the average Christians who never understand the principles of the era of grace.

No, the church age is not a blend of Old Testament beliefs, of customs, and of pithy sayings, and of being a good, nice person. Christians today commonly assume that the Old Testament, unconditional, national and ethnic Jewish covenants with Israel as a nation, have been spiritualized in their meaning, and transferred to the church, who is now viewed as a new spiritual, with no Jewish national future in mind. That is a deadly misconception.

I heard a man on radio. This man, obviously, has money to be able to finance radio programs, and to be able to be there speaking. And he was propagating this exact concept. And so multiple thousands of people were listening to him, and were being told that Israel has no future as a nation, and that the church is now the new Israel of God; and, that the covenants of God to Israel as a nation (which had to do with the land; the people; the throne; and, a kingdom) have all been spiritualized, and they no longer are literal in their meaning.

**Dispensational Changes**

However, in scripture, it is very clear that God's promises are exclusively, and moreover unconditionally, to ethnic Jews. They were never given to Gentiles. And they were never given to Christians. Israel as a nation is to be preserved. That's what God has promised. Israel as a nation will be spiritually regenerated. That's what God has promised. And that is exactly what is going to happen. And God's faithfulness to the Jews as a nation has never been rescinded, as many theologians have assumed, and thus insulting the veracity of God's Word. God's promises are not to be flippantly cast aside. God will do what He has promised to do to Israel. And these covenants, beginning with the Abrahamic Covenant, do not belong to the church. They never did, and they never will.

Now, the doctrine of the dispensations reveals similarities between the dispensations. Some things carry on from one dispensation to the next. But they also are very clear in distinctions which separate them. And trying to unite the dispensation of Israel and the church, for example, makes God look inconsistent and unreliable in His promises, because things were different in the Old Testament way of life. I mean, if you try to squeeze that into the church way of life, you have contradictions. Dispensational changes never undermine the integrity of God, or disrupt His decree of the course of human history. God is consistent, and He always will be.

So, both the Jews and the Christians are indeed spiritual seed of Abraham, in terms of their personal regeneration through Jesus Christ, but they are never viewed as being one people ethnically. That's the difference. We Christians – yes, we are spiritual descendants of Abraham, because it is through him and his line that the Savior came. And Paul makes that clear. But he also makes clear that what is pertinent to Jews as a nation has nothing to do with Christians. God's justice will discipline Israel for her rebellion, but he does not go back on His word, and reject the Jews as His special people, and replace them with the church as a spiritual Israel.

That is an assumption. It was a misconception that Satan interjected into the early days of the church, especially when it became a state religion of the Roman Empire. And the reformers, unfortunately, carried that misconception over. The literal interpretation of Old Testament Scripture never leaves open the option that God will permanently reject Israel. But the Old Testament is replete with warnings. For God said, "If they do not obey Me (Leviticus 26 – read it yourself, at home), I will take them through five stages of discipline. Five stages: bing, bing, bing, bing, bing – each one worse than the next. And in stage number five of the cycle of discipline: "I'll disperse you among the nations." That's exactly what happened.

However, those same prophets say that in God's good time and order, the angels will gather up Israel from all nations, and bring them back to the land. And this is what is going to happen. It is happening in a beginning form in our day, but it will fully be accomplished at the Second Coming of Christ. Then God's final promises to Israel will be fulfilled.

So, mixing Israel and the church is such a devilish concept, that it's hard to believe that anybody with a modicum of biblical knowledge and reading, can still be holding that misconception, as costly as that is to the individual Christian. No wonder Christians live like they're people of the world. Either you don't know how to live right, and you don't have the power of the Holy Spirit if you do know how to live right, because you're in carnality; or, because you have chosen to be negative to the instruction of the Word of God, because you choose, as a Christian, what to do with your assets. It's not because God has changed His ways.

The false concept, that the church is the new spiritual Israel, also tempts Christians to get involved in trying to bring in the kingdom by reforming Satan's world system. Only the Lord Jesus Christ will reform the world of Satan. He'll do that in the millennium. Christians are now to be exemplary citizens, and to be heaven's ambassadors, and they are to never neglect their first calling, which is to mature to the super-grace level. And we will look at that in more detail shortly. That is number one.

**Become Like Christ!**

Now, the average Christian doesn't understand what God wants me to do. He doesn't want me to go out witnessing. He doesn't want me to go out talking to people. He doesn't want me to be doing some good work for Him. He doesn't want me to be giving my money. He wants you to do those things, but not first. What does He want me to do first? He wants me to become like Christ. Oh boy. That's it. I wake up every morning, and that's all I'll do. Forget all these fancy dude things you do in your service. He's not asking you to do something. He's asking you to become something. And He has giving you the means to do it. But somebody, obviously, has to explain it, so that you know how to do it.

So, when you had this false concept that Christians are to do something for cleaning up society, then they lose their track of what they have been called primarily to do. The super-grace Christian, when he develops that maturity level, then becomes indeed an impact on his society; and on all the people he touches; and, on the nation itself. Christians are God's nobility as citizens of heaven, but, on earth, they are simply pilgrims passing through.

Philippians 3:20-21: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly await for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." We await for Him as mature, super-grace-level Christians: "Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with His body." We'll have a resurrected body, such as He has, which means: no old sin nature; no death; and, no possibility of doing evil: "By the exertion of the power that He has, even to subject all things to Himself." He is omnipotent. He will do this for us.

In the meantime, the apostle Paul says, "We are strangers and pilgrims. We're walking through." That's it. So, if you want to call each other "pilgrim," that's not too bad a title. That's pretty much on target.

**Royalty**

What God has provided for the church-age believer is spiritual assets to enable him to walk in this world in a manner that is worthy of his royal position. You may get tired of hearing this, but I see too many Christians who cannot rise to living as royal men and women. They keep making the choices, and the volitional moves, that bring them down into the dirt.

Ephesians 4:1-3: "I, therefore," Paul says, "the prisoner of the Lord entreat you" (I just beg of you) "to walk in the manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility, and gentleness, and patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit of the bond of peace."

Now, if you want some guidance and an asset of the spiritual life, you have a magnificent one right there to carry you through – those three verses. If Christians did just that, what a transformation of human relationships that would be right there: to walk like a prince or princess. That's what you've been called: to have an attitude of humility – not of arrogance; to have a sense of gentleness; to treat people with patience, even when they're very aggravating; and, to show forbearance – tolerating people who act in a ridiculous way. For what purpose? So, that you can treat them. And why would you do it? Because you're treating them in "agape," mental-attitude love, so that you can preserve the Christian spirit of unity. This is unity in the God the Holy Spirit. And the result is what? Peace. When there's conflict between people, God has the means of making peace.

**Self-Centeredness**

Many Christians never mature spiritually, or they fall into carnality, so that they live as enemies of Christ while they serve Him. And here indeed, we must admit that we have this feeling so often that the apostle Paul enunciated in Philippians 3:17-18: "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us (the godly pattern of the church age believer). For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you, as even we experience ourselves, weeping – that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." People whom we esteem. People whom we expect more of. People who should walk as royalty. And they want to make us just cry, when we observe what they have chosen to become, because of the key quality of the sin nature. What is it? Self-centeredness. If you are self-centered, I guarantee you Ephesians 4:1-3 can never be fulfilled with you.

Philippians 3:19: "Whose end is destruction; whose God is their appetite; whose glory is their shame; and, who set their minds on earthly things." And when we see Christians who set their minds on the now, and the earthly things, and their self-centeredness, we want to weep.

Christians will utilize the grace assets for church age living, or they will resort to a way of life that their old sin nature provides. And they'll call it: "the will of God." Those are the people who get mad at us for saying, "The world is not your home. They create a way of life from the old sin nature, and from the approval of society. And they call it the will of God. A Christian who is ignorant or negative to church-age doctrine; its grace lifestyle; its personal holiness; and, separation from the world, is going to lack discernment of what is right, and he'll become arrogant in living as a worldling. Such a Christian invites grief into his life. He will lack personal peace. He lives at a frenetic pace. And he will become a loser at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

None of that is necessary. We have the ability to do it right, and to come out winners. Church-age assets make the believer a potential recipient of vast spiritual and earthly riches beyond all he asks or thinks of God. Beyond all I ask of God, I have available blessings beyond anything I think of? That's right. They're all stored in heaven, piled up (warehouses full of them), they have your name on them, and all you have to do is draw down on it.

Ephesians 3:20: "Now to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly, beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us." According to the power of doctrine, and the temporal fellowship with God the Father through the leading of the Holy Spirit, gives us the power to draw down blessings from heaven beyond anything we'll ever ask for, or anything we would even think of asking for. That is the magnificence of the church age. This scripture could never have been said to a person under the Jewish Old Testament system, that so many want to live under.

Blessings now on reserve in heaven cannot be drawn off by the Christian who does not possess church-age spiritual maturity. There's the rub. If you're not a mature Christian, then the magnificent things that God wants to give you for life and eternity will never come to you. Only a fool would give his ten-year old son an automobile, to drive around town in. He doesn't have the maturity to handle it. Only a fool would give his daughter all the money in the world that she wants to use as a teenager, because she doesn't have the maturity to handle it. And God is no fool. And He wants to pour out on us the riches, beyond anything we'd ever dare to think to have, or to even ask to have. But you cannot draw down on those riches unless you have spiritual maturity.

Ephesians 1:4 says, "For just as He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love." The core feature of spiritual maturity is the overwhelming mental attitude "agape love" that controls the life of the Christian. And that only comes from the Holy Spirit.

How about 1 Peter 1:4: "To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." Yes, that inheritance in heaven now can be drawn down on in our lives now. But if are not qualified to draw down the inheritance now, you'll not be qualified to receive rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ either. If you are too immature spiritually, and functioning on some messed-up mixture of the age of grace, such that you cannot serve God as a winner, and have the spiritual capacity to produce divine good works, and to draw down for your life now what you need, you can't be producing things for which God will reward you in eternity.

Then there's James 4:6: "But He gives a greater, super-abounding grace. Therefore, he says, 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'" He gives super-grace. It is to that super-grace, mature Christian that God provides these heavenly blessings in storage. Now, such a saint, who does not rise to this kind of super-grace, will neither be able to draw down at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

2 Timothy 2:5: "Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules." Is there a prize? Oh yes, there's a great prize in an athletic contest, But if you don't qualify, you never get the prize. It's the same thing. Think what God would enable to do in His service if you could keep drawing down upon the treasures that have been set in reserve in your account in heaven. That's the distinctives of living by the principles of the church age.

2 Timothy 4:7-8: "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. In the future, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing." Paul came to the end of his life, and said, "I have lived by the principles of the age of grace. I have gone to super-grace maturity. I have drawn down upon my treasures in heaven. And because I was qualified to do that, I also qualified to serve God in a way that He will reward me at the Judgment Seat of Christ." "In the future there is laid up for me," and for Paul, he says, "even one of the medals of honor of heaven: a crown of righteousness – the crown to the Christian who has spent a maximum amount of his time in life living in temporal fellowship with God the Father."

So, God has a distinct life mission for every church-age believer. The apostle Paul refers to that in Acts 20:24, 1 Corinthians 9:25-27, Philippians 3:13-14, and 2 Timothy 4:2. The apostle Paul says, "God has called me to a life mission, and that, for me, was very serious business." That's why it's important to live according to the principles of the age of grace.

In Acts 20:24, the apostle Paul says, "But I do not consider my life of any account, as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course (my mission), and the ministry which I receive from the Lord Jesus Christ, revealing the doctrines and the principles of living under the grace age to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."

In Corinthians 9:25-27, Paul says, "And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we are imperishable. Therefore, I run in such a way as not without aim. I box in such a way as not beating the air, but I buffet my body and I make it my slave, lest, possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself shall be disqualified." Paul says, "God forbid that I've explained to other people what the principles are – the problem-solving mechanisms of the church age, and the power system of doctrine and the indwelling Holy Spirit in temporal fellowship with God the Father, and then I blow it. I don't live like that. I get to the Judgment Seat of Christ, and because I self-indulge my sin nature, I lost it all." Paul says, "I'm very conscious of not wasting my life."

Matthew 16:26: "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his life?" That means the potential of his life.

Philippians 3:13-14: "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet, but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind, and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Paul says, "Yes, sometimes I fall. I have to get up and confess. God brushes me off, and I go on."

In 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul he comes to the end of life, and says, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I've kept the faith." Are you going to say that? I've kept the faith? Well, you have to know what the faith is. He's referring to grace-age principles. And he can't fight the fight, and finish his course, and win, unless he knows how to live by that. Yes, Paul had a mission. He understood that he was born to fulfill a mission. And so was the Lord Jesus Christ, in His humanity, which also should be an inspiration to us.

I'd refer you to John 18:37, where Jesus talks with Pilate: "Pilate, therefore, said to Him, 'So you are a King?' Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I'm a King. For this I have been born. And for this, I've come into the world: to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Jesus knew He had a mission, and that's what He went out to fulfill.

God's objective – let's summarize it. For the life of a church-age believer is learning doctrine with a positive volition response; growing into the spiritual grace maturity level (super-grace maturity level); maintaining temporal fellowship through confession of known sins; and, fulfilling one's life mission through the exercise of your spiritual gifts.

Now, to illustrate this in just one small way. It is really impossible. This is so overwhelming, because the assets of the church-age are so great that I can only touch on it, and I'll only be able to begin this morning.

**Problem-Solving**

Problem solving techniques – you have a problem. The Scripture has the technique, whatever the problem is. For example, you need divine guidance. You need blessings. Your life is out of sync. You sense that you're walking alone without the guidance of God upon you. You pray, and nothing happens. You witness, and nobody cares. You get up, and you trudge through life without purpose, and without meaning. And you are very keenly aware of the fact that you're lacking divine viewpoint wisdom. How do I get back in touch with God?

**Confession**

Well, first of all, it's 1 John 1:9, because what has taken you out is sin. That's what lack of divine guidance begins with that. So you confess: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

**Be Filled with the Spirit**

Then there is the principle of Ephesians 5:18: "Do not get drunk with wine for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit." How do I get filled or controlled by the Spirit? By confessing known sins. How do I stay filled with the Spirit? By walking by means of the Holy Spirit. How do I walk by means of the Holy Spirit? By understanding the principles of doctrine that I've learned and stored in my human spirit, that the Spirit of God will bring to my mind at certain points to guide me. By not quenching the Holy Spirit. By saying "no" when He tells me to do something – that money He told you to give, but no, you don't want to do it. By not grieving the Holy Spirit. That sin: "Yes, I know, oh yeah, I know this is what God wanted me to do, but I just can't do it." That is a horrible thing. Once you grieve the Holy Spirit, you are so far out of the orbit of divine influence, and care, and guidance, that life is increasingly going to become rotten for you.

**Live by the Spirit**

However, there's a means to solve that. You cease and desist; you admit the error; and, you start living by means of the Holy Spirit.

**Faith Rest**

How about those problems that come into your life that are so beyond your human capacity to deal with. You're overwhelmed by them. Well then we resort to the magnificent asset of the faith rest technique. Hebrews 4:1-2: "Therefore, let us fear, lest while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it." The promise is doctrine. What do I do with it? "For indeed, we have had good news preached to us, just as they also." He's referring to the Exodus generation: "Who could not believe the Word of God, and then rest in faith upon that promise of God, to carry them through their wilderness experience. But the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard."

**The Promises of God**

You take the promises of God – 7,000 of them in Scripture for this age. There are 7,000 promises for this age. They are good only on this earth. They are never good in heaven. If you don't use them now, you don't get them. And you mix those promises with belief that God will come through and keep His word. So there's that circumstance, and there's that person. You do all you can, and then you turn to God and say, "I call upon Your capacity and Your promise to resolve this for me, and I now rest myself by faith in Your hands.

**Prayer**

Pray for God's provision and enablement in the Holy Spirit. How can I pray effectively? Well, the first thing is all your prayers, to be effective, must originate in heaven. If your prayers do not originate in heaven, so that you're repeating them back to God, then they are prayers which are originating in your sin nature. There are prayers which are not in the name of Jesus, and thus, they're not in the will of God.

Now, the promise of prayer is magnificent: John 14:13-14. And don't try to dilute this in any way: "And whatsoever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." No Old Testament Jew ever heard words like that from God: "I'll do anything you ask, providing you use the technique of prayer the way it's been designed to be used." Your prayer begins in heaven as an expression of the will of God, and it is demonstrated by declaring this to be in the name of Christ, which is the will of God.

**Petitions**

Ephesians 6:18: "Meeting the devil in his own world with all prayer and petition – praying at all times in the Spirit, with this in view. Be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all saints. The general word for "praying" is talking to God, and asking Him for things. And "petitions" is the urgency word. I have a desperate need. I go to God. And for the Christian who is in temporal fellowship, and that desperate need is directed to you from God: you ask; and, He will respond.

Philippians 4:6-7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all comprehension shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." I pray. The prayers has come from heaven. I repeat it back to God. And then I faith rest it. And the results will be what they should be. They may not what you think they should be, but they will be what they should be.

Now, there are many more principles on: how to function on divine viewpoint; how to deal with a spirit of bitterness and self-centeredness; how to deal with my anger; how to face personal death; how to deal with marital strife; how to focus on spiritual things in the world that is obsessed with the material; how to meet the temptation of that secret sin; how to resist my spirit of indifference toward attending church; how to overcome resistance with my financial gifts to the work of God; how to resist my attraction to Satan's world system; how to break the appeals of the old sin nature lust pattern; and, how to deal with my problems of employment and business relationships. The problem-solving for family structure and authority lines – tonight, we'll look at them.

God, our Father, we want to thank you for these great and wonderful assets that You have given us, and for what you have made us in Christ. We are a special people, and our prayer is that we would rise to what we are in Christ, so that all of our potential can be realized. We thank You for the fact that there are scores and scores of problem-solving techniques laid out for us in Scripture: the guidelines; and, the power lines for implementing them. We pray that You will help us this day to get a little insight into some of those, and give us an eye to spot the others. Thank You that we are members of the church-age family in Christ's name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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