***Holiness

Colossians 1:25-29

COL-229***

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2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

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

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

Please turn to the truth of the Word of God in Colossians 1:25-29. We are studying "The Mystery of the Church," segment number 44.

**Lazarus**

This past week, I officiated at a grave site funeral. At one point, I reminded the audience that all the people buried roundabout us were still alive. Only their bodies were dead, but their souls were alive. And I suggested it would be fascinating to be able to walk through that cemetery, and step in front of those grave markers, and be able to speak to the people who lie there, and to ask them how things are with them today. Some of them would answer with the response of Lazarus from Luke 16:22 – that all is well, since they are happy in heaven, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. They're in paradise, as was Lazarus.

**The Rich Man**

However, others would answer, with the rich man of Luke 16:23-24, that all was not well. He was in agony of suffering in the flames of torment in Hades, and all he had to look forward to was his ultimate transfer from Hades into the lake of fire for his eternity. The rich man, realizing what had happened to him, because he was still alive, wanted Lazarus to be resurrected, and sent back with a testimony to his five brothers, who were as riotous and unbelieving as he was, to warn them of the consequences of negative volition toward the gospel and toward the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He had found too late for himself that it was all true, and that what the Scripture said was really true. That's the way things really were. And now, he at least hoped that he could save the rest of his family from the same experience that he was having.

However, Abraham said to him that they already have the testimony of the Bible about salvation. That's the only reliable source. It's not what their preacher; priest; or, people think. It's what the Bible says. And Abraham said: "They have the testimony just like you did from Scripture." They don't need anything more. They don't need something that is miraculous. They don't need an emotional kick to prove that God is true, and that what God says in Scripture is right.

However, the rich man said that his brothers would believe if somebody rose from the dead to warn them what had happened to their brother, and what awaited them if they were not saved. However, Abraham said, "That's not true. If they will not believe the Bible, God's revealed truth, they will not be convinced by a miracle either. And the reason that's true (the reason God works that way) is because the devil can perform miracles. And in the end times, he'll be the most spectacular miracle worker, the Bible tells us that ever was. And because he is a miracle worker, he can fool people. He can deceive them, because they're operating on emotions.

Abraham said, "That's not God's way. God's way is to tell you what is in Scripture, and then it's up to you to believe it, or not; and, to act upon it or not. So, the issue is of one's life from here to eternity. All of these issues are determined by our negative or positive volition to Bible doctrine truth.

Christians who are in deep trouble spiritually today are often Christians who have been instructed in the Word of God, and have chosen, like Demas, to take a negative direction toward that truth. They know what is right. You cannot speak to them. You cannot explain something to them. They know it all. They've heard it. They know exactly what God's truth is. And for us, sometimes, it's hard to believe that somebody would say, "Yes, I am thumbing my nose at God. I know exactly what He wants me to do. I know exactly what is the truth. But I don't want to do that. I want to go in a different direction.

That's exactly what these people do. And that's exactly what happened to this rich man, on the other side, where the Christians would say, "Yes, I know what God thinks. I have doctrinal instruction. And I want to do it. I say, 'Yes Lord. And I bow humbly in your presence in obedience.'" And the consequences are dramatically different.

So, the question this morning, indeed, is how are things with you today, now when you can still make things right in your life with the truth of Scripture? I may assure you that if things are not right with you and your Father in heaven, on the basis of the Word of God, that you know things will go far astray, and you'll become a spiritual casualty. And it all begins with one little "no." It all begins with one little justifying something, such that, at the moment you know shouldn't do something, or something you should do, that you're refusing to do. And what happens? After a while, the gentle hand of God the Holy Spirit (and it's always a gentle hand), suddenly it's not there anymore, and it[s not guiding. God says, "Do you want to go negative? I’ll take My hand off, and you may now run your course.

So, we have gathered this morning for considering seriously what it is – the wisdom of God that we've been studying, is all about, and how important it really is.

We come to the end of Colossians 1:28, where the apostle Paul says, "We proclaim Him (Jesus Christ). We announce Him, admonishing and warning every man (every Christian) about sin and negative volition to the Word, and teaching every man doctrinal principles, so that he has all wisdom (the wisdom of God)." And then the apostle says, "Why do I do that? Why do I tell people to attend our services, so that they may be instructed in the Word of God? Why is knowing what God thinks all that important? Why can't my IQ do it? Why can't my good judgment do it? Why can't my personal experience be my guide – the advisement of other people who have walked the road?"

It is amazing how people will shred their lives and how they will destroy themselves with human viewpoint wisdom, instead of choosing to go God's way, which is the only way to go. And so what happens? Well, if you follow God's wisdom, what is happening to you? You're being transformed into the image of Christ, and into His humanity. We say, "You are becoming Christlike." And if you don't go with the wisdom of God, all there is, is the wisdom of the sin nature from Satan. And then what happens? You become an animal. You descend into the image of the physical – just the animal structure. And if you persist in that, it goes down, and down, and down.

We now have national leaders in our country who, for decades, have been in the forefront of championing biblical causes through the political system; biblical concepts of morality; the way things ought to be; and, the way things once were. And now, one prominent leader has shocked even the liberals, when he has said, "It's no use. It's no use trying to press a political agenda onto the American people, because the nation has turned into a sewer. And this man is so prominent, and so wise, and so effective, and so well-known, that it shocked everybody, and it made some of the people, even in his own political party, mad that he said that. His point is that it has all come to where the people have descended to the animal level. And from the highest echelons of government, to the lowest, it's one big moral garbage pile. It is defended, and it is excused, and it is the wisdom of man.

So, how are things going to be for us? This prominent Christian man's point is: "Folks, you're on your own. Don't let your children go to the public school system. You stay out, and disconnect from the world system of activities. You devote yourself to the things of God. You focus upon your particular mission in life, to the extent that you may perform it within a society that increasingly is going to come after you, because you are a Christian." And I'm afraid, in large part, he is right.

Now, who's going to stand in their condition like that? Only one kind of a Christian – the mature believer. The immature believer is going to flake out. The immature believer is going to get blown out of the water. It's going to take some terrific Christian men and women to be able to survive in that kind of a climate, which is what we're in now.

Well, what Paul does at the end of Colossians 1:28, is that he says, "This is the reason that I have been propagating doctrinal principles. This is why I've been so emphatically teaching you. This is why I've been telling you not to neglect this knowledge, and not to neglect your opportunities of feeding upon the Word of God. For what reason? "That" introduces his purpose. And he said, "So that I may present." The Greek word looks like this: "paristemi" (par-is'-tay-mee). This word means "to make into something." It means to take something, and to make into something. Here, it is at some point in time, and it is done by the ministry of Paul. It is done with the Word of God. He's taking something, and with the Word of God, he is transforming into something magnificent. It's a potential goal.

Well, for whom is he doing this? "To present every man" (every individual Christian). This is the third time that he has spoken about every man. We proclaim Him, and we admonish every man. We warn every Christian about the sin path." And then he says, "And teaching every man" – we instruct them in the Word of God – every Christian. For what reason? So that every one of them, he may present in a condition that he calls complete: "teleios" (tel'-i-os). Now, this means complete in a very specific way. It's not like when a man gets married. A man is not complete until he's married (then he's finished)! And this Greek word "teleios" is a little different.

That it means is mature. Aha! So, you want to stop being a bunch of twits. That's right. Paul says, "You want to stop all these twits running around in the Christian life? You want to have some real men, and some real women, who are up there, capable of meaning whatever the devil throws against them." You want people whose only reaction to evil; human good; and, sin, is to have their stomach turned like they're about ready to throw up. That's the reaction of God. And if we're Christlike, that's what our reaction is going to be.

**A Spiritual Maturity Structure**

So, this word connotes a church age believer with a well-developed spiritual maturity structure in his soul. That means he has five basic qualities that have developed.

1. **Grace Orientation**

He has grace orientation. He knows how to live by the grace of God, not by the Judaistic Old Testament Law system which never could carry anybody to anything spiritual.

1. **A Mastery of the Details of Life**

He has a facet of the mastery, the details of life. That means you know how to handle your material prosperity or your material poverty. A mastery of the details of life. They do not master you.

1. **A Relaxed Mental Attitude**

He has a relaxed mental attitude; that is, he has an emotional rapport with people. He does not get all up and frantic (hysterical) as he deals with people and as he goes through life. He has a relaxed mental attitude – emotional control.

1. **"Agape" Love**

He has the capacity of agape love. He can have that mental attitude goodwill and sacrifice that is characteristic of God.

1. **Inner Happiness**

Then he has an inner happiness. A happiness which is a joy, and he always has it. It's not dependent upon people; circumstances; or, things. Now that is not natural. For people, happiness is dependent upon the person: "Make me happy." Happiness is dependent upon some great circumstance that I'm in – things are going well. Happiness is dependent upon something I have – some material thing I have. And those things, the apostle Peter tells us, are all going to be turned back into their basic elements. They're all going to be burned up. They're all going to be gone, and with that will go your happiness. But when God the Holy Spirit gives you happiness (part of the fruit of the Spirit), which comes with spiritual maturity (and that's the only place you get it), now that's a different kind of lifestyle. And you don't have the whiny Christians, and the self-pitting Christians, and the Christians who are excusing themselves because they're not rising to their calling in Christ Jesus, and they're not rising to the capacity of being mature believers.

It is the opposite of the condition of spiritual immaturity that Paul says he wants to bring you to. This opposite condition is described in Hebrews 5:12, where Paul says, "For by this time, you ought to be teachers." He is speaking to a group of Christians of Jewish background, who were still trying to hang on to the Mosaic Law system, as many Christians do today. They were still trying to have one foot in Moses, and one foot in Christ. And the thing didn't work. And what it did was that it made them immature spiritually: "For by this time you ought to be teachers. You have had enough instruction in the Word of God. You've been a Christian long enough, such that you should be able to teach people. But what are? You need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God. And you've come to need milk, and not solid food."

Now it's always sad if you see an adult who can't eat solid food – an adult who has to go back to baby nutrition for one reason or another. The same thing happens in the Christian life. A solid Christian who, because he has stepped aside from feeding upon the Word of God, suddenly loses his maturity, and goes into reversion. And now, he has to start all over again.

Hebrews 5:13-14 says, "For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe." He has gone into babyhood in the Christian life: "But solid food (the deep things of the Word of God) is for the mature, who, because of practice, have their senses trained to discern good and evil." The solid mature Christian knows what's right, and he knows what's wrong. This is not on the basis of 51% of the human race voting, but on the basis of the Word of God.

Now, that's what we're talking about. Paul says, "This condition is bad – to be immature. And what I'm doing is that I'm spending my whole life (my whole ministry)," Paul says, "in trying to get you people to the point where you're grown-up, mature Christians."

Now the false teachers in Colossae were playing upon the emotions of the Colossian Christians. So, those teachers could never bring them to spiritual maturity. Most people who are sitting in church this morning are having their emotions played upon. They're not being spoken to in terms of what God thinks, and then their emotions will flow from the joy of that understanding. But spiritual maturity is what Paul had for the Colossian Christian. And the Colossians were very fortunate. They had a pastor-teacher named Epaphras, who understood what his job was – to give these people a chance to grow up spiritually in the devil's world, so that they would not become a casualty.

In Colossians 4:12, Paul says, "Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bond slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect." Here we go again, with that same word "teleios," meaning "mature and fully assured in the will of God" – knowing what God wants you to do. That's what life is all about – the will of God. Nothing else is of any significance – only knowing the will of God.

Now, Epaphras was visiting Paul. He was ministering to Paul. He was learning from Paul. And he was going back to Colossae. And he says, "Here's what I've learned." Like all pastor-teachers, you have to study; you have to learn; you have to analyze; and, you have to put it together. And then you stand up before the people and say, "Here's what I've learned. This is what the Word of God teaches. And I hope you'll believe it. And I hope that you'll act upon it.

The objective of the Christian life is found in Hebrews 6:1: "Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and a faith toward God." These people to whom this letter was written were Hebrew Christians, and they were all not sure that they shouldn't go back to the Mosaic way of doing things. They were slipping back to the Mosaic customs. They could not really grasp the fact that everything was now different. That old system of Judaism never worked. It was only a guideline to show how bad we were, But now Paul says, "Forget all that. Put that behind you. If you're still playing that game, that shows you're a baby Christian."

Well, that is the problem – when people are baby Christians. And how do you become a baby Christian? Well, that's what you are when you're born into the Christian life. But don't forget, that once you start going negative to the Word of God, even if you're a very mature Christian, you start going down. And at some point, you're on a slippery slope, and, all of a sudden, before our very eyes, we see people crashing spiritually, and saying, "What happened? How could this happen so quickly?"

It's because they stopped being subject to the Word of God, and doing what was right, and not doing what was wrong. And for some, the wound would be so great that they never get back.

So, Paul says, "We do this teaching so that we may present every man (we may transform every man) complete – mature in Christ." Now, the key phrase is "in Christ," and that shows that he's talking to church-age believers. Paul's goal is to make every church-age believer a mature Christian when he appears before the Judgment Seat of Christ for his evaluation. He does not want to see any Christian stand before Christ when his life is judged for its service, to find that that Christian is spiritually impoverished. Some Christians, hell or high water – they're going to be impoverished. There's nothing you can do. They choose to do it. And no matter how much admonition; how much warning; and, how much cautioning you give them, they just cannot rise to it.

However, a mature Christian, is going to live a life in the will of God. He's going to be focused on fulfilling the reason for which he was born (his mission), so he will qualify for great rewards and an enriched eternity. And that's what it's worth spending your life on.

So Paul says, "Everything I do is focused so that a Christian will never look back, and say, "Why didn't you give me a chance to have risen to my potential? Why didn't you admonish me? Why didn't you teach me the principles of doctrine? Why were you always telling me stories, and making me laugh, and playing with my emotions, so that I had nothing to carry me through, when Satan slipped up on my blindside, and caused me to fall?" We're talking out a believer who would be capable of victory in the angelic warfare, because he's spiritually equipped for battle by the maturity that he possesses.

This Christian will be the recipient of maximum blessings on earth from God. This mature Christian, from Paul's ministries, was the source for him of great joy. And it was the basis of something very important to him. It was going to be a crown. If Paul did his job well, and Christians were given the opportunity to come to maturity, there's a special crown for that Christian.

**The Crown of Joy**

It's called the crown of joy. In 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, Paul says, "For Who is our hope (or our joy, or our crown) of exaltation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy" – the crown of exaltation, because you did the job for which God brought you into this life." The greatest thing of all is to fulfill your service to God.

Well, Paul said, "My service is very simple – to produce grownup Christians." Let's get rid of the twits. Let them go elsewhere. But let the real men and the real women of God get together, and throw their weight to make an effective impact upon the world.

Full spiritual maturity comes, of course, only in heaven, when we're in Christ's presence. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 says, "Now, may the God of peace Himself sanctify you (set you apart) entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." There you have the concept of complete again. What does he mean? Complete – the word "teleios." And there he mentions the three parts of people – the three parts of a human being. He has a human spirit; he has a human soul; and, he has a human body. Paul says, "I want all those three to be intact and complete at a maximum level of development."

Compare that to 1 Thessalonians 3:13, "So that he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

**Spirit, Soul, and Body**

Now we have entered another key word. Paul says, "I want your spirit; soul; and, body." And don't say it the other way. That's how people always do: "body, soul, and spirit." No, it's: spirit; soul; and, body. That's how you get married. You approach marriage not the way the world does: body; soul; and, spirit. You approach it spirit first. If you don't have spirit compatibility, "adios muchacho." Next you get soul compatibility – the personality level. Then, within marriage, comes the body compatibility and intimacy. But here it is. Paul says, "I want you as a complete person to be mature." Well, what does that mean? I'm going to read it again. 2 Thessalonians 3:13 said, "He may establish your hearts unblamable." "Unblamable" does not mean sinless. It means "all known sins confess." You have taken care of them; repented; and, you keep making correction of your course: "unblamable in holiness." You're in temporal fellowship. There's the key word: "holiness:" "Before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." You are going to be holy when you come back with Christ – when you face Him and return to this earth.

Now, God's purpose for every church age believer is to resurrect him to experience personally the shining glory of God with Christ in heaven. And He will not fail us in fulfilling this objective. You will be raised to share the glory of God Himself.

**Sanctification**

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14: "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation." He didn't choose everybody, but some of you He chose to come into His family. And you do that, through sanctification by the spirit, and faith in the truth." "Sanctification" is another word for "holiness." Setting aside to God, and setting apart from sin – faith in the truth of the Word of God: "And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Because of the glory of God delivered through the gospel of the grace of God, you're going to be a very magnificent person when you are raised someday from the dead, or if you go up in a rapture.

Romans 8:11 adds this, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, Who indwells you." God the Father raised His Son. That same Holy Spirit abides in us. That Spirit will someday raise us back to physical life. Now, that is what is ahead for us.

**Holiness**

So, what does it mean to be a mature Christian? What is the connection between holiness and maturity? How then should we live as believers? Paul says, "That's what I'm after, so that you'll live in a right way."

Now we can understand that many times ourselves. We know we don't live right. And we can see it in other people. We weep for them. We shake our head, dumbfounded, as to how they choose to live, and how they choose to conduct themselves. And we wonder: Why? What's the value of that? What good is that? How then should we now live our lives?

2 Thessalonians 2:15-17: "So then, brethren, stand firm, and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us." He's referring to doctrinal traditions: "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, Who has loved us, and given us eternal comfort, and good hope, by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word." We should live in every good work through which God has called us on the basis of the Word of God, which governs our lives.

Now, if the Word of God governs our lives, what are we going to be? What is the nature of a Christian? There is a basic characteristic. Well, Paul is connecting to what a mature Christian is. What he means by this word "teleios" is very clear. A mature Christian, at the end, is a holy Christian. Holiness is what is characteristic of the mature Christian. And anybody who's not holy is not a mature Christian. The word "holy" looks like this in the Greek: "hagios" (hag'-ee-os). And what "holiness" means is "set apart." This means: "set apart from sin unto God." It means set apart from human viewpoint wisdom, and doing things the world's way, and being up to your elbows in the world's activities, over being set apart to the wisdom of God, and the truth of doctrine, and the service of God, and the fulfillment of your life.

A mature Christian is one who is holy. If he is not holy, he's not mature. And most Christians right away don't qualify. In previous generations of Christians, the concept of holiness was very big. Preachers talked about it all the time. People were constantly called to be holy as God is holy. They were reminded that this was the core of the Christian life. They were not to be indistinguishable from the world. You were able to look, and find: "This person, obviously, is a Christian, because he is not like the world system. It is not just because of his conduct, but because of his thinking, and what he believes: how he uses his possessions; how he uses his time; and, how he uses up the days of his life.

Ephesians 5:27 says, "That He (Christ) might present to Himself the church (you and I, the body of Christ) in all her glory, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that she should be holy and blameless" – holy and blameless, relative to sin that she may fall into because confession is made.

So, when we talk about Christian maturity, all of a sudden, a lot of Christians are eliminated when it comes to maturity. All of a sudden, you can't kid yourself anymore. You cannot say that I am a thinking Christian when you are doing that which is unholy. Right away, we know that you're a twit. Right away, we know that you're spiritually disoriented. Right away, we know that Satan has put the hook in your nose, and he's dragging you along, and you are anything but manly or womanly. You are anything but holy.

It is the duty and the life goal, then, of a Christian to be holy. I direct your attention to 1 Peter 1:14-16, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts (that is, the lust pattern of the old sin nature), which were yours in your ignorance." You lived like that, on the animal level, because you didn't know any better. It wasn't that you didn't have a high IQ. You see what he says. He says, "You are ignorant," which means that you didn't have knowledge. You didn't have an understanding of doctrine. And in your unsaved days, you couldn't understand spiritual things, because those things are only spiritually discerned.

Verse 15: "But like the Holy One Who called you (like the God Who called you) is holy (separated unto what is right), be holy yourselves also, in all your behavior because it is written (and he quotes the Old Testament): 'You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Now, that is a very sobering verse. This is what spiritual maturity is all about: being Christlike. And the core feature of being Christlike is to be holy.

Now, they were told to do this in the Old Testament: "Be holy," God says, "because I'm holy. You just the way I act." Then he gave him 613 rules, and said, “This is the way you would do things if you were holy." And they couldn't keep, them because all they had was human willpower, and human willpower will always be defeated by the old sin nature.

However, now for us as a Christian, it's all different. We have a full gamut of doctrinal instruction available to us, and we have the indwelling Holy Spirit. As long as known sins are confessed, and you remain in temporal fellowship, He's going to take that Word of God, and He will apply it to your minds, and to your experience, and God will bless you; He will guide you; and, holiness will be the norm.

Some of you are beginning to catch on with what I've been referring to as intuitive direction. All of a sudden, you're suddenly realizing that God is putting thoughts in your mind. The Holy Spirit is speaking to you in that way, telling you to do this, and don't do this: "I can't find this book." Look over there. "Yes, thank you, Lord. That's where it is: "I need to make a decision. I don't know which is better. This is better. How do I know? Well, I have that intuitive direction, and I follow it. Yeah, it was better." And finally, anytime you get to that point, that's the way Jesus was in His humanity. We get that Christ-likeness of maturity, and you ignore that intuitive guidance, it will be costly.

2 Corinthians 7:1 says, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Why? So that you can be a grownup man as a Christian, or a grownup Christian woman – perfecting holiness. And why do you do that? Because you're afraid of God. Why am I afraid of God? Because He is holy. And He is not going to tolerate holiness in one of His children. But as long as I am holy, as He is holy, and I cover my tracks with my confession of sin, so that I readjust when I need to, then all will be well.

2 Thessalonians 4:7: "For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification." "Sanctification" is another word for "holiness." It is the same basic Greek word. God hasn't called us to be impure as His children. That's nonChristlike. Maturity as a Christian is to be Christlike. And to be Christlike means to be holy.

Ephesians 4:15, "But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, Who is the head even Christ." We're to speak the truth of the Word of God, and we're to grow up spiritually. How? By the fact that we imitate Christ. On the basis of the Word of God, we live the way He would live. We don't do the things of the world system. Holiness, which marks a mature Christian, is the product of his positive volition to the guidelines of Scripture for living in the devil's world. It is what Paul has referred to here as God's wisdom. Holiness is to be Christlike – doing what He would do in a certain situation in your life. And when you decide in the life situation to do what Christ would not do, then you are immature, because you are acting in an unholy way.

You're confronted with a moment of opportunity of immorality – say, sexual immorality. Let's make it stark. What is Christlike? What is not Christlike? Well, what would Jesus do? Oh, now it's easy to see what's Christlike. What would He do? If I'm a mature Christian man or woman, I will not violate the code of God. That is what the life of the believer is all about – being a grownup Christian. Is that good? Oh boy, does that save you a lot of heartache, and problem, and difficulty, and distress in life? Does that ever keep you from botching up your life for the rest of your life? It just means to be Christ-like – just to do what He would do? And it isn't guessing. It isn't consulting with other people. It's all in the Word. So, that the more the Word of God you know, the more you'll know: "Yep, this is the way to go. This is the only way to go as a mature Christian."

Ephesians 5:1-2, "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. Imitate God because you are His children. Live the way your Father would live, and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you." Why? Well, because Paul has pointed out elsewhere that those who live under the basis of the fruit-of-the-Spirit love – "agape," mental-attitude-goodwill sacrifice, you won't break the moral commandments. Breaking the moral commandments is an act of hatred, not of love. It's an act of self-indulgence of the sin nature. And the sin nature is not what is characteristic of a mature Christian. It is characteristic of those who are not mature. So, we act Christlike because we're led by the same Holy Spirit Who has led Him.

Ephesians 4:13 says, "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ, so that we may all attain to the unity of the faith (true doctrine) and of the knowledge (the full knowledge) of the Son of God" – knowing what He would do. How would He act? What would characterize the humanity of Christ? So that we can be mature. How mature? To the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. Everything that Jesus is (the fullness of Christ) is His holiness.

Now, that's Ephesians 4:13. But let your eyes slip up to Ephesians 4:11-12, because that tells you how that happens: After Jesus left, He had to leave other communicators to handle the job. Ephesians 4:11: "So, he gave some as apostles and some as prophets." Those gifts are no longer with us, since the Bible has now been written. They communicated pre-New Testament information: "But we have some evangelists" – those who go as pioneer missionaries, proclaiming the gospel. And then we have what is a combination gift in the Greek: "the pastor-teachers." Who does what? Who has got the capacity of conveying spiritual connections and spiritual understanding?

Ephesians 4:12, "For the equipping of the saints" – for providing you with the means for spiritual combat, which, on a human level means to be equipped. First of all, you have to have a body. You have to have a body that's strong, and that's well-strengthened. And if you've been in the military service, you know that the first thing you do is that you get up in the morning, and you go out for heavy duty calisthenics. And you also have to have information.

So, the next thing you do is that you sit in classes, and you are taught in the military how to deal with weapons; how to care for them; how to take them apart blindfolded; then you put them together; and, how to use them most effectively. And then you learn some of the terrible things you have to learn as a soldier: where you can hit a person and kill him, or where you can do vital damage to a human being coming at you. All of these things are equipping for what? For combat. Well, spiritual life is a combat – spiritual combat for the equipping of the saints. For what? The work of the service (your mission) – to perform your service for which God called you in this life. For what purpose? To the building up of the body of Christ – to the building up of the church, and the individuals within it. This is what God provided. For what reason?

Now look at Ephesians 4:13: "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith (sound doctrine), the knowledge of the Son of God, to know how He would do things, to a mature man in Christ (a mature Christian man or woman), to the measure of His stature, which belongs to the fullness of Christ." And what is the fullness of Christ? His Holiness. The mature Christian is a holy believer who imitates Jesus Christ rather than the lifestyle of Satan's world.

Now, let's get very specific – Christian immaturity vs Christian unholiness. My goodness, I have a long list here. Christian unholiness consists of little things. It's among us all the time. And when you spot them, you won't kid yourself that you're a mature Christian. You won't kid yourself that all is well between you and God. You won't kid yourself that, boy, the Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be a great experience of reward for you.

Okay, next time, we'll look at some of these things: the signs of the immature Christian; and, the practices of unholiness. They're horrendous. And they're all around us. And we get so acclimated to them. May it never be!

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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