***Admonishment and Counseling

Colossians 1:25-29

COL-218***

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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."

Acts 20:32: "And now I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to hold you up, and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

Revelation 3:22: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

We direct your attention to Colossians 1:25-29. Our subject is "The Mystery of the church," segment number 33, in Colossians 1:28.

**Jesus Christ**

The apostle Paul says, "And we proclaim Him". Paul declares that here he and his associates, in the ministry of evangelism and teaching of the Word of God, proclaim Jesus Christ. This word "proclaim" is a word that means information that is coming down to one from a higher authority. It means to report down from God to Paul, and to the Christians of the church age. Paul has received doctrinal information about the church dispensation, superior to that of any other apostle. This is about the Lord Jesus Christ and His special relationship to a special group of saints in this particular period of time – the church age. This information comes from God to Paul, and Paul, in turn, teaches the church age believers.

There is a specific content to Paul's ministry of proclamation about Jesus Christ that we looked at briefly last time. Paul proclaimed salvation as a free gift from God, apart from any human works. Paul did not play on people's emotions in his preaching, but instead he appealed to their thinking capacity. He appealed to their minds, and told them that Christ has died for all mankind, and the penalty for all sin has been paid.

Paul proclaimed that, through faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior, one will receive forgiveness for all sins. Paul proclaimed that, through faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior, one is credited with absolute righteousness, and so he is forever justified. Jesus Christ was proclaimed by Paul as the firstfruits of the resurrection, to be followed, in like manner, by all who are believers. Paul's proclamation of information about Christ came from the Scriptures – from the Word of God revealed to him. It was not the result of human philosophy, nor of his human reasoning. Therefore, what Paul said could not be ignored. It is the Word of God.

Paul, in his proclamation, checked up on how his converts were carrying on with the proclamation about Christ which they had received from Paul. So, he went back to see how true they were to their opportunity. Paul rejoiced to find his converts were witnesses. They were proclaiming the gospel of the grace of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, this gave him a great deal of satisfaction, because this is the bottom line to the Christian life. In the Christian community in general, people are given the impression that the preacher is the communicator of the gospel. If you want to be saved, come to church. I heard of a preacher one time, who was visited by a man in desperation about his soul. And the preacher was meeting with him in his office, sitting across from his desk from this man. And he said, "Now, I want to tell you. You do have a problem sir." And if you'll come to church next Sunday morning, I'll preach a gospel sermon that'll solve all your problems." The preacher never even had enough sense to give him the gospel right then. The preacher, furthermore, had a congregation of people that didn't have enough sense (who were associated with this man) to give him the gospel. It is so tricky, whether you're a young person or an older person, to say, "I'm nothing in life if I'm not a seed-planter of the gospel. In one way or another, I am the communicator." And we shall see more about that in a moment. But it's important that we understand that it isn't someone else, and that the Lord said, "You will be My witnesses." We are the ones.

So, when Paul went back, and he found these people witnessing to the gospel message, along with all the full counsel of the Word of God, he knew that they understood what God expected of them.

There is one thing more" Paul's proclamation about Jesus Christ is summed up in his call for the lost sinner to be reconciled to God through Christ. Now, the local church ministry has been organized by God, with the pastor-teacher instructor, for the specific purpose of preparing Christians to imitate Paul in proclaiming Christ, and to imitate Paul in explaining the full counsel of church-age doctrine. That's what our Christian life is all about.

**Admonish**

So, Paul said, in Colossians 1:28: "We (I and my associates), first of all, before we do anything else, we proclaim Him (Christ)." Then he said, "In the process of dealing with Christians who have accepted Christ as Savior, we proceed to admonish every man." The word "admonishing" looks like this in the Greek language: this word "noutheteó" (noo-thet-eh'-o).

**Counseling**

This is a very interesting word, because this is the word that, in English, we would refer to as "counseling." That's big stuff in Christian circles. You have whole departments in theological seminaries on counseling people. You have whole church divisions on being able to speak to a counselor.

Well, here the apostle Paul uses a word that says, "We are counseling people," and at the heart of this word "noutheteó" is the concept of "warning." We are warning people in reference to something. We're warning people in reference to their condition, and their relationship between God and man. We're warning them about false doctrine – the evil consequences of a lifestyle in the world system. We are warning them about these things.

Now, how do you do that? By the psychology of Freud? Or do you do it by the Holy Spirit power of instruction in the principles of doctrine? Obviously, nobody will ever get counseled, in an effective way, through what psychiatry or psychology has to tell you. But through the Word of God, you will be advised, and you'll have the judgment to what you should do; what you should not do; how you should think; how you should not think; whom you should associate with; whom you should not associate with; and, what you should do with your life: first; second; and, third, and last. This is a very significant word.

Paul says that, after we have proclaimed Christ to them, then we say, "Now we must give you some cautions. If you ignore our gospel testimony, you'll spend eternity in the lake of fire. If you become a Christian, and you do not grow spiritually, you'll be wounded, and become a casualty of Satan. And if you become a mature Christian, and the blessings of God are upon you, and you begin to forget why you are so blessed, and you begin to drift away into carnality, the result will be the same. Eventually, you will become a spiritual casualty. And people will look at you, and they will shake their heads, and wonder what on earth happened?

Well, what happened was that we Christians have not been admonishing one another (warning) what can happen. Or we have not taken seriously the warnings of the Word of God. The whole Bible is one book of counseling. And every time you sit in a church service, where you are fortunate to have an expository preacher who has taken the time, and the effort, and the stress, to examine the Word of God, and to discover what it has to say, and you are sitting there, having that explanation, then you'll know what to do. You'll know what to think. You'll know how to guide your children. And you will not be a sucker for the world's system. After you're saved, you need to be on your guard.

Now, the apostle puts this in the Greek in such a way that it indicates that they do this all the time. They were always warning people. They were always putting people on their guard. They were always cautioning. And he puts it in a way that indicates that this is what they're doing personally. They're not saying, "Hey, let me take you to church, and they'll give you some good counseling advice." No. He says, "We are doing this. We are advising people. We're giving them this indication." It's a statement of fact. Paul himself was continually warned. He continually warned the lost people about ignoring the Lord Jesus Christ. And he proceeded to plead with them, that they would believe in Christ for salvation. It is important for the world to understand that salvation is a very small gate, and it's a very narrow road. And if you miss that, there is no other way.

Now, that is highly resented in our day, because people like to think that there are all kinds of ways to get to heaven, and that is simply not true. In Acts 20:18-21, the apostle Paul is in Ephesus. All over the city of Ephesus, there are homes in which Christians are meeting as small congregations. Each one of these has one elder. He is called the pastor-teacher, or the bishop. And these men have all gathered at the dock on the seashore. Paul is about ready to board the vessel, to make the journey to Jerusalem. They'll never see him again. He'll never speak to them again. And he wants to stress to them some things that are so important. What shall he say to them?

Beginning in Acts 20:18-19, Paul says, "And when they had come to him (all these preachers), he said to them: "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility, and with tears, and with trials, which came upon me through the plots of the Jews." Satan was using the opposers of Jesus Christ to make things very hard for Paul. That's when a lot of Christians collapse. That's when a lot of Christians give in. They don't want to serve the Lord under the trying circumstances that are often demanded of us.

Acts 20:20, "How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house (visiting these house churches). I taught you in the house churches, and I taught you in the family groups, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Was this changing your mind about God, and considering God a liar? No, I changed my mind. He is telling the truth. Therefore, I must place my trust in Jesus Christ. I've changed my mind. He is the Savior. And I will trust in Him and accept Him.

Then Paul says: "This is what I did all the time. I'm with you constantly. I'm giving you this instruction. Now you follow my example as the spiritual leaders in this city.

Drop down to Acts 20:31. Paul says, "Therefore, be on the alert. Remembering that, night and day, for a period of three years, I did not cease to admonish each one with tears." Now, why was Paul weeping? Paul's tears came because of the people who were negative. Paul's tears were because of the people who had grown spiritually, and were great servants of God in the local community, and the Christians were blessed by them, and dependent upon them. And then the devil was able (like Demas) to snatch them out. And here's somebody that became a great disappointment.

It is very hard for the pastor-teacher not to have to sit down in the quietness of his study, and wonder about these things, and get a few tears shed over the tragedies of Christians who do not take seriously the admonishing (the warning) that Satan is ever present to bring you down, because he wants to silence you.

Now, if you're a Christian who never plants the seed of the gospel; if you're a Christian who keeps most of the money that you get for yourself; if you're a Christian who seldom worries about praying; if you're a Christian who gives very little thought to the study of the Word of God yourself; or, if you're a Christian who is totally preoccupied with life in the world system, and the activities of the world, then you don't have anything to worry about from the devil. He's not going to bother you. He's going to keep you as happy as he can, because you're no threat.

But I guarantee you, if you're a Christian who walks by that table today, and picks up a couple of those evangelism brochures, and you say, "I'm going to plant the seed, at least to one person. I'm going to go back to my school, and I'm going to plant the seed to one person, now you have immediately come up as a prime target on Satan's radar.

However, you are also immediately surrounded, with swords drawn, by the hosts of God. That word "hosts of God," in the Old Testament, means army. And the army of God immediately comes to you as a defender. If you keep your nose clean in temporal fellowship, and you keep your integrity up there with the principles of the Word of God (the moral code), then the devil is not going to be able to touch you. Will you have a hard time? Yes, you'll have a hard time. Will you get sick? Yes, you'll get sick. Will you have physical ailment? Yes, you'll have physical ailments. He'll do whatever he can, and what God will permit him to do. But the Word of God tells us that you'll never be tested. You'll never be up against temptation greater than what other people have been carried through by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. You will not be brought down.

However, he says to them: "Preach the word. I did it for three years here. You should see how I did it, and imitate my example. And the reason we should do that is because that's one of the last things the Lord told us in Acts 1:8, just before He went to heaven. He said, "But you shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you (which happened on the day of Pentecost, and continues to this day). We have the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We have the power system of doctrine: "And you shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Now just read this: "But you," then put your name in there: "You, Sam, shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you (which He did at the point of your salvation), and you (put your name in there), Sam, you shall be My witness, from where you live to the far corners of the earth. This is speaking to you. This is speaking to us individually.

Acts 4:12: "And there is salvation in no one else. There is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

So, the Muslims are wrong. They cannot be saved through following the precepts of the Quran. They cannot be saved through their trust in Mohammad. They're wrong. And the Hindus are wrong. They cannot be saved by the concept that they have deity within themselves, or their own imagined Gods. They're not going to go to heaven. The Jews are wrong when they will not accept Christ as personal Savior: "There is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." Now, that's a pretty strong condemnation of the religions of the East, and of every other effort of the religions that name themselves as Christian (like Mormonism), but add human works as the final key feature.

So, it is very important that you understand that your first mission in life is to be a proclaimer of the gospel. And in heaven's name, if you can't do it by handing out one of those splendid Berean evangelism brochures, then you have a big problem. Certainly anybody can do that. It just takes the vision of understanding that this is my calling.

**Why Don't we Share the Gospel?**

The apostle Paul himself could look back on a life of service for God, and know that he had given fair warning to people. In Acts 20:26, Paul adds this to these pastor-teachers: "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I'm innocent of the blood of all men." This is a phrase that says: anybody who is going to experience death (eternal death), and eternal separation from God in the lake of fire, it is not because of me. Anybody that has come into the orbit of my influence, will never look back and say, "Now, why didn't Sam tell me about this? He knew about all this. Why didn't he inform me? Why didn't this guy sitting across from me in the desk at school – he knew this? Why didn't he tell me about this? Why didn't he invite me out to club so I could learn about these things? Why did he let me drift, knowing how hazardous my position was?

Paul said, "I tell you this day. I can tell you before God that I'm innocent of the blood of all men, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." Now he steps up. He not only says, "I guarantee you anybody who came, and would sit and listen to me, they learned how to go to heaven. They learned the true, grace, gift-from-God salvation process. But then he kicks it up.

**The Whole Purpose of God**

He says: "The whole purpose of God." And that means everything pertaining to church age doctrine. He said, "I didn't get people saved, and then leave them like blathering idiots (infants) – never developing. When they were saved, I put them under your care, pastor-teachers, all over Ephesus. And I helped you to understand the doctrinal principles of the church age. And you got up in the pulpit and you preached. And I wrote letters, and you received those letters, and discovered that there was an inspiration about those, because they were under the guidance of the Spirit of God.

The apostle Paul said, "I didn't shrink from getting you saved, and I didn't leave you there as dummies after you were saved." I took you to spiritual maturity, which, as you know, is what our Colossian passage is all about. Paul said: "To bring you to where you are mature."

Paul admonished his associates to follow his example, in warning the lost of the lake of fire, and of warning believers of the loss potential of their rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

I don't know how to answer the question (somebody asked again): "Why don't I hear this at my church? Why is it I never hear anybody talk to me about confession of sin to keep my lines of communication, and blessing, and care open with God? Why have I never learned about storing treasures in heaven? I thought, 'Well, you saved. Bingo! It's all over. Everybody's going to be the same up there. There will be no difference among us. Everybody gets up there, and all of a sudden to my horror, I'm realizing that each day I've lived, without investing it in eternity, is a lost day, and I never can get it back."

The apostle Paul was very conscious of the fact that he will be reviewed by God for the life he has led, and rewarded or not. 2 Timothy 4:1-5: Paul says, "I solemnly charge you." And please remember that this is written to his like-a-son associate, Timothy. And this is 2 Timothy. Paul has already said to Timothy, "The Lord has spoken to me. Nero is going to execute me, and my voice will be silenced now, except for the letters I have written, and from the people I've instructed, and people like you, Timothy, who will have to carry on, and you'll have to train other men."

So, you have to have that as a background. It's a very poignant statement to Paul, knowing that he's trying to stabilize those who are going to be left behind without his powerful force.

2 Timothy 4:1-5: "I solemnly charge you, in the presence of God, and of Christ Jesus, Who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and by His kingdom." This is His millennial kingdom, which is to come, of which the church-age Christians will be the rulers. Preach the Word." That's it: "Preach the Word of God. Proclaim doctrine. Be ready in season and out of season" – when people are receptive, and when they are not receptive.

The American society today is most unreceptive to the Word of God. It is my personal conviction that the Lord God has abandoned the United States now, as He has other great nations when they turn from Him, and they cut themselves loose from the Word of God, and in the highest institutions of influence in our society, evil is called good, and good is called evil.

In Isaiah 5:20, the prophet said, "When you see that, you know that that country is on its way out." Preach the Word. Be ready in season and out of season." And you and I have to minister to people in an out-of-season time, if there ever was one: "Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with great patience and instruction." You can hardly find people in public life who are willing to say, "That's wrong." People will say, "If you say that, we're going to take your authority away." We should say, "Fine. I'm a man of honor, and by the authority of God, what you're doing is wrong. Therefore, I'm condemning this, and calling your attention to it. And if you want to punish me in return, that's fine." You hardly can find anybody like that anymore.

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires." They'll run off, and run their own little operations. They'll run their cute, little, "churchy" groups. They'll run their emotional orientation congregations. The place will be full, and the money will be pouring in. They'll have programs galore. And everybody will think that things are really wonderful, but there is not a whisper of the mind of Christ (of the Word of doctrine) is to be found in the place. And what will happen? The true places will be the ones that will be the first to be abandoned.

I was speaking to a professional man this past week who knows of the Berean ministry. And I mentioned to him something that we were doing, and I told him how we were pleased with what God does for us. I said, "Here we are, a little podunk church in Irving that nobody ever notices or hears about." And he said, "Oh, you're wrong about that, Dr. Danish. I move in rounds where the influence of Berean Church keeps cropping up, and people are aware. They know you. Some of them don't like you, but they know you. And they know the proclamation that comes out from your church. So, you may have empty seats, but the influence of the Word of God cannot be stopped." And, of course, he's right in that

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. They want their ears tickled". They'll go to the places that will play on their emotions, and they'll feel that they had a wonderful time with God. And what's going to happen? Pretty soon, they're having a wonderful time with God. And then, they'll come and say, "Hey, can you help me? We're having a divorce." And you say, "What?" I thought you were riding so high with God – never closer to him in your emotional jag, and running your wonderful operations." Well, they discovered that it's very costly to let somebody tickle your ears.

There is a problem with having itchy ears in the emotional realm. Have you ever had an itch that won't stop when you scratch it? That is very maddening. You scratch it, but it won't stop. And you have to scratch it more. Then you have to scratch it even more. It gets to be a hopeless situation. That's what happens when you want to play the game emotionally. And pretty soon, people just bomb out. And then they look at one another, and life is all torn apart. And then you wonder: why did I ever sit around, and say, "What I want is somebody to give me an emotional jag." And the reason for it is because that's where most people are. Most people can't be wrong.

In 2 Timothy 4:4-5, the consequence is inevitable: "They will turn their ears from the truth, and they'll turn aside to myths. But you be sober in all things. Endure hardship. Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry." It will not always be easy to be the proclaimer of the Word of the gospel (the Word of the full doctrine of church-age truth), but you do your job. Now, Timothy had a special niche, but you have yours in the same way."

Some of you people are teaching children constantly. You're dealing with youth here constantly. You're doing exactly what young Timothy did. The influence is enormous.

In the book of 2 John, there's one little verse that is an interesting verse about: "Christians, don't lose your rewards. Don't get to this nonsense that heaven's going to be the same for everybody. In 2 John 8, John says, "Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished". Now, what did John accomplish? These people have been thoroughly versed in the principles of church-age truth, and of the power system of the Holy Spirit guiding through doctrine. He said, "This is what we were able to bring you to this stage of maturity. Watch yourself. Do not lose what we've accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward." What's he talking about? He's talking about the Judgment Seat of Christ, where Paul says, "We must all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, to be evaluated for what we have done, good or evil."

But I'm struck by the word "full:" "That you may receive a full reward. Even in this moment of the tragedy of finding that you have wasted your life out there, the tenderness of God the Holy Spirit puts in this word "full," because it's to remind us that what you have once done for the Lord, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, no matter how far you may drift off into becoming a prodigal, God never forgets. All that you have done; all that you have been; and, all that your life has been invested in the things above, and in the will of God, and the fulfilling of your mission, He will never forget. And that reward is secure in heaven. The tragedy is there could have been, for many, a great deal more that would've enhanced the beauty of their heaven.

Hebrews 6:10 says, "But God is not unjust, so as to forget your work, and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered, and by still ministering to the saints." God will never forget the service that you have done for Him. God will never forget the times when you have been true to Him; when you've treated your money as His money; and, you've treated your life as one that is no longer your own. Because He has bought you, and paid for you, you are now His servant, and you live for the glory that He has for you in heaven. That's where life is really going to be. He says, "God is not going to forget that. He will remember even, when you've turned against Him. And even when you've become a horrendous casualty in the spiritual warfare, He will never forget your halcyon days when you are on target.

**Heavenly Rewards**

Also, I remind you of 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, where Paul summarized all this that he's talking about here – to preserve the integrity of your eternal rewards: "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." That's what salvation is based on: "But from salvation, if any man builds upon this foundation of salvation, with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, haste, and stubble, each man's work will become evident." This is Christian rewards: "For the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire (the evaluating Judgment of God). And the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work." And Christians who have produced scads of human good effort things, that make them really "feely" good stuff, and made them impressive in the eyes of other people, but were not the work of God through them – that's hay, wood, and stubble, and that's all going to be burned up and thrown away by the Judgment of God.

On the other hand, "If any man's work which he has built upon it (his salvation) remains (gold, silver, and precious jewels), he shall receive a reward." It will be some marvelous thing. And I guarantee you that when, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, God says, "Well done, good and faithful servant, please enter into your reward." And an angel pulls the curtain back, and you will look, and you will gasp. You'll not believe what will be awaiting you that will be yours to enhance your whole eternity, to enjoy forever, beyond anything you could dream now. It's going to be very real, and it's going to be there.

How much? It is up to you. "If any man's work is burned up (as all the human good will be), he will suffer loss (the loss of what could have been), but he himself shall be saved." It's got nothing to do with salvation here. This is all rewards for service: "As through this fire of God's judgment."

So, the apostle Paul was very careful to admonish Timothy, and his other associates, that they should be sure to so live and serve, as to not come short at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**Admonishment**

Admonishing deals with counseling – with warning a person with doctrine, in order to prepare him to become a mature Christian, so that he will not be a spiritual casualty in the angelic warfare.

1 Peter 5:8: "Be of sober spirit ('gravitas' is the old Latin word). Be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." And I guarantee you, if your eyes are on yourself, and if your eyes are off of Christ, Satan will get you. And often, you won't even realize that he's got you. It's only at the other end of the line, as you look back from eternity, that you'll realize: "So, that's what happened to me at that point in my life.

1 Corinthians 10:11-12: "Now these things (Old Testament Scripture records) happened to them as an example. And they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." These previous dispensations, like what happened to Israel in her national history, all have been recorded so that we can learn by their foolishness: "Therefore, let him who thinks he stands, take heed, lest he fall."

Okay, which Christian is so hot and sure? Which Christian is so indifferent? He says, "I don't have to come to church. I don't have to worry about reading the Word of God during the day. I don't have to be concerned with keeping my life clean, and my integrity intact before the Lord, and when I'm out of step – to confess it." Who's going to do that?

God says, "Just think of Israel." They saw God personally in action. They saw Him doing tremendous things. They knew He was there. And then, they turned against Him? They went after the gods of Egypt? They went after the corrosive worship practices – the degrading practices of the world? And these were the people who knew God so closely?

So, just because you have grown spiritually, and just because you have a terrific track record of serving God, and of divine good works, don't think that Satan can't bring you down. He's determined to do it.

Now, when we admonish Christians, our purpose is to help by alerting them to their foolishness, and to their evil ways, and to warn them of the potential discipline of God. When we call attention to these things, from the experience of life that we learn from others, it isn't because we want to beat anybody over the head. We may call *your* attention to something. Even this morning, God may have rung a bell. And you might say, "You know, that could apply to me. That could be something with me." It isn't because somebody is trying to punish you.

In 1 Corinthians 4:14, the apostle Paul says, "I do not write these things." And he wrote many condemnatory things to the Corinthian church, of things that they were doing that were bad: "I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children." We don't call attention to this because we want to embarrass you. We called attention to this, because we know that these problems will be devastating to your personal wellbeing, now, and at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:12: "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord, and give you instruction." When you instruct people in the things of God, you must be prepared, as certainly I must be prepared, to be rejected. You must be prepared to find that people will no longer sit in the congregation to be instructed in the Word of God. The Bible says that if someone is explaining the Bible, and he is true to that mission, you should appreciate those who are doing that. You should appreciate those who diligently labor among you – not somebody who gets up in the pulpit who preaches off the top of his head; gives you a few illustration; a few cute stories' and, sends you out emotionally kicked up, but spiritually starving. Why would you appreciate that person? Why would you go back to a church service like that? Why would you give your money to support that kind of a ministry?

"We request of you, brethren," Paul said, "that you get your head screwed on straight, and you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, instead of rebuffing them, and giving them the back of your hand, and showing them that they can't tell you what to do, and have charge over you in the Lord, and to give you instruction."

You would be surprised, were I to take the time, to tell you how people retaliate to the Berean ministry, in the circle of our operation here – the things they will do to create misery for us, and to create grief for us. Why? Because we proclaim the Word of Truth, and because we do it so that they might save their lives. But they know that when we proclaim this, they come, and they live along like this, and nobody thinks they're wonderful. So, they strike back at those who are telling them the truth – at those who are really nurturing and caring for their souls.

I saw a frantic mother. She was at K-Mart or someplace (maybe the grocery store). And this mother is there, and she has this very good looking little boy. And he has long pants on, and they all crumbed up at the bottom. They are bigger than he should be. He had the little ring in his ear – all the accouterments of the world system. And I thought: "How sad." Instead of enabling him to grow up into a godly man, here she is, training him to do all the styles of the world, and to have all the signs of being effeminate.

Well, I thought, "I'd like to ask that kid to come out to youth club, but he would feel really uncomfortable in a club meeting, even though everybody treated him nice. He'd really feel uncomfortable." And after a while, he would recognize that the guys don't think it's wonderful for him to wear big, wide, baggy pants, or to have his sister's earrings in his ears. He would do one of two things. He'd get rid of those things, or he would be resentful, and see how he could retaliate. That's the pattern. And you must be prepared for it. I'm never surprised what people do to us. Other people *are* there. They just get so indignant. I can't believe somebody would do this to us. Yes they will. When you tell them what is God's way, Satan is going to say, "Make it expensive for them."

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15: "And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man, and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. Yet, do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." Okay? I'm not going to say: "Fine, in regard to what you're doing; I'm not going to associate with you in what you're doing; but, I am going to treat you as my brother in Christ. And I'm not doing it to injure you, but I'm doing it because I must call to your attention (I must admonish you) according to my responsibility – the full counsel of the Word of God.

Now, the unsaved world automatically hates biblical Christians, because the biblical Christians do the work of "noutheteó" (noo-thet-eh'-o). They do the work of warning and of admonishing in the Scriptures. They tell us what the Bible says about the things of God; about morality; about the divine institutions; and, about the inspiration of Scripture. And the Lord Jesus went out of His way considerably to prepare us for the fact that we are going to be ill-treated when we proclaim the word of truth. We have a church ministry where we have young people, and we say, "Here's the way you should live; here's the way you should conduct yourself; and, you do not imitate the world. Some rise to it, but some resent it, and see what they can do to strike you back. And very often, these are the kids who have never learned to be under authority at home.

In John 15:18-19, Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you're not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore, the world hates you." Isn't that interesting? What did the Lord choose us to do? When he chose us for salvation, He choose us out of living the world's lifestyle. And how many Christians are absent this morning, because they're too exhausted, or they're too involved in the lifestyle of the world, all over the place. How sad!

John 17:14: "I have given them Your Word." This is Jesus, in his high priestly prayer, saying to the Father: "I have given them Your Word, and the world has hated them because they're not of the world, even as I'm not of the world." Jesus says, "I've given them the doctrinal principles by which they are to live, and because they live by those principles, the world doesn't like them."

So, if you're one of these people that just gets along great with the world system, and great with the people of the world, and you have great social relationships with the people of the world, you have a problem. As people abandon the authority of the Bible as God's Word, the more they will hate those who seek to obey the word of the Lord.

2 Timothy 3:12-17 is an interesting observation: "And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You however, continuing in the things which you have learned, and become convinced of knowing from whom you have learned them." So, when somebody comes up to you at school, and wants you to do something that's evil, say, "I can't. I've learned better from the living God through my pastor-teacher; through my parents; through my Sunday school teacher; through my training union leaders; and, through my club leader. I can't do that. I know that God says, 'That's not the way:'" And from childhood, you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus."

It is amazing how people, from childhood, have really learned from their pastor-teacher, and other teachers, the real, genuine, in-depth things of the Spirit of God. And yet, those are the people they despise and dislike the most. Those are the people they can't wait to get away from, to escape having to sit through a church service.

2 Timothy 3:16 then sums it all up: where is it from? "All Scripture is inspired by God, profitable for teaching, for reprove, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Then there is 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12, "And for this reason, God will send upon them a diluting influence, so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged, who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness." God said, "I'm going to take those who reject the truth, especially those who have had it, and I'm going to then say, 'Okay, do you want to be negative to the principles of the Word of God? Do you want to be negative in your conduct, and in your thinking to doctrine principles? Now I'm going to cause you to go for what is false. I'm going to remove from you the discernment of what is the truth. I'm going to let you eat the garbage.'" And suddenly, people who once were deep into the things of God, have joined the prodigal son at the pig trough, and they're eating the things of the world.

That's why I say that, in my opinion, God has abandoned the United States, because from the highest of the lowest echelons of this nation, all we are getting is dignity for eating from the pig trough, and dignity for the life of the pigs. But Christ in us, the hope of glory – that is no longer dignified in this nation. That is no longer the ideal. All that the people of influence struggled to do in this nation now, is how to maintain justification for their evil.

Now, who's going to help? Only you: you people who know better; and, you people who have the discernment. It's going to be your life, your time, your gifts, your money, and your presence that's going to make it possible to have a voice of influence. And it is only going to be as you hand out the Word of the gospel through our little brochure, perhaps. Somebody may say, "Yes, I believe this". Then you say, "Now I have something more for you. Come on down to Sixth and Nursery to Berean Church, and sit in those morning and evening services, and your mind will be transformed into the thinking of God, and your life will become a glory land.

The unsaved cannot believe, however, that we godly Christians will not join them in their sinning. So, they slander us as extremists and fanatics. They call us "the Christian right," and they call us "the Christian conservative fundamentalists." But again, the Word of God said, "Let it not bother you. Expect that. Let them turn their backs upon you. And let them ridicule you. Even when you say, "No, here's what I believe. Their ears are closed, and they keep misrepresenting what you really believe, and what you really have said.

Notice 1 Peter 4:1-5, Peter says, "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin; so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh, no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." If you say, "I'm not going to be devoted to the lust patterns of the sin nature," okay, then people are going to make you pay for that. You will not live according to the lust patterns of the sin nature, which is commonplace and acceptable in our world society, especially if you're in an academic setting like colleges. People will say, "Okay, we're going to make it miserable for you: "For the time already past is sufficient. Our life in the past (out of Christ) – that's enough time for you to have carried out the desires of the gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lust, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

Then, in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation. And they malign you: "I can't believe it – that you do not do something like this." And then, instead of saying, "Well, okay," they seek to slander you, that you're some kind of a fool such that the sin nature does not dominate you.

Verse 5: "But they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." Yes, we are the Christian right? Yes, we are the conservatives. Yes, we do take the Bible literally, but that's because this is the Truth of God.

So, when Paul says, first of all, "I proclaim Christ with all the features that are pertinent to what He has done to the transformation of a human being from a destiny in hell, to a destiny in heaven. And then I proceed to admonish Him. I proceed to warn him what it is like to live the Christian life: the principles of doctrine; and, to enable you to know what to do and who our enemy is. What Paul is saying is, "I'm telling you that you're going to be in a warfare. The spiritual angelic warfare is going to come down on you, and you must act accordingly. You walk with the Lord; you learn the Word of God; you obey the moral code; and, you maintain your personal integrity by confession of known sins (that wonderful 1 John 1:9), and you never get sloppy in that. And then you live your life for the glory of God: "Lord, look at everything You've given me. Look at the talents I have. Look at the physical capacity I have. That's one of the most important things. Every moment that you have physical capacity, take a look at somebody that doesn't have it anymore, and you'll see that this is your day of opportunity.

So, take a look at what God has surrounded you with, and then say, "Father, this is Your day. This is Monday: then the next day is Tuesday; and, right down the line. What shall I do for you?" And He'll open the doors. And if you stay with the Word of God, the simple little things, not the least of which is associating with other Christians. I cannot believe how people think they can make it in the Christian life, and they're never in a church service. You can't. Not only do you lose the instruction, but there is the reinforcement of other people there – the encouragement to you that God's people are there. You're not alone.

What was it that's so discouraged Elijah at the confrontation with the ancient Ahab and Jezebel? He thought he was the only guy. He was the only one left. And the Lord said, "Oh no, Elijah. You're out front, but I have all these multiplied people who are true to Me, and teachers of the Word. They're all going to come out when you make the statement. When you make the stand, they will have courage, and they'll be out there, but you have to be the point man. So are you the point person? Perhaps.

God our Father, we thank You for this, Your Word.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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