***The Wisdom of God

Colossians 1:25-29

COL-222***

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Out topic is the "Mystery of the Church," segment number 37, in Colossians 1:25-29.

**The Uniqueness of the Word of God**

Of all the sacred books in the world of the religions of mankind, only the Bible is the Word of God, because only that book has been produced by Him. We make no apologies for that. The book of the Quran is not the Word of God. The Book of Mormon is not the Word of God. The sacred writings of the religions of the East are not the books of God. Only the Bible speaks for the Creator God.

Now, that is the beginning of wisdom. When you understand that, you are in a position, now, to come into information through which you may reach the mind of God.

**God-Breathed**

Now, the Bible clearly makes this claim for itself. 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is inspired," and that word "theopneustos" (theh-op'-nyoo-stos) in the Greek means "God-breathed." He has breathed the information out to the authors, and then they recorded it on paper" "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." And the man and woman of God will never be adequate and equipped for any kind of good work (divine good work), unless you have breathed in the Word of God as we are doing right now. That is the core necessity of every believer's life. Most believers don't have a chance. They never get a chance to be able to breathe in the Word of God, because they're fed nothing but corn cobs (not the kernel) of the Word of God. The food, the nourishing part, is never given to them, because it's more fun to play the emotions.

Now you should respect, and count yourself fortunate, to have access to that, as should other Christians who happen to be in that kind of an expository preaching church. Without it, there is no hope for you. It's hard enough to be able to walk with God, and to live with Him, when you have instruction in the Word of God. We see spiritual casualties regularly among ourselves, of people who decided to step off the path of walking with the Word of God. They step off the path of feeding upon the things of the Word of God. They step off the path of walking in doctrinal principles, and getting all tangled up in the world. And that is a lie. That is a self-deception. It's the worst kind of false witness that you could bear. It is like the saying says, "Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive." And that is what is constantly done out in the religious community. But the Word of God, the Bible – there we have an access to true truth.

2 Peter 1:21 says, "For no prophecy (that is, no revelation from God) was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." And these men spoke by writing it down. God breathed into them the information, then they spoke, it and they wrote it down, and we have it today. All other sacred books of the world are the word of man produced by the mind of man – every single one of them, without exception.

In 1 Corinthians 1:20-21, Paul says, "Where is the wise man?" (Where's the person with the high IQ? "Where is the scribe?" Where is the official recorder of truth: "Where is the debater of this age?" Where is the one who knows the ins and outs? "Has not God made foolish the (IQ) wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world, through its wisdom, did not come to know God?" Since man, by his own wisdom, can never come to know God, what did God do? God was well-pleased, through the foolishness of the message preached (doctrine), to save those who believe."

So, the Bible makes no apologies for the fact that, if you look for spiritual enlightenment any place else, you're not going to get it. And though most of the humanity in this world today, as in ages past, and all the way to the future, believes false religious books, and follows false spiritual leadership, that doesn't make any difference. The majority is overwhelmingly wrong. It is the Bible alone that is spiritual truth, because it expresses the divine viewpoint wisdom of God.

This is what Paul has told the Colossian Christians he is bringing to them. He is bringing to them, through the Word of God, great wisdom from God.

In John 17:17, Jesus says, in His High Priestly prayer for the church: "Sanctify them in the truth. Your Word is truth." And it is only the word of the Bible which is truth, because only the Scriptures are the Word of God.

At the end of the New Testament, in the little book of 1 John 2-3, this also emphasizes that the Bible alone is spiritual truth: "Beloved, I pray that, in all respects, you may prosper, and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. For I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth; that is, that you are walking in the truth." The apostle John, the elder, was the only one left of all the apostles. And he was very soon to die, near the age of 99 or so. And he writes this little letter to a friend named Gaius, who was a spiritual leader that John has been associated with.

He says to that little group, "I want to see you in as good health as your soul prospers." Did you get the connection? The more responsive you are to the principles of doctrine, the better health you'll have.

Try to find that in all your health books and medical bulletins that you receive. Well, you do find it. I received one that said: "Religion and faith makes a big difference in how well they are, in the physical condition of people." And it went on. It was very interesting. It was not from a Christian point of view, but just from a scientific point of view. They observed the difference.

"I pray that you would have good health to the degree that you soul prospers." So, to be in prosperity physically is to have prosperity of good health, so it is to have prosperity in your soul. And John says, "I'm glad to see that you're walking in the truth." That's why they're prosperous in their soul, because of the truth of the Word of God. The sacred books of the world are not the spiritual truth, but they are the wisdom of man. And that's all that they are – just the wisdom of man.

**Paul at Corinth**

Please look at 1 Corinthians 2. I want to read an extensive passage, to pull this together, and to help you to understand why we pound away at staying in the Word of God, and why it is such a great tragedy for anybody within the circle of this congregation who, for whatever reason, is not able to be here this morning. It's an enormous tragedy. And, likewise, it is a tragedy for someone who once was here, and who became a spiritual casualty, or crossed the line, and God pulled them out, and took them away from the privilege of expository preaching. Why is that so important? How does that happen? It is not a triviality. It is the heart of everything that has to do with our taking our next breath, and making life worth living.

The apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 2:1, says, "And when I came to you brethren." And please remember that the Corinthians didn't like Paul. They really didn't like him. They were very irritated because he called them down on their sin, and there was a lot of it in that congregation of churches. And they made fun of him. And they even made fun of how he looked. So, the apostle Paul here is having to be as nice as he can be, with people that he has opened up heaven to, because of his instruction, and now they're stabbing him in the back and ridiculing him, because they are so much superior now, and they don't want anything to do with him.

Paul comes along, and because he has apostolic authority over them, he says, "When I came to you brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech, or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God." Yes, Paul says, "I'm a university graduate. I've got a couple of degrees, like the University of Tarsus. And I'm right there, at the top of my class. But I didn't come to you with that kind of IQ and information I have. I came to you with the testimony of God in a different way. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. Yes, I could have talked to you about psychology. I could have talked to you about psychiatry. I could have played on your emotions. I could have played on all kinds of things. I said, "No, I'm going to tell you one thing. I'm going to tell you how to get to heaven. And I'm going to tell you how to become a mature Christian under the power system of the church age,” which the Jews never had.

So, in verse three, he says, "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. I may have looked like an imposing figure to you when I stood up to speak. But I carried a lot of intimidation. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom (of his IQ), but in demonstration of the Spirit and the power of God – that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."

Do you see the problem? Your faith – if it rests upon the fact that you've gone to church, and some pulpit personality has wowed you with his oratory, and his little stories, and his little clever connection, and his little one-liners, then when you leave, that's all you have. But if you have been fed the eternal Word of God that Jesus says no man can live without, then you have the power of God. The wisdom of men is nothing. And a pulpit-personality, dramatic type is nothing. But the simple stumbling preacher who can tell you what God thinks, because he can explain doctrine – that is where the power of God lies.

"Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature. A wisdom, however, not of this age, nor the rulers of this age who are passing away, But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery – the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory. This is the wisdom which none of rulers of this age has understood for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

As it was true in the time of Jesus that the rulers of that age (both Roman and Jewish) did not understand, and did not have God's point of view, so it is true today. Yet these people parade around nightly news. They give us their pontifical declarations. They talk to us, and everybody stands and listens to them, and they're awed that these people know nothing. You should understand that the people who are in authority in our country today are, by and large, completely devoid of God's wisdom. Therefore they have nothing of significance to say to us.

Paul says, "This is confirmed in Scripture." And then he quotes verse 9: "As it is written, things which eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man all that God has prepared for those who love him." That's what they don't have. Now, that's talking about doctrine – the great revelation of church-age truth. And he said, "These are the things that you cannot get through studying a book, or through listening, and through human IQ.

"For to us God revealed them through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of man, except the spirit of man which is in him?" Even so the thoughts of God, no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now, we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us." And that Spirit which is from God can have a double meaning. It's that human spirit that God gives you, which becomes your reservoir; your container; or, your cup, into which God's point of view pours when you learn the principles of Scripture. As well as the Holy Spirit who then uses that information in your human spirit to guide the life.

1 Corinthians 2:13-16: "Which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man (the unsaved man) does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for their foolishness to him. He cannot understand them because they're spiritually appraised (spiritually understood). But he who is spiritual (that is, he is in temporal fellowship with God the Father), he is filled with the Spirit (he is under the control and direction of the Spirit). He who is a spiritual Christian understands all things. Yet he himself is understood by no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ. There's nobody who has the mind capable of teaching God. But we, through doctrine, have the mind of God."

**Respect for the Bible**

So, it is very important that you never lose your respect for the Bible as the Word of God, and is the sole source of divine viewpoint wisdom. This is what Paul is giving to the Colossians. This is what every Christian should get in every church service. And God help those who sit in a service where and that is not done. And God help those of you who have a choice to prevent that, and sit by, and let it happen, because you'll be held accountable for it. If you see a blind man about to walk out into a fast lane of traffic, and he does not realize what he's doing, and you do not rush to grab him, and prevent him, but let him go out there and be struck and killed, it's your responsibility, and you're accountable for the fact that you stood by, like a ninny, and let it happen.

God's wisdom from the Bible is spiritual light, and that's why it's important, while man's wisdom, from the old sin nature, is spiritual darkness. And that's the difference: walking in light; or, walking in darkness. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Bible tells us, is the source of spiritual light – the divine viewpoint of the Word of God. His words are the words of the Father. His words are the words of God's point of view.

1 John 1:5 has this to say: "And this is the message we have heard from Him, and announced to you – that God is light; and, in Him there is no darkness at all." The Lord Jesus Christ has instructed us that God is light. In Him, there is no darkness at all.

John 8:12 stresses the same principle. "Again, therefore, Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world' (because He is God). He who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." And that's the issue. Who are you following? Are you going to follow Christ, and walk in the light? Are you going to follow the world's system of Satan, and walk in darkness? And every one of us is constantly making that decision every day of our life. All day long, we make a decision to follow Christ in the light; or, to follow the world system in the darkness.

2 Corinthians 4:6 says, "For God, Who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the one Who has shown in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Now, this is all that the apostle Paul is trying to do for the Colossian Christians – to give them the wisdom that knows the difference between spiritual light and spiritual darkness.

That's why the Bible is so emphatic to remind us that, before we were saved, we all walked in spiritual darkness. But now that we are in Jesus Christ, we are in the light of God's wisdom, and therefore, we should walk accordingly. And yet, how many Christians cannot keep from imitating the world. They just love to be like the world.

Ephesians 5:8: "For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light"? So, when the world does something: some style; some mannerism; or, some activity of the world, it's the activity of darkness, it is in violation of the Word of God. Don't look there with admiration upon it. Don't want to be in with the world. But look upon them with pity. And walk as the person that you are – the one who is in the light of the Word of God.

Ephesians 5:11-12, "And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead, even expose them. For it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret." And we have gone through a national experience of having to listen to the disgraceful things which are done in secret. And the Word of God says that that is Satan's territory. Make no mistake about it. If you want to walk like that; if you want to live like that; and, if you want to be in that realm, that is darkness. That is spiritual darkness, and that's not smart. That is not wisdom. But it's very attractive.

That's why Hebrews 11:25 says that Moses chose not to enjoy the pleasures of sin. Instead, he went with the truth of God, because that pleasure is darkness, and in the end, it turns into ashes in your mouth.

Please notice 1 Thessalonians 5:1. We are no longer people of the darkness: "Now to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you"? Paul says, "I spent six weeks with you. You are thoroughly trained in prophecy. You know about the rapture. You know about the antichrist. You know about the tribulation. You know what's coming.

2 Thessalonians 5:2-4, "For you yourself know full well that the Day of the Lord (which begins with the tribulation, the first part, and the second part is the millennium) will come just like a thief in the night. While they're saying, 'Peace and safety,' then destruction will come upon them suddenly, like birth pangs upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness – that that day should overtake you like a thief."

**The Sons of Light**

Thessalonians 5:5-6: "For you are sons of light (sons of the day). We are not of the night nor of the darkness. So, then, let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober." Paul says, “In heaven's name, you're children of light. Why are you living like people of the world system? And why are you letting others, under your circle of influence and authority, live in darkness, and move about in the world system?"

Have you had the experience of noticing how many Christians so exhaust themselves on Saturday night that they can't be out to church on Sunday? They exhaust themselves into things of useless activity? So, when it comes time the next day for some responsibility of Christian service, they're not up to it?

Thessalonians 5:7-8: "For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation."

Thessalonians 5:9-10 – here's one of the verses that tells us that we are not going to go through the tribulation: "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us – that whether we're awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore, encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you are doing"? Paul says, "Keep up the good work. You're encouraging one another to walk as children of light."

Then the apostle Peter says, "Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment."

**A Royal Priesthood**

1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of Him Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." We are the people of the light. Do not ever compromise that wonderful position into which God has brought you. Fellowship with God the Father is based with walking in the light of the wisdom of doctrine. There is no fellowship with God the Father outside of that. The average Christian has virtually no fellowship with God the Father. He doesn't understand the principle of temporal fellowship. He doesn't understand the principle of confession of sin. He doesn't understand the principle of walking in the light. Therefore, all he has, again, is religion. Is he going to heaven? Yes, but he is like a poor hound dog with nothing in terms of eternal enrichment.

1 John 1:6-7, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him (with God the Father), and yet walk in darkness, we lie. We do not practice the truth." Truth is not something you talk about. It's what you practice: "But if we walk in the light, as He Himself is in the light (and doctrine gives us the light – that wisdom), we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." It cleanses us from sin to get us into salvation; and, it cleanses us from sin to keep us in temporal fellowship. For the next verses deal with confession of known sin.

1 John 2:3-4, "And by this, we know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments. The one who says. 'I have come to know him,' and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him." There it is. Walking in the light is keeping the commandments of God. But somebody has had to teach you those commandments so that you can walk in the light. Otherwise, there is nothing for you.

How sad it is for Christians never to learn how bad the world system is. And in our ministry, you and yours will find that this is toughest part of winning the hearts of Christians. Christians are so attracted to the world. It's like a piece of iron that a magnet can pull to it.

However, whatever you may think about that, 1 John 2:15-17 reminds us again: "Do not love the world nor the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world: the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eyes; and, the boasts will pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world, and the world is passing away, and all through its lust. But the one who does the will of God abides forever."

**Personal Moral Conduct**

The wisdom of God is nowhere more important than in personal moral conduct. And there's where the great breakdown is in our day. The message of the apostle Paul to the Colossian Christians, in Colossians 1:28, is that he is bringing to them the wisdom of God. Colossians 1:28 Paul says, "And we proclaim Him (Christ), and we admonish (we warn) every man about sin. We teach every man doctrine, and we do this with all wisdom." We do this for the purpose of wisdom.

**The Wisdom of God**

God's wisdom from Scripture for one's life is the "in" thing to do. That's the thing that you have to decide. What is the "in" thing to do? Every adult, and every young person, has to decide what is the "in" thing to do. And that's what he commits his life to. Peter points out that the wisdom that the apostles received came from God. That's what they taught.

In 2 Peter 1:15-18, Peter says, "And I will also be diligent that any time after my departure you may be able to call these things to mind." He says, I'm reminding you more than once of important doctrinal principles, so that you'll not forget them, to your own spiritual self-destruction. And when I'm gone, I want these things to be so imprinted on your mind that you will remember them."

2 Peter 1:15-18, "And I will also be diligent that any time after my departure, you may be able to call these things to mind. For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." When did Peter see the coming of Christ? It was on the mount of transfiguration, when Elijah and Moses appeared, speaking with Christ, and the Lord Jesus Christ pulled back His divine glory shine through.

"For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the majestic glory: 'This is My Beloved Son, with Whom I am well-pleased.' And we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven, when we were with Him on the holy mountain." The devil says, "This is a good phrase. And what do you think Mormonism has to say from the mouth of Joseph Smith, to confirm his authority from God? It is these very words: "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well-pleased." And when you go through the Mormon temple in Salt Lake City, they will say, "Do those words sound familiar to you church people?" The implication is that the same thing that God said about His Son, He said about Joseph Smith.

Now, if you want something gross, there it is. And what Joseph Smith brought with Satan's tremendous power was the wisdom of man that is taking sincere people, lockstep, into the lake of fire. It is no small thing that you have access to the Word of God. And you should not give it the back of your hand. You should not treat it as a triviality. You should not walk out into the world and say, "Here, take my best. Give of your best to the master." That's the principle of the Word of God, not: "Give of your leftover to the master."

One lady this week, who used to have children in the academy, came by, introducing a friend to enroll in the school. And she had grandchildren now – two enrolled. And she was very effusive. I happened to walk into the office. She was very enthusiastic about what the academy had meant to them. When I walked in, she says, "Oh, here, I must introduce you. This is Dr. Danish. He is an icon here." I'm not sure I know what that word means, but it sounded good. So, I try to look like an icon. But in the process we got off into other things, like you do in conversations with people. And something had come up about the cost. And I said, "Yes, the financial cost is not a small thing. The congregation has to decide that God has called them to do it, because Berean Church has to come up with one third of the cost of every child's education. I said, "Yes, this is our home missionary enterprise. Like we invest in foreign missions, we invest in this." And I said, "And we do it because we wait upon God to make the provision, because He's called us to do this." And He does. I said, “We don't even pass an offering plate to take an offering."

Well, the lady who had been with us before, looked and said, "Well, you believe in tithing don't you?" And I said, "No. I wish we did. That's the Jewish system of giving in the Old Testament under the Mosaic Law. That was a great thing, because under that the Jew owed nine-tenths of everything of his salary every week, and God only got 10%. That's all the claim that God had. Then the Bible speaks about tithes. You had to give that. Then you could give offerings, out of your nine-tenths, if you want to." But I said, "We Christians, I'm sure you know, are stewards of God, and we don't own anything. Every paycheck belongs to Him. Every profit margin belongs to him. You don't have anything. And as the Jew was told: "How dare you rob God by keeping my 10%?" So, the Christian really, by that same principle can be asked, "How dare you rob God when the Holy Spirit tells you to give 50% of your income, or whatever percentage." And I said, you must read 2 Corinthians 2:9, and you'll see the Christian principle of giving. And there's no percentage. It's only what God leads you." And I said, "It is my personal belief that it would not ever be less than 10%. That would be pretty low, but that would be a starting point. But no Christian ever sits on 10%, because that's not the way of stewardship in this age."

So it was fun talking to them, and the amazing thing was that this seemed to be something very new. And these were very sincere and very dedicated people, but somebody has not taught them.

**The Mount of Transfiguration**

Now, Peter, at the mount of transfiguration, speaking with Moses and Elijah, said, “We saw this. We heard it. We were eyewitnesses of this majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance was made (Matthew 3:17): ‘This is my beloved Son.’" And this identifies the truth. And the wisdom of God is not known out there by the general church public. And for that reason, the United States now is no longer under the blessing of God. It is the nation, now, that Christ has abandoned, and which is rapidly going into the antichrist's world. Also, on the horizon is the rapture.

**The Sin Nature**

Man's old sin nature says that the "in" thing to do is with Satan and his world. But God says that the "in" thing to do is with His wisdom in Scripture. Now what's the "in" thing with you? When along comes a male who says, "Wow, I'd like to look like a girl. I'm going to have a ponytail." Now, if I were a ponytail wearing male, and I had been watching these little girls we have at school, and I can't believe that one of these wimps who likes to wear a ponytail, and be like the girls, has not caught on that some of these girls wear one out of each side. Can you imagine a big husky, prominent person coming on with a ponytail on each side? The girls would hate him. That would really be something. They used to wear one ring. Now, they wear a ring in both ears. And somebody would say, "Boy, did you see so-and-so the other day? He not only had rings, but big glob rings. The ladies don't have a chance.

That is interesting to me that, in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 22:5), God forbid, under great judgment, men wearing the accouterments that identified femaleness. And women wearing the accouterments that identified maleness. It was one of the 613 Mosaic Laws. There was a condemnation for that, because God says that you identify your gender, and you stand out with pride in what God has chosen to give you. And you carry the responsibility of your gender.

So what is the "in" thing to do? Well, the world sets the "in" thing for many Christians. And it's hard for young people not to follow the "in" thing of the world. But we expect them to, because they don't know any better. That's why they have we seniors to say, "No, you can't cross this line. You can't walk out of this corral. Here it is. And when you get on your own ("adios muchacho") you'll suffer the consequences of going by the world's wisdom, or by God's wisdom. Whichever way you go, it's going to work out, one way or another.

**Joshua**

Let's look at a big passage before we run out of time, in Joshua, that points to this thing. Whose wisdom will you serve? The "in" things of Satan, or the "in" things of God. We are down near the end, and Joshua is 110 years old. He's a real senior dude now. It's time for him to pass on; to go to be with the Lord; and, to hand over the leadership to someone else of the Jews, who have now been led through the Exodus wilderness wanderings. There in the land. Isn't it interesting what his final summary words to them are?

Beginning at Joshua 24:14-18: "Now therefore, fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and truth. Put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the river." This is referring to the Euphrates River, back in Babylon; and, those gods – the gods of Nimrod, Babylonianism, and of Egypt (the animal gods of Egypt: "and serve the LORD." The word "LORD" is in all capital letters (LORD, Yahweh), and that refers to the most sacred name of the Creator God: "And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourself today whom you'll serve, whether the gods which your father served, which were beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living." Joshua says, "Now if you don't like serving the LORD, well then just make your choice. You can go ahead and serve the gods that our fathers knew back in Babylon, or you can serve the gods that you become acquainted with, here in the land of the Amorites in Canaan. Make your choice. If you do not want to serve the LORD, that's your option" – one of those two sets.

**We Will Serve the Lord**

Then he makes that dramatic statement. Here's a man's man: "'But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.' And the people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods. For the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt (from the house of bondage), and who did these great signs in our sight, and preserved us through all the way in which we went, and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God." They had clear evidence Who was God, and who was not.

However, Joshua is a smart old man here. Joshua said to the people, in Joshua 24:19, "You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a Holy God; He's a jealous God; and, He will not forgive your transgressions (or your sins). If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods (you go with the "in" thing of the world), then He will turn, and do you harm, and consume you after He has done good to you." And the people said to Joshua: "No, but we will serve the LORD." Well we know from history that they did not. Joshua saw what was coming. He knew what their character and temperament was.

In Joshua 24:22-27, Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves – that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him." He says, "You have made, an effect, an oath. So, don't perjure yourselves, and act a lie. And they said, in effect, "We are witnesses now. Therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel." Joshua says, "Fine, let's start by getting rid of those gods that you're carrying around in your baggage now, and that you've been on the sly, doing abeyance to:" "Then the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the Lord our God. We will obey His voice.

"So, Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there, under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. And Joshua said to all the people: 'Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us. For it has heard all the words of the LORD, which he spoke to us. Thus it shall be for a witness against you, lest you deny your God." He said, "I'm going to put a symbol out here. This symbol is going to remind you that you violate that commitment to God, and you go with in things of the world, then God is going to come down on you with judgment. Count on it.

**The World's Wisdom vs. God's Wisdom**

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul picks up the same theme again. In Ephesians 5, we close with this dramatic comparison. The Old Testament says, "Which one are you going to follow: the "in" things of the world, or the "in" things of God." He says, "The world's wisdom; or, God's wisdom." When we go to the New Testament church, here it is, right to us folks.

Ephesians 5:1-3: "Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. But do not let immorality, or any impurity, or greed, even be named among you as is proper among saints." Now, in heaven's name, I hope I don't have to remind you once more, as you have been reminded repeatedly, that this passage, as others like this, are referring to Christians. This is talking to church-age people.

As soon as you see these terrible sins, your mind is going to click and think that he's talking about unbelievers. No. This is what Christians were doing. In the Corinthian church, they were particularly were doing them. And he has these kinds of passages prominently there. How many Christians do you know that are off into the immorality of the world? Yes, they're Christians, and this is what they're doing. They don't like to come around here very much. They like to slink off into the darkness that they're walking in. But how pitiful that they should have gotten in that condition of darkness to begin with.

Ephesians 5:4-5, "And there must be no filthiness, or silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks, for this you know with certainty – that no immoral, or impure person, or covetous man, who is an idolater has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ our God."

Now, you know that that is not telling them that they will lose their salvation. You know that the thing he's telling them is that they will not be rewarded with a position of authority in the Millennial Kingdom. You'll not have a throne of authority. You'll not be one of the rulers with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom. You'll be in some lower, working, serving status. And you won't resent it, because then you'll see things God's way, and you'll say, "Yes, I had great opportunity. I just blew it. I could have done so much. I never did get Christian giving straight, and the whole bit. But, boy, will you get it straight then? And then, God's going to say, "I'm sorry, the rewards and the qualifications are not on record up here for us. Your job is going to be this." And you'll look at others that didn't make much of a mark in your mind, but they were the people who walked with the Lord. And they said, “That's all I am. I'm a servant of the Most High God, and I depend upon Him in everything. If He lets me live, I serve Him. I walk with Him. If he starves me to death, then I'll go to be with Him.”

Philippians 1:21: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Either way is good, as long as I'm doing the "in" thing.

Ephesians 5:6-17, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them." You can have morality redesigned. We have the new morality, and is being redefined, but God says, "You Christians, don't be fools. Let these important people redefine their immorality, but it doesn't redefine it with God. And as Scripture says, "You may get away with it, but God will not allow evil to go unjudged.

"Therefore, do not be partakers with them, for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. For the fruit of the light consist in all goodness and righteousness and truth, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead, even expose them, for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light" (the light of doctrine – the light of God's moral truth), for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason, it says, 'Wake up, sleeper. Arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.' Therefore, Christian, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time because the days are evil (and furthermore, they're short. You don't have much time.)"

"So, then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is for you." What is the will of the Lord? To walk with the "in" thing, which is the judgment of the wisdom of God that comes from Scripture.

We're going to close this morning, summing it all up with a basic line of a wonderful hymn: "Give of your best to the Master." And that's what this is all about. If you walk in the wisdom of God, then the best is what you will give him. You'll not go to Him and give Him all the leftovers: your time; your energy; your vision; your money; and, your possessions. The best goes to Him, and you'll be happy with the leftovers. Please take the song sheet that we have passed out:

"Give of your best to the master.
Give of the strength of your youth.
Throw your soul's fresh glowing ardor
into the battle for truth.
Jesus has set the example.
Dauntless was He – young and brave,
Give Him your loyal devotion.
Give Him the best that you have.

Give of your best of the master.
Give Him first place in your heart.
Give Him first place in your service.
Consecrate every part.
Give and to you shall be given.
God, His Beloved Son, gave,
gratefully seeking to serve Him.
Give Him the best that you have.

Give of your best to the master,
naught else is worthy His love.
He gave Himself for your ransom –
gave up His glory above.
Laid down His life without murmur.
You, from sin-ruined to saved.
Give Him your heart's adoration.
Give Him the best that you have.

Give of your best to your master.
Give of the strength of your youth.
Clad in salvation's full armor,
join in the battle for truth."

Shall we stand as Mr. Holt leads.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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