***Problem Solving Techniques for Christian Living, No. 3

Colossians 1:25-29

COL-210***

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Hebrews 4:12: "For the Word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, 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."

2 Peter 2:1-3:"But false prophets arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them, the way of the truth will be maligned. And in their greed, they will exploit you with false words. Their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep."

This morning, we direct your attention to Colossians 1:25-29, and our subject is "The Mystery of the Church," segment number 25.

The spiritually born-again people of God's family, who live during the 2000-year church dispensation, have special divine techniques for meeting the problems of life successfully. No matter what it is, there is, in the word of God, the guidance and the principle and the provision of capacity to take life in stride. The spiritually dead unsaved people of Satan's world try to meet these same problems of life with the human reason of the old sin nature; with the myths of psychology; and, with willpower. So, they go down to defeat.

Carnal and legalistic Christians, who lack orientation to the Word of God, and are out of temporal fellowship, are no better off than the unbeliever, in meeting the problems of life. They're controlled by the old sin nature. They lack the guidance of the Spirit of God. So, there's only one place to go when you're a Christian and you're in that condition, or you'll go spiritually insane. And then you'll begin to act mindlessly. And as we see Christians who go berserk, we say, "That's crazy." That is a very apt observation, because that is exactly what happens – the loss of mental orientation to the real world, and to the reality of life, as it does exist under God's hand.

So, the carnal and legalist Christian is just as bad-off as the unbeliever in meeting the problems of life that come upon all of us. The unique power system, however, of the church age is doctrine stored in the human spirit reservoir, and the filling of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to apply that doctrine, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, so that we'll obey the doctrine we know, in a particular life situation. It's a win-win combination all along. You learn the Word of God; you say "Amen" to it; and, it is stored within your human spirit. The Spirit of God is there. And when you are in temporal fellowship; that is, He is in charge, then the information comes up when you need it for you to act upon.

**Confession**

I don't care how far off you may get into the world, or how far off-track from the will of God, you must remember that there is always a way back. That is what the marvelous power system of the church age is all about. You can always return. You can always get back in operation. You can always become the prince or the princess that you really are. And you must never forget, no matter how far astray we may go into sin, or into rebelling against the will of God, all it takes is 1 John 1:9: a moment of admission (a moment of confession), and you're right back there ready to go on.

Now the longer you've been out of step with God, the more weakened you've become; the farther afield you've gone; and, the more of your spiritual stamina you've lost. So, while you are back in potential of growth, you are going to have to recoup lost ground. And that is always a tragedy, because that's wasted life time. But you can recoup that ground, and you can go back. That's what's at the heart of our stressing, in the church age, these techniques for living the Christian life – these problem-solving situations. They're not just nice things. They are vital to us. And it is important that you remember never to become discouraged in the Christian life because you may have played the fool. That happens all the time. Yet, what happens all the time is also fools who become wise once again.

So, the unique power system of the church age is something that you should appreciate, and treat with great respect. Doctrine and the Holy Spirit – it is those two things that carried the Lord Jesus through His life sinlessly in His humanity. That's all – those two things: the mind of God; and, obedience to it through the power of the Spirit of God.

Nothing is so wonderful, really, in life as the grace orientation of God's Word, so that we can meet the good times and the bad times in stride, to the glory of God. And that's what Christian maturity is all about. You meet the good times in stride to the glory of God. But you meet the bad times equally to the glory of God.

The apostle Paul points out in Romans 16:25-27, as he closes this book: "Now to Him Who is able to establish you, according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past." Now you know what that mystery is: the dispensation of church truth. "But now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets (the New Testament prophets), according to the commandments of the eternal God, has been made known to all nations." They have been particularly made known through the apostle prophet Paul, to whom church truth was revealed: "Leading to obedience of the faith. To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever."

So, the apostle Paul is pointing out here that the life of the Christian can always be to the glory of God. Whatever the situation, because of what has been revealed to us about the unique features of the church age, we can do things they never could in the Old Testament. We can live as they never could live. We can bounce back as they never could bounce back. And if you do not bounce back, by the way, that's an insult to God. It's near blasphemy. You're suggesting that you can do something so terrible that God has no solution for it. That's not true. He does the transforming, and there is never a time when we are hopeless.

In the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul pointed out another facet of this. The book of Galatians deals with legalists – people who think that they progress in their spiritual lives by the legalistic systems, such as was prominent in the Old Testament. In Galatians 1:3-5, Paul says, "Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen."

Here again, the apostle Paul says, "You may glorify God because He has made it possible. He has made peace between you and God possible in what He did on the cross. He gave Himself for your sins, so that you could be delivered from the sin nature (and notice) from this present evil age." That is the problem with Christians. We get more Christians mad at us, as a congregation and as a church, when we stress the fact that, out there, the world belongs to Satan. And engagement in life in that world system will bring you down, and it will destroy your walk with God. Yet, we have a system of power, in the church age, such that the evil age around us does not have to intimidate us, and it does not have to control us. In fact, we can walk the good times and the bad times through this evil age, and keeping our integrity intact, and our manhood, and our womanhood complete as an honor in glorifying God.

In Philippians 4:11-13, there is another observation of the apostle Paul – the wonderful life of grace orientation. Paul says, "Not that I speak from want, for I've learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means (the bad times). I know also how to live in prosperity (the good times). In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry (the good times and the bad times), both of having abundance and suffering need (the good times, and the bad times). I can do all the things (in spite of all that) through Him Who strengthens me."

So, this is the great thing about living the Christian life. It is possible to walk in such a way that your life is always to the glory of God. That's what these principles, that we've been looking at, are all about.

Now, the average Christian, we must sadly admit, is quite ignorant of the divine power system that God has provided for the exclusive use of church-age believers. The average Christian, because he is ignorant of this system, he becomes a spiritual casualty. And the hand of Satan is able to bring him down. It is not enough to be a born-again Christian. It is important in this world that you understand how the Christian life has to be lived, and how you have to deal with the issues that come into your life, according to the techniques of this power system. The average Christian is ignorant of the divine power system provided exclusively to church-age believers, so he becomes a spiritual casualty at the hands of Satan.

1 Peter 5:8-9 says, "Be of sober spirit. Be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." You're in no different position than the rest of us are. Your life is under the potential attack of Satan, like a person being potentially under the attack of a lion.

If you were out in a jungle area, surrounded by lions, you'd be alert. You'd be very much on your toes. You'd be aware of the potential destruction that is at hand. And all you need to do is fall asleep, or lose your caution, and you're lion meat. And then they will open the store named "Food Lion" in memory of you.

That is the same way that we should live with Satan. A lion is always out there. And you are going to become spiritual dead meat, sooner or later, if you do not walk around knowing that that character is pussyfooting around, just waiting for an opportunity. You play the fool when you do that. And that's why it is very apt to say that people who do get pounced on by the lion, because they've opened themselves up – they do that because they're mindless. They're crazy.

When you are spiritually on target mentally, you're always aware that, in the periphery of your vision, the lion is there eyeing you. That's the way it is with Satan. If you forget that, I guarantee that you will bring grief into your life.

In 1 Corinthians 10:12, Paul says, "Therefore, let him who thinks he stands, take heed, lest he fall." Those of you who are great servants of the living God, you must never forget that. Obviously, the great things you do of divine good, for which many are blessed in the critical role you play, is because God has chosen you and enabled you, and because you have been walking with Him. But because you do have spiritual orientation, that doesn't mean that you're safe. You're safe as long as you're in that inner circle of protective custody of temporal fellowship. If you step out of that circle, now you are in the devil's realm, and the potential destruction is enormous.

When I was a teenager, a very wise man told me that I could learn things in one of two ways. One was by my own experiences, and pay the price. Or I could observe other people, and learn by their experiences. That's not a very great, deep thought, but it is so true. And what we're saying this morning is that you know plenty of people who have destroyed themselves spiritually. How did it happen? For the simple reason they did not understand how to live under the divine power system, and stay in that protective circle – the inner circle of temporal fellowship. Once you're out of that, through sin, or through human good, sooner or later, Satan will get you.

James 4:7 says, "Submit, therefore, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." And the only way you resist the devil is by being in church, and learning doctrine, and saying "Amen" to it. The only way you resist the devil is by confession when sin does occur. When evil occurs, remember that human good is as bad as sin. And that's how you resist the devil. And when you do resist him, then he goes looking for a better prospect someplace else. He's not going to pursue the Christian who is walking with the awareness that Christ is in him – the basis, and the hope of glory.

So, we have been looking at these techniques for living. From questions I've had about one of these, dealing with personal anger, there are a couple of thoughts that occurred to me that we need to add to that.

So we have touched how to deal with personal anger. The first thing we pointed out was that there are legitimate means for a Christian's personal anger: to be angry against what is evil; and, to be angry against negative volition to the Word of God. That isn't a legitimate expression of personal anger.

Please notice in Mark 3:1-6, where the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated anger toward people who rejected the Word of God – people who would not say "Amen" to a principle of doctrine: "And He (Jesus) entered into a synagogue. And a man was there with a withered hand. And they were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath day, in order that they might accuse Him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, 'Rise, and come forward.' And he said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm – to save a life, or to kill?'"

Now, Jesus put it very plainly to them. He knew that they were going to accuse Him of breaking the Mosaic Law, because He's working on the Sabbath day, He's putting out an effort. So, Jesus is trying in His teaching way to clarify for them that none of the rules for governing the Sabbath day were designed to injure people; to do harm to them; or, to deny them blessing.

So, Jesus says, "Now, let me help you with the thought that you have got in your minds: "Is it good to do harm on the Sabbath day, or to save a life, and to kill". Which is the thing to do? Meaning is it incompatible with the will of God to help this man who has this terrible affectation of a withered, incapacitated hand; or, is it in the will of God that this should not be done on the holy day of the Sabbath?

Well, they knew what the answer was. They knew very well the answer was "No." God means to do good, not to do evil to this man. But for them to say that would've been to say that Jesus was right. And that stuck like the proverbial broken chicken bone in their throat. They could not say, "Yes, Jesus, You are right." They could not say "Amen" to a principle of doctrine.

Notice the Lord's reaction in Mark 3:5, "And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart." Yes, we are angry at people that play fools in their spiritual life and with the Word of God, but at the same time we are grieved. We must weep for them, and we do, and we pity them.

"He looked around at those with anger and grief, and with the hardness of heart. He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored." Now you would've thought that these men would have said, "We're wrong. This Man has just done an amazing thing. He has taken what only God could do, and fixed a part of a physical body that's not fixable by human means." He did it by the power of God. That places upon it the stamp that what He did on this Sabbath day is acceptable to God. It's pleasing. It's right.

What was their reaction? Mark 3:6: "And the Pharisees went out, and immediately began taking counsel with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy him." They went out, and said, "How can we destroy this Jesus to silence Him, so that He will stop telling us the truth?"

Well, now days, when preachers of the word give people the truth, they generally don't try to kill them. But if they cannot silence them, by stripping them of financial support, they flee. They go someplace else to church. They put their hands over their ears, like in Pilgrim's Progress, and they run away from the sound of the truth. And this is what these people did. Instead, they took counsel as to how they might silence the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, it is right to become angry, as Jesus was by this demonstration of negative volition toward the Word of God – to be angry toward that. But the biblical technique for dealing with anger is not to sin in the process. And we did point that out last time. I want to read that verse once more.

**Be Angry, but Don't Sin**

Ephesians 4:26-27: "Be angry, and yet do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity." Now, you can do some things, and that's where the question was raised, when you're properly angered – when you're justifiably angered, with a holy anger. And in the very process of expressing that anger, there is the potential for you to do evil. We didn't stress that. And that's what I want to stress now. Be angry, but don't sin." And the first way you will sin is by letting the sun go down on your anger. You do your legitimate anger, and then you turn it over to the Lord, and you do not keep stewing about it, and getting your stomach all upset, and getting your whole physical body out of sync, because of an emotional tension that you're under. You put the anger aside, and you don't give the devil an opportunity to bring you down.

Now, the caution that needs to be brought in here is expressed in Romans 12:17-19, which we did not look at last time. This is what needs to be added: "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord."

This is one of the principles back in Deuteronomy 32:35. It was part of the Mosaic code. God told these people, "You do not take your vengeance." And that's the problem. When people make you mad, and righteously mad, and when they have abused you, and when they have mistreated you, and you have a reason for being indignant, at that moment, Satan will try to make you take your own vengeance, and to put out your own punishment, and to take your own retaliation. And the result will be that you will have sinned in the process of being righteously angry.

**Faith Rest**

That is not entirely easy to do, but the principle is oh, so true. You do not take your own vengeance when something makes you angry. This is where you have to bring in the faith rest technique. You do what you can in dealing with a problem, then you turn it over to God. And you let Him do the vengeance. And there's nothing worse than you can do, whether it's a Christian or an unbeliever, than for you to turn to the Lord and say, "Father, here's the situation. Here's the evil that has been exercised toward me, and I now turn this person over to you for the exercise of your justice, and for the dealings of vengeance, as is appropriate, in Your estimation." That way you don't make a mistake. That way you leave it to God to do what should be done to that person. And I guarantee you, that if you pray that prayer, that person is in bad trouble.

A prayer of turning it over to the Lord by a Christian in temporal fellowship, I guarantee you, is going to be heard. And the judgment of God will come down upon that person, and then the judgment will be right. You will not be involved in contaminating yourself.

So, do not return evil, but always keep in mind: "I'd like to turn back good for the abuse of others."

In Romans 12:20-21, Paul says, "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in doing so, you'll heat burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Now our natural inclination is to let evil overcome us. We want to sock it to him the way they socked it to us. The Word of God says, "No, that's not the technique." In the grace age, you have the capacity, because of your knowledge of the Word of God, and because of the power of the Spirit of God that can enable you to do this, you'll overcome evil by doing good in return. Do you want to be a brute? Do you want to be a beast? "I'm going to be an agent – an angel of God, in return to you."

**Family Duties and Lines of Authority**

Let's look at one more principle that I think is obviously so important in our age. It is one of the major contaminations. It has to do with the family. All over American society, there are efforts to destroy the American family in some of the grossest ways imaginable, because the family stands in the way of the sin nature's full and free expression. We will now look at family duties and lines of authority. What does the Bible have to say about that? If there was an area where Satan brings grief into people's lives, it is in this area here. And the younger you are, the sooner you need to learn this.

First of all, I direct your attention to 1 Timothy 5:8 which says, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever." This has to do with dealing with members of the family – members within the Christian community. But the principle here is that if anyone does not provide for his own (his own family members) especially for those of his household. It brings it right down to your family. God says that you have denied what is the Christian faith. This is not the work, and this is not the attitude of a Christian. And you're worse than an unbeliever in the sight of God.

Now, an unbeliever is headed for hell. That's pretty bad. God says, "I look at you in about the same way." This is obviously being directed, as we will see, by the context, to the father of the family – to the husband. It is his business to provide the bacon. It is his business to be out there providing the sustenance for the family. Whatever other income may come in through other members of the family, that is all secondary, and that is all subject to certain conditions of life that they may live under. But the core principle here.

In former ages in American society, when two people were going to join in marriage to begin a family, the man wouldn't think of asking a young woman to marry him. They wouldn't think of getting married, even if they were engaged. Sometimes, in earlier times, it wasn't until he even had a house for her to live in. He went that far – to have a house. And he had the house, and he had the income. That's why people in earlier generations in America, they used to be older before they got married, so that a man had established the means to care for the wife and the children potentially that would be born. They didn't get married if the husband depended on his wife to help them survive. So that's point number one. It is the place of the husband. And I know that the feminists hate this. Nevertheless, you see it here. You heard it in Scripture.

Drop down to 1 Timothy 5:14-15. Paul says, "Therefore, I want younger widows." In the Greek, that can also be "women." And you see that it's in italics. The translators believed that it's talking about this specific category. But in any case, it's talking about unmarried women: "To get married, bear children, (I have to read it, folks), keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach." Do you want to give the devil a hand to get at you? Then have a wife who is not the homemaker. That's it. You're on your way. And Satan's got you. He's looking at you, especially if you have a child.

"I want the young women get married; bear children; keep the house; and, under those conditions, you will give the enemy (Satan) no occasion for reproach. For some have already turned aside to follow Satan." Their called "feminists" in our day. They were called other things in the New Testament time. They've already turned aside to follow Satan.

Now, having said that, we ought to understand that we are all our own priests. We all represent ourselves before God. We all deal with God directly. And you do whatever you want because you're under grace. You do this, or you don't. It's up to you. But the principle, first and foremost, is that the husband brings home the bacon, and the wife does the cooking of what he brings. She is the homemaker. She's the caretaker at the home at this certain stage of life. And basically, whatever else she does, and certainly when there are children, that is where her situation lies. And whatever else she may do in life (which is the beauty of Christian women – that they serve in all kinds of Christian service activities that they're free to do) is because their husbands are doing their job of caring for them. Therefore, they are free to do the things of the Lord. Even when they have children, they are free to work around with those children, such that they're able to be engaged in the things of God. These are the women who make the work of the Lord go on tremendously. Without them we'd be greatly crippled.

So, the principle, first of all, is that the husband does the job of providing, and his wife does the job of helping him do it by being there at home, and taking care of that end.

Titus 2:3-5: "Older women ('presbutis') (pres-boo'-tis), likewise, are to be reverent in their behavior; not malicious gossips; not enslaved to much wine; and, teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women ('neos') (neh'-os) to love their husbands; love their children; (I'm sorry – I have to read it, folks) workers at home; kind; being subject to their own husbands, that the Word of God may not be dishonored." That is pretty clear, isn't it?

I don't care what the feminists say. They're a shoddy lot. They're a sorry group. Their only purpose in life is to protect abortion, so that we may murder these children instead of being keepers at home.

One of my duties at Berean Christian Academy is to drive one of the school buses. And in the morning run, I pull up to a daycare center, where we pick up one of our children. And no matter how many times I see it, I cannot but cringe when I observe it. I just can't get used to it. I see these cars parked there, and these mothers who are rushing out, carrying their little bundles of nuisance. These little, wrapped-up bundles of nuisances, with their little carriers for them to be in, that they're going to lie in. And they're rushing in to rush in the door; drop off this child; and, they're going to rush out to their place of business and their employment. And somebody else is going to spend the day with that which is an arrow in a man's quiver, that God has given him, by which he may conquer the world for Christ. Someone else is going to have the influential voice on this small bundle, which should be a bundle of joy, but is obviously a bundle of nuisance. And there it is. I see it every time I pull up.

Now, this is what the Word of God says: "That's wrong. That is not the will of God. That is not the plan of God." Is it the plan of society? Yep, you betcha, because this is the present evil age we live in.

2 Corinthians 12:14 gives us a point. Here, Paul says, "For this third time, I am ready to come to you (speaking to the Corinthians Christians), and I will not be a burden to you." He means: "It's not going to cost you anything. I'm not going to charge you anything, and I'm not going to even ask you to give me hospitality: "For I do not seek what is yours, but I seek you. For children (and they are his spiritual children) are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children."

Now, here you have it again: who provides for your children? Well, there was a time in our country when they had to make laws against child labor. People were putting their children out like little slaves, to make it for the family. It is the purpose of the parents, particularly the father – he is the one who makes the provision. And the mother helps make that provision have maximum effect in the family.

So, Paul says, I'm going to treat you as my spiritual children, as on the human plane, I would be providing for you – not you for me. So, I will provide for your spiritual needs, and you won't have to worry about providing for me.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14, "Be on the alert. Stand firm in the faith – act like men. Be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." Here are two of the most tremendous verses in the Bible about family life. Be on the alert to Satan, and to the world system, and to your sin nature. Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Stand firm on the basis of doctrinal principles pertinent to the age of grace, and these techniques (these provisions) for solving human problems and relationships, and act like men.

How many problems would be solved if Christian men could just act like men, instead of acting like self-centered, and (the key word of the old sin nature): selfish twits. Act like men. And what are men? They're strong. They're the ones you lean on. They're the ones that the wife and children can count on, who will never let them down, even when he has personal incapacities and stresses and problems.

**"Agape" Love**

The primary factor of being a man is that all that you do be done in love. And the Greek word there is "agapé" (ag-ah'-pay). That is mental attitude love, that you're well acquainted with. Love has no shade of bitterness; has no shade of demand; and, it has nothing but self-sacrifice at its heart. It's a good mental attitude. Whatever burdens you bear in life, if you're a man, you never let down your kindness of spirit toward the wife; toward the children; toward your friends; toward your church members; and, toward your family.

**Men**

And we are a generation where it is really tough to find men who can stand firm in what they know to be truth. We see the sorry side of saying, "Yes, I know what is the truth. I know what I should be, but I don't want to do that." That is a weakling. And that certainly does not convey what every Christian man should be conveying – the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Lines of Authority**

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, here are the lines of authority that we're talking about, that come into conflict within the family. We've been stressing family structure, and family unity, and family peace on the basis of what duties each is to carry. Now, here is the line of authority: "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman (or the head of the wife, more specifically), and God is the head of Christ."

So, here are the lines of authority. It begins with God. It goes down to Jesus Christ. It goes down to the man in the family. It goes down to the wife. And then underneath it, as the context goes on, to the children. Now, here's a divine order of authority. God is in charge. Christ is His agent. The man is subject to the Lord Jesus Christ. The woman comes under the authority of her husband. And the children are under the authority of that mother and the Father. If you change that line of authority, and the duties that each is to perform in that lineup, you will have disaster. You cannot escape it. In one way or another, you'll have disaster. Here is a divine order: God; to Christ; to husband; to wife; and, to children.

The next time you want to be a smart mouth and a rebel against your parents, you who are youth: here, and those who will hear us afterwards, consider these verses very carefully. And this is the voice of God that you're listening to in these Scriptures. Ephesians 6:1-4: "Children." That's not little baby kids. It's anybody who's under the authority of his parents. In the Old Testament, until you were 19 years old, you were a child. You were under the authority of your parents.

Ephesians 6:1-4: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." You're to obey your parents, but in the Lord. You don't obey your parents, if they want you to help them rob a bank, so that we can buy a new PA system for the gym. You obey your parents in the Lord. You have a responsibility for doing what is right. People in the military, who are involved in very brutal things in the nature of the case, whether it's in combat or just ordinary military duty, have to also be very careful. While they have been given the force, and the power, and the training, and the means to exercise great forcefulness, and to impose their will, they cannot obey an illegal order. They cannot obey an order that is improper, or that violates the rules of warfare.

It's the same in the spiritual combat of the Christian life. We, who are youth, obey our parents, but we cannot obey their orders if they are a violation of the Word of God, and the principles of integrity: "For this is right."

Ephesians 6:2-3: "Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise." This is the first commandment of the Mosaic Law that says, "If you do this, I'll do this for you." Now that tells us that obeying your parents is very important: "That it may be well with you, and that you may live long on this earth." Do you want to have a prosperous life? Do what your parents tell you to do. You want to have a long life and a healthy life? Do what your parents tell you to do. That is the way it was in the Old Testament. It works the same way today. And if you do not do this, then you expose yourself to a great deal of grief.

Now, suppose, in the Old Testament, you're 20 years old, and now you're an adult. Now you're held responsible on your own. Now your father is no longer your priest between you and God. You're your own priest. What is your attitude towards your parents now? Then you must honor them. No matter how old you get, your parents are always in the position of honor. Until you are out on your own as an adult, you must honor them by obedience. You must be obedient to them. When you're on your own, making your own decision, you must honor their consideration and their advice. You don't just blow it off, because they know what they're talking about. They have been your age, and you have never been their age.

Also, it's interesting that this admonition of children is closed with an admonition to the father. Ephesians 6:4: "And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger." Don't do things that embarrass your children that make them mad for what you're doing; the violations of the moral code; or, the violations of duty and authority: "Do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and in the instruction of the Lord." Help your daughters to be women, and your sons to be men, because you're bringing them up with the proper discipline of the Word of God, and the integrity of the instruction of the Lord.

The Old Testament was not silent on this business of family relationships. In Proverbs 30:17, we have a rather sobering observation of dealing with the kid who will not obey: "The eye that mocks a father and scorns a mother – the ravens of the valley will pluck it out, and the young eagles will eat it." This is in direct relationship to the code that says, "Obey your parents (honor your parents) if you want a long life. If you do not honor them, it will snap your life short, and you'll become bird food. The eagles (the ravens) are going to be plucking out your eyes, and the young eagles will have a good feast on your carcass. That's very sobering. What God is saying is: "If you make fun of your father, or you scorn your mother when she tells you to do something, you don't obey it. And this, while it was true in the Old Testament under the Mosaic Law, is an eternal principle of righteousness. As I've just shown you, it's repeated in Ephesians. The same thing holds true here. God will bring a brick wall down upon you if you treat your parents without instant obedience to their proper directions, and their legitimate constituted authority.

Matthew 18:5-6 is to father, again, about rearing their children, and to mothers: "And whoever receives one such child in My Name receives me. But whoever causes one of these little ones, who believes in me, to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea."

Now, here's another principle. God says, "Once you begin in your line of authority, and your authority is abused, and brings grief upon your family, you have now hung yourself a millstone around your neck, and you are a potential candidate for death. God is not a fool. And He will not be treated as a fool. And these rules for human relationships are not going to be ignored – especially if you know them.

In Colossians 3:18-21, here's what we've been saying, all summarized, and all put together in one nice little package: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord:" "Husbands (mental attitude, as well as emotional), love your wives. Do not be embittered against them." If you have mental attitude love, you cannot be embittered against them: "Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart." There it is – all put together. Those principles are to be obeyed on all lines of the family, recognizing the lines of authority, and recognizing the duties that each as, whether father; mother; or, children, brings about peace and victory in a family life.

We have one more in Romans 16. Why do families get so broken up, and so out of sync with reality? The Bible says it's because of some of the things you're learning. Romans 16:19: "For the report of your obedience," Paul says, concerning these Romans, "has reached to all. Therefore, I'm rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil." Many a father and mother goes astray because they have permitted themselves to become contaminated by getting to learn about evil. They listen to the talk show programs, where the vilest qualities of the human nature are portrayed. And the disgusting things, instead of being things of shame, are their pride: "I want you to be wise about what is good (the principles of the Word of God). I want you to be innocent about what is evil. I don't even want you to know about how filthy, and dirty, and lowdown people can be. And I don't want you to be associating with people on that basis."

We close this morning with a principle that makes all the difference of the world, on all of these guidelines that we have read. They are all for naught unless this principle is observed. It is James 1:22-25: "But prove yourselves doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror. For once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer, but an effectual doer, that man shall be blessed in what he does." The law of liberty is Bible doctrine of the church age. And a man who looks at that, and compares himself – he's going to be a true prince; a victorious man; and, he'll be blessed in what he does. And he will not be someone who becomes spiritually insane because he becomes a spiritual casualty.

Remember that these are only some of the guidelines, that we have looked at, and that this is only some of them. There's many, many more. These resolve human problems and human relationships, but they all depend upon our positive volition to accept these as the truth of God, and to apply them, and to live by them, or there will be no benefit and no success. Do not exclude yourself. Do not think you're an exception to Satan's potential for you. And do not think that you can change, in a family life; the responsibility; the duties; and, the authorities as God has set them up.

You can muddle through, and you can scrape through, and you can have all the misery you want. But if you want God's way, and God's prospering, and God's blessing, and, most of all, standing at the Judgment Seat of Christ unashamed, you have to do it His way.

God our Father, we want to thank You for the great things that You have constantly shown us in Your word. And we pray that You will help us on these two great principles we looked at this morning: anger without vengeance; and, a family that does it God's way. May that be true of us. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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