***"Your Word is Settled in Heaven"  
  
Colossians 1:25-29  
  
COL-232***

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We are studying "The Mystery of the Church," number 47, in Colossians 1:24-29.

**An ABC News Program**

Last night's program was so typical of your agenda. You picked the dufus of the office to be the one who was against the idea of his mother being gay, and made him look like a whiner because he had convictions. This type of mentality calls people like me "gaybashers." Read the first chapter of Romans (that's in the Bible), and see what the apostle Paul had to say about it. He and God and Jesus were all gaybashers. What if she'd fallen in love with her cocker spaniel? Is that an alternative lifestyle? By the way, the Bible speaks against that too. And then He signs His name.

Here is their reply: the ABC online webmaster wrote, "How about getting your nose out of the Bible, which is only a book of stories compiled by many different writers hundreds of years ago. And read the Declaration of Independence, which is what our nation is built on, and where it says, "All men are created equal. And try treating them that way for a change. Or better yet, try thinking for yourself, and stop using an archaic book of stories as your crutch for your existence."

He goes on and says, "I reply to them:" Thanks for your reply. Evidently, I hit a nerve from your harsh reply. I will share it with all whom I come in contact. Hopefully, the Arkansas Democrat Newspaper will include it in one of their columns. And I'll be praying for you. Then he signs his name.

This is a classic example of the difference between the wisdom of man and the wisdom of God, which we have been studying in the book of Colossians that Paul has been proclaiming. In Colossians 1:28, I remind you that Paul says, "We proclaim Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we admonish, and we warn every man, teaching every man (giving them doctrinal instruction) with all wisdom." For what purpose? "That we may present every man complete (mature in Christ)." The apostle Paul says that spiritual maturity is what our call is as Christians in our ministry.

**Eternal Consequences**

Now, this response from ABC, a very liberal network, shows that it is the garbage dump of the media, in what it puts out constantly, and it has enormous influence. And Christians are always made to look like clowns. But there is a God in heaven Who adjudicates all this. And I always like to remind myself, when I read something like this, that nothing is ever left in spiritual things which is not resolved. And while the Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be tough on some of us, it's going to be pure hell for others. Because all the differences of opinion are going to be resolved. And we're going to going to know who was right, and who was wrong, on any particular issue, because it will have eternal consequences.

**"Who among you is Wise?"**

The difference is that which is described here in the book of James 3:13-18, "Who among you is wise in understanding? Let him show by his good behavior, his deeds, and the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy, and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant, and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, and demonic, for where jealousy and selfish ambition exists, there is disorder in every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first: pure; then peaceable; gentle; reasonable; full of mercy and good fruits; and, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness, is sown in peace by those who make peace."

**The Wisdom of the World**

Now, the human mind is totally, by nature, absorbed with the wisdom of this world – the wisdom of Satan. It is *the* natural realm in which everybody lives. You're born with that mind. And if you have the misfortune of never being reared in a Christian home where the word of God has taught you, that's the only mind you ever have.

1 Corinthians 2:14 says, "But a natural man (the unsaved") "does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. And he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised."

The Bible, in our society today, is despised and discarded by liberalism. It rejects the divine authority for governing human conduct, which can be read and understood. People don't like to be told that this is the right way.

1 Corinthians 2:16: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he should instruct him, but we have the mind of Christ."

**The Word of God**

One of the pages in our "Days of Praise" devotional booklet from April 24th (yesterday) said, that Psalm 119:160 says, "The Word is true from the beginning, and every one of Your righteous judgments endure forever." But the world about us says that all these things are just stories – just old things written. It doesn't bind any authority upon us. The writer of the devotional says, "Very few books survive very long. Only a few survive the first printing, and science books especially get out of date in just a few years. But one book is eternal. The Bible stands. Even its most ancient chapters are still accurate and up to date. Furthermore, despite all the vicious attacks of both ancient pagans and modern humanists, it will continue to endure.

In Matthew 24:35, Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away" (Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33). Even after everything else dies, and all the bombastic tirades of skeptics and secularists are long forgotten, the Word endures.

Isaiah 40:8: "The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of our God shall stand forever."

**"Your Word is Settled in Heaven"**

In Psalm 119:89, note the often repeated testimony to this same effect. In addition to the comprehensive promise of today's text, this great psalm of the Word also contains these affirmations: "Forever, oh Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven." That's where we get the phrase that you see on the front of our communion table. So, as you sit here, every week, your eyes are glued to that. So, what you hear from this pulpit, you understand, is what is going to last forever? What you've heard from the world isn't going to last long at all. It's going to be gone very quickly. And you can play the fool, and go out there, and live by the standards of Satan, or you can be smart, and play by the Word that is settled in heaven. It's not going to change. God said, this is the way it is. This is the order. And here it is."

He goes on, in Psalm 119:111: "Your testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever. For they are the rejoicing of My heart."

Psalm 119:144: "The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting."

Psalms 119:152: "Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever" (Psalm 119:89, Psalm 119:111, Psalm 119:144, and Psalm 119:152). They have been founded forever; inherited forever; settled forever; and, lasting forever. God is eternal, and His Word was true from the beginning."

Revelation 22:19, "Men may, in these last days, arrogantly think that they can take away from the words of the book of this prophecy. But such presumption will only take away their part out of the book of life. And the Bible will stand."

1 Peter 1:25: "The Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word which, by the Gospel, is preached to you".

These things are well-spoken indeed. And how appropriate at this point in our society! The public schools cannot teach the Bible. The public school cannot teach biblical morality. The public school cannot tolerate prayer. So, they're wondering why these terrible things happen in ([Littleton, Colorado](https://news.gallup.com/poll/3898/public-views-littleton-tragedy-sign-deeper-problems-country.aspx)). And all the fools of our society, from the highest echelon down, are pontificating their ignorance on the subject. Only here and there is the voice of wisdom (the voice of Scripture – the voice says the problem is: "Know God."

There is one of these young thugs, a follower of rock-n-roll artist Marilyn Manson, and their Gothic death-lifestyle, who centers on the color of black. Have you read some of the lyrics of Marilyn Manson? I read some this morning. And you can see what the philosophy is. And this was all permitted in a public school. So, one of these thugs (these losers in life) confronted a girl, that they apparently knew, was a Christian. They asked her, "Do you believe in God?" And when she said, "Yes," they blew her head away. Now, does that sound like wisdom that James speaks about? Does that sound like the public schools are the fountain of wisdom? Do you wonder why your children come home, fighting what the preacher says from the pulpit, and fighting with the lifestyle that the pastor recommends to you? Of course, they're going to fight it, because they're out there, where the majority reigns, and it's the devil's point of view.

Can you imagine what those two poor high school boys, who finally killed themselves, and are now in Hades, are experiencing Lazarus and the rich man all over again (Luke 16:19-31)? They're finding out that it really was true. And all they had to have was an acceptance of the one authority that could speak for God – the Bible itself.

**The World will Hate You**

It's amazing how those of us who wants to speak for that authority, and the implications of that Word, keeps getting beaten over the head. We scrape for the money; we scrape for the people to be present; we scrape for the people to do the work; we scrape for the vision; and, we have to fight off these worldly ideas. And you get a little sympathy of what the Lord went through, when He said, "They hated Me ('miseó' (mis-eh'-o), in the Greek) without a cause." They hated Him for the good he was doing. And He said, "When you go out and do my good, they're going to hate you just as well.

So, we scrape; we plead for money; we tried to get the thing done; and, we struggled to carry it on. We find the people who are off someplace else, too busy, and they up to their eyeballs in worldly things. And we have two boys who can shatter a bunch of lives, in a society where ABC says, "Get your nose out of an archaic book."

These sophisticated people (these intellectual types) are the ones that the apostle Paul had in mind. I have it on good authority that he had ABC in mind when he wrote Romans 1:21-32. And I'd like to refresh your memory on that again. And anybody who did not bring a Bible to Church this morning, I can tell you that this was a bad Sunday to do that. You have just added (according to the Roman Catholics!) 5,000 years to purgatory for yourself, for not having your Bible here, so that you can be sure that I'm not making up this stuff, because some of you are already looking at me with a little fishy look, like you don't believe that this is really that bad.

**Rejection of God's Word Brings Moral Decay**

Beginning with Romans 1:21-22: "Even though they knew God (people, from the creation originally), they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks. But they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools (ABC sophisticated, intellectual, ignorant fools), and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed animals, and crawling creatures."

Now, when you reject doctrine, and when you reject the authority of the rules of God for personal conduct (moral conduct), you immediately head in the direction of death, and you immediately go into great moral decay. At the moment that you distrust the Bible, and the moment that you question its absolute authority, you're on your way to moral degeneration. You do that personally. Then you get enough people doing it, and you have a society that's doing it. And parents are such ninnies, that they're not holding their hand out, and saying, "Wait a minute. You can't go down that road now," especially when they're young enough to get it through their head: "Wait a minute." We're not going to put you in the context where you can be tempted, at this stage of your life, to go down the road of accepting the breakdown of society.

Well, they had the knowledge of God. They thought they were smarter about the Word of God, so they became fools. And the next thing they did was that they started worshiping animals, and then the moral degeneration set in.

Romans 1:24-25: "Therefore, God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them." How was the body dishonored? "For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie. And they worshiped and served the creature, rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." They exchanged the wisdom of man for the wisdom of God. And they said, "The wisdom of man is better. The wisdom of God is old fashioned, and it irritates us. Some believers said, "We're the only ones walking in the wisdom of God, and everybody else around us is with the wisdom of the world.

**God Turned them over to a Lie**

In Romans 1:26, "God said, 'Fine. Then that's what I will give you." And He turned them over to the lie." Now, here is a great and horrible principle of doctrine that you must never forget. If you keep pushing God against the truth that is propounded to you, and the cautions that are given you, and what you are alerted to, then the time will come when He will turn the switch off, and everything will go into reversion.

So, this is like when a cameraman (a photographer) looks into his lens, and everything is reversed (upside down). And suddenly, you believe the lie. You might say, "Oh no – not me. I'm a Christian. God the Holy Spirit lives in me." Yes, but you will. You'll believe the lie, and you'll not be able to realize that that is what happened to you.

Romans 1:26 says that if you reject the authority of the Word of God, and the implications of the Word of God, you will go to the lie, and God will take His hand off of you, and you'll go headlong into it: "For this reason, God gave them over to degrading passions, for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural (lesbianism, courtesy of ABC). And in the same way also, the men abandoned the natural function of the woman, and burned in their desire toward one another: men with men, committing indecent acts, and receiving in their own persons, a due penalty of their error." And the due penalty of homosexuality is death.

We can see it all around us. We don't live in a theocracy anymore, as Israel did. So, we don't execute people, because that would be improper. Under a theocracy, God made the rules, and people like that were executed. But now God does the executing himself. He moves in with disease, and He gives the penalty of this error. ABC says, "Get your nose out of that stupid, archaic book. Get up here with us sophisticated intellectuals.

**"A Depraved Mind"**

Romans 1:28: "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper." If you think, as a Christian, that you cannot become a depraved mind, you're seriously mistaken. A depraved mind means a mind captivated by reversionism. If you turn your back on the cautions of the Word of God, and the true voices of admonition, then your mind will reverent. It will reverse itself. That's the way that the mind works.

Years ago, I watched a Moody science film, made by Erwin Moon, of the Moody Bible Institute of Science. And he was showing how the brain can be tricked. And he put on a pair of glasses. It looked like little telescope binoculars. And what that did was it turned everything upside down, like in a photographer's camera. And he walked around, wearing these things. And all of a sudden, something switched in the brain, and the image reversed. Now, he's wearing these little binoculars, and now everything was upright – the way it should be.

Then he took the binocular lenses off, and everything was upside down. All of you would be on your head as he looked at you here. Everything was reversed. Everything was backward now, and he didn't have the lenses on. A switch had been thrown in the brain to make the change. Fortunately, after a while, it switched itself back. . . . One thing he did say was: "Don't try this at home." So, I better pass that on to you. But it was shocking to him, and it was a demonstration of what the brain will do.

Now, this is what happened spiritually. It was exactly the same thing. He wasn't even aware of what happened. All of a sudden, if he didn't know he was wearing those glasses, he would have thought that everything was just the way he was looking at it. But it was all backwards.

Romans 1:28-32: "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved (a backward) mind, to do those things which are not proper: being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, (they are) gossips, slanders, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful. And although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them." They pat you on the back for being a skunk, and for being a low life.

Now, if that isn't ABC, I don't know who the Holy Spirit had in mind when He wrote that. That's it – to a "T." And our culture is so antagonistic to the wisdom of God, that it has created a sewer that gets worse all the time. The whole way of life of the world, with its institutions, is one big satanic lie, with which, even sometimes we Christians become enamored." And that is the shock of all. It is the big lie, and we become part of it.

1 John 5:19 points this out, when John says, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." We Christians are of God, but everything about us (every institution of man) is built, and structured, and controlled, and directed by the devil.

**An Enemy of God**

James 4:4 adds this: "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world, makes himself an enemy of God."

So whose friend are you? What a great thing! Several times in the Old Testament, Abraham is referred to as "the friend of God." What an honor! "The friend of God." And every one of us, as Christians, depending on whether we are operating on divine viewpoint wisdom or human viewpoint wisdom, we're either the friend of God, or we're the friend of Satan.

**Do not Love the World**

1 John 2:15:16 summarizes this very succinctly: "Do not love the world (it's a big lie), nor the things in 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 pattern of the sin nature), the lust of the eyes, the greed, and the boastful pride of life (the arrogance – the intellectual arrogance) is not from the Father, but is from the world."

Then, in 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul says, "For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, Who is the Savior of all men – especially of believers."

Then we have the saddest note of all, in 2 Timothy 4:10, "For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me, and gone to Thessalonica". Demas, having loved this present world, was an associate on the evangelistic team of the apostle Paul. And you don't think that your mind can have a reversal?

The historical results of abandoning the revealed Word of God in Scripture, for moral guidance in society, are laid out in scripture. The pattern down was very specific, and the results were terrible. This was all because man began with the knowledge of God, and then he turned his back against it. Let me lead you through this for a moment.

**The Flood vs. the Rapture**

In Matthew 24:38-39, Jesus says, "For in those days which were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage; until the day that Noah entered the ark. And they did not understand, until the flood came and took them all away. So, shall the coming of the Son of Man be."

Noah was preaching, saying, "The Judgment of God is coming upon you for what you're doing. You have abandoned the Word of God. You have corrupted yourself morally. Your every thought is now evil. You are increasingly vile in the sight of God."

Genesis 6:5: "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Genesis 6:11-12: "Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence, And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth." That was the result of the fact that they had turned their back upon biblical instruction, the revelation from God, which was given to guide them in their lives. They were sophisticated; they were arrogant; and they thumbed their nose at God.

As the progression proceeded, God finally had to bring Noah in; bring the flood; wipe all that out; and start over again. But in our day, the progression is in the same direction.

**The Doctrines of Demons**

1 Timothy 4:1-2: "But the Spirit (that is, God the Holy Spirit) explicitly says that in latter times, some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons". This is the nature of our society. It functions on the doctrines of demons. And if that little girl that was killed by those two hoods (those two punks) at the Columbine High School in Littleton – if she had gone down the hall saying, "Praise the Lord. Hallelujah. Jesus saves," and carrying her Bible. And if she dared to hand out a tract, she would have been in the principal's office. But if those guys, and their associates still left there, could walk around calling, themselves "the Mafia gang," and could wear their identifying clothing, and nobody bothered them. Nobody stood in their way. They could threaten, and they could push their way around. And doctrines of demons flowed in their minds, from the rock-n-roll that they were listening to.

Now, some of you might have thought that Dr. Fremont was a little naive last Sunday night, when he was giving us instruction on principles for rearing children, and saying, "Cut them off from rock-n-roll. He touched a little on it. He didn't have time for going too deeply. But now you see the reason for that. He was right on target. It is a vial and degrading and corrupting system. All you have to do is read the words, let alone the monotony of the music.

1 Timothy 4:2: "By means of the hypocrisy of liars, seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron." That is where we are now. Conscience is seared. These little girls are weeping on television: "How can anybody do that to us? How can anybody do such a terrible cruel thing?" Well, it is because the conscience is seared, because you've been reared under a context where it doesn't matter what God says. It only matters what you say.

2 Timothy 3:1-5: "But realize this: that in the last days, difficult times will come." We are in the last days, and here's Noah's experience all over again: "For men will be lovers of self; lovers of money; boastful; arrogant; revilers; disobedient to parents; ungrateful; unholy; unloving; irreconcilable; malicious gossips; without self-control; brutal; haters of good; treacherous; reckless; conceited; lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness; religion; and, although they have denied its power, avoid such men as these."

Some would say: "Oh bunko! I'd have to pull my kid out of the secular school system to avoid this. I'm not going to do that. Look at all those wonderful opportunities they have. Are you crazy, Paul? Avoid such men as these?"

2 Timothy 4:1-2: "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 in His kingdom. Preach the Word. Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with great patience and instruction." Now, we all need that. We who are expository preachers; we who are expository teachers; and, we who are expository Christians who explain the Word of God to people. We are an offense to our society, and it gets discouraging. Nobody knows how, potentially, that period can come than do I, with people pounding away from different directions. For what reason? Because they have heard God speak, and we don't like it.

So, Paul says to Timothy, "They're not going to like you, but your job is to explain the Word. And you do it in season, and out of season." When people sit there, and they are listening, they want to know; or, when they walk out and go someplace else to church, you still keep preaching it. When they abandon, and leave the seats empty, you still tell the word of truth. And you do it by reproving; you rebuke; and, you exhort. You do it with great patience, but above all, with instruction. Don't give them your opinion on this matter. You give the Word of God, and the impact of experience.

2 Timothy 4:3-4: "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. And they will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths." And so we wonder why people live like dogs and animals – shacking up together, and living lives that have no honor. And then, like pigs in their pigsty, all covered with their mud, they are smiling at each other, and feeling so intellectually superior, like the American Broadcasting Corporation.

The doctrinal ignorance, and the false religious teachings, always result in the same degradation as occurred before the flood. And this is where America is today. The carnal and the spiritually immature Christian is an easy target for Satan to capture in the world system. That's all it takes. Just get yourself into carnality. You get yourself out of that inner circle of spiritual fellowship, where the Spirit of God is in control, and be an immature Christian, even though you may have been mature once. But stop feeding upon the explanation of the Word of God, and you will very quickly go down.

**Holiness**

The spiritually immature Christian is an unholy person, who feels at home in the lifestyle of the world, and its religious structure. And you remember that I have pointed out to you, that at the heart of being a mature Christian is holiness. And the word "holiness" means "separation" from everything that has to do with Satan and his world system. You're in it only as the light. You're the beacon. You're shining the light on the path that should be followed. You're the pointer: "This is the way to heaven; this is the way to God; and, this is the way to a life that is above an animal level. You are a beacon.

Jesus, in His high priestly prayer, in John 17:15, says, "Lord, I cannot ask you to take My sheep out of the world, but I do ask you to protect them from being influenced by it. If I took them out, there would be no witness. They are My witnesses. They must be there. And I pray that you'd give them protection and courage to stand and do right, and supply what needs to be done, so that the Word gets out. For it is without the Word of doctrine from God that the condition results in no life. You don't have a life if you don't have the Word.

You have a person who is self-centered; carnal; immature existence; and, resentful of true doctrine, and its true communications, and, its true communicators. You don't like the people who are giving you the perspective of truth.

This is one thing I learned a long time ago. People tell me all kinds of fool things. And they tell me all kinds of mistaken things. And they tell me all kinds of misconceived things. But I listen to everybody. And I know how to process that before God, and to know when something needs to be taken seriously, and when something needs to be, prayerfully, helped, to somebody who's off-base and off-target. Without the Word of God, you don't have a life.

**Grace**

As we learned last Sunday, Matthew 4:4 means a lot more than just being fed the Word of truth. When Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded from the mouth of God," He was pointing out to us that the bread (the food – the sustenance) we need for life, that's not what we live by. We live by the fact that God spoke and said, "He can have the money. He can have the body. He can have the time. He can have the capacity to earn what he needs, so that he can have the bread." It is God's Word, ultimately, that makes it all possible: "Let him take another few breaths. I'm going to keep him going. And it is the Word of God that produces everything we are, and everything that we shall ever be. That's called grace. And that's why the Apostle Paul was so very proud to stand tall and straight, and said, "I am what I am by the grace of God.

Now, some people will never rise to that, but those who do: what a magnificent entrance into heaven they're going to have! What a glorious time at the Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be theirs. It is a true and wise Christian who gives great concern to anything that stands between himself, and deviating him from the Word of God, and from the person of our heavenly Father.

Now, maturity is not a matter of how long you've been a Christian. We have churches that are filled with Christians who have been fed on inspirational sermons; challenges; funny one-liners; and, a tricky combination of words. And when those people go out of a service, they know nothing of the mind of Christ." They walk out after they've had their ritual. They've been sprayed with the holy water, and had some holy mackerel to eat; and done all of the ritual and the procedures, and they have nothing. They're just another pagan. And they've done this for years. So, they consider themselves Christians who are in the know. They consider themselves very mature. And most of them, whatever they have about the Bible is what their human mind has invented, and they've concluded: "This is the way it is." No one's ever taught them the scripture, so that they know what's in there. It's all made up.

No, spiritual maturity, and its core feature of holiness (separation) unto the will of God, unto the purpose of God for your life – that's a building process. It does come from the intake of doctrine into your human spirit. That is developing the spiritual maturity structure of the soul that 2 Corinthians 12:10 describes so that you develop a facet of grace orientation; and of a mastery of the details of life, so that you're not a greedy gut with money, so that you have a relaxed mental attitude. You have a rapport on the emotional level with people. You have a capacity love with the mental attitude goodwill of "agape" love. And you have an inner happiness that is yours no matter what surrounds you on the outside. Now, that's a mature Christian. And that kind of a Christian is separated unto the will of God.

Spiritual maturity is not a static condition. It can deteriorate very quickly into immaturity, and to unholy carnality. The propensity of that sin nature within us, is always to do what the one who runs the sin nature does best: lies. The devil is the one who manipulates the sin nature, and what the devil does is lie. "He is a liar from the beginning," Jesus said. "And he is that always.

So, the sin nature in us wants to bear false witness, and this is clearly evident to Christians who lie to themselves – about themselves, and about their imagined state of spiritual maturity.

James 3:14-15: "But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant, and so lie against the truth." What a chilling statement that is! To lie against the truth. And this is what Satan does to us with the sin nature. He causes us to bear false witness – one of the major commandments of God. Satan enables us, through our sin nature, to lie to ourselves against the truth. The truth comes to us in various ways (the Word of God), – through the reading of Scriptures; or through our study of the Word; through the exposition; and through the advisement of wise Christians. And Satan turns it into a lie, and we don't believe the truth. So, it shows up with bitter jealousy; selfish ambition; and we're arrogant; and we can give the back of the hand to the truth of God.

James 3:15 says, "This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, and demonic." This is American society today. And even believers can be caught up in lying to themselves against the truth of God.

Now, the most serious thing about this is that we're going to find out, someday, that that's what we did. The Judgment Seat of Christ is not going to be a picnic when that happens.

A spiritually mature Christian can, through sin, become an immature Christian. And he will then think and act in the unholy ways of the world.

In 2 Timothy 4:10, we have that reference once more to Demas, who began to think and act in unholy ways, because he loved the world.

Here is the bottom line. The spiritually immature, unholy Christian does not have his eyes on the Lord Jesus above, but on the things below, on the earth. That is the sure sign. And it is one of the most consistent things that happens when we lose our way spiritually. Our eyes are no longer on the things above. They're on the things of this earth. That's the sign of spiritual immaturity.

We close with a few passages. Colossians 3:1-4: "If then you've been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Where Christ, Who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." That's right. Someday in glory, at that Judgment Seat, our lies will be revealed: "I have died with Christ on that cross. I live with him now. And the only life I have is the life that He lives through me." If I don't have that, the only other life there is a life that Satan can live through me.

2 Peter 3:10-11: Do you have that nice car that you love so much? Do you have that nice house that you've been building on, and improving? Do you have that nice jewelry you just got? Do you have all those things that you've been getting together, and accumulating? Do you have that lovely garden that you've been building? You should understand that there's a destiny for all those things, just so you'll keep it in perspective. There is nothing wrong with having a nice garden, and a nice house, and making it better, and gardening, and vacationing, and all that. But keep it in perspective, because the liar is going to get you to twist it out of its purpose.

2 Peter 3:10: "But the day of the Lord (it begins with the tribulation, and then goes through the millennium) will come like a thief in which the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."

Do you remember, from chemistry class, that you had the Periodic Table of Elements? And it showed how you began. I think it started with hydrogen, and then went up as the electrons increased. And you went on up through all the various elements. God said, "While you're enjoying things, I want you to know that I have a plan that will put it all back to its natural elements." They're all going to go back up on that chart on the chemistry wall.

Then, He says, in 2 Peter 3:11: "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be, in holy conduct and godliness?" Spiritual maturity is "separation." That's what "holy" means. Holy conduct is godliness (that means by God's rules), and most importantly, by God's mission for you – not your mission.

2 Peter 3:12: "Looking for, and hastening, the coming of the day of God, on account of which, the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat." The day of God is the day of eternity. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness? What sort indeed?

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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