***The Burnt Offering

Colossians 1:25-29

COL-434***

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This morning, we direct your attention to "The Error of Legalism,” number 46, in Colossians 2:16-17.

**The United Methodist Church**

Christianity in American society has become largely a religious ritual, devoid of the divine viewpoint principles of Scripture, and has become a user-friendly, emotionally-oriented experience. I received an article this past week written by a bishop of the United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Church does not hold to an inerrant Scripture, and it is a very powerful religious denomination. The article was written by Don Wildmon, and it reports a message by this leader of the United Methodist Organization that reflects where American Christianity is today. He is not exceptional, and he is not an oddball. He is one of the routine, run-of-the-mill, religious leaders that are in America today. It is hard for us to understand, because we don't move in those circles, so we're out of touch with that.

This United Methodist bishop denies the essential truth of the gospel: "My column this month deals with comments made by a United Methodist bishop. In one sense, it is reflective of only one person: the bishop. But in another sense, it is reflective of many leaders in the old line denominations. Let me share with you some quotes taken from a presentation made by United Methodist Bishop Joseph Sprague. Bishop Sprague is president of the North Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops of the United Methodist Church. These comments were made in a speech given at Illith School of Theology in Denver on January 28th, 2002. >The Virgin Birth

"The bishop said, 'I believe Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ of God, was fully human. The myth of the virgin birth is found neither in Mark (the earliest gospel account), nor in John (the latest account). A theological myth that you know so well, is not false presentation, but a valid and quite persuasive literary device employed to point to ultimate truth that can only be insinuated symbolically, and can never depicted exhaustively.'"

**Literal Interpretation**

The bishop said that you cannot take the Bible literally, in the literal meaning of its words. The bishop was saying that Jesus Christ had a human father. He also was saying that He was not supernaturally born, in His humanity by an act of God. He says, that the virgin birth is a myth, but he says, "It's not a lie. It's just a device to bring you an emotional experience:" to bring you a feeling – touchy-feely American religion, even in Bible churches.

The bishop said, "He (Jesus) wasn't really a virgin born. That was just a literary device."

Secondly, the bishop said, "The myth of the virgin birth was not intended as historical fact, but was employed by Matthew and Luke, in different ways, to a point, poetically, the truth about Jesus, as experienced in the emerging church." Do you understand what that means? Please explain it to me after the service. I think that he is referring to the emerging consciousness, and to what people think about Jesus Christ. And gradually, they had a feeling: "He's something special, but He's not God. He's something special, but He certainly is not sinless humanity. He is something special, that we can emote over, but he is certainly not virgin-born.

**Christ**

Next, the bishop said that Jesus was not born as Christ. Rather, by the confidence of grace with faith, He *became* the Christ, God's beloved, in Whom God was well pleased. That is a chilling statement. He was not born the called one, the Messiah, the One promised to become the Savior of Israel, and through them, to all the gentile world.

**Mormonism**

Now, the fingerprints of Satan are all over that statement. And I want to remind you, again, that this is a leading (not an oddball) spokesman of the United Methodist Church. This is routine doctrinal understanding. Some of you Methodists can relate to that. What he is saying here is exactly what the Mormons say. And that is that Jesus Christ was born a human being, who *became* God because of His faithfulness, and because of His, as the Mormons say, worthiness. Every Mormon, every day, looks forward to becoming a god, and to having his own planet, on which he may rule his own world, as did Joseph Smith, their founder. Isn't this interesting, that when he becomes that superior deity and God, he will have a multiplicity of lives?

**Islam**

What other religious group do you know that is driven by the vision of a man getting to heaven, and having a multiplicity of lives? That's right: Islam. Muhammad taught his followers that Allah said: "If you die in a holy war, a jihad, spreading Islam, imposing it on people by force, if necessary, and in the process you die, you will immediately go to paradise where there will be 70 virgins waiting for you." I mean, this is right out of Islamic theology. Get the book of Koran, and read it. And those 70 virgins will be there for your pleasure, and they will forever be virgins.

Bishop says, "Jesus Christ wasn't born the Messiah, Divine Savior. He was called. He became, by his worthiness, the Christ."

**The Resurrection**

Then the bishop says, "I believe in the resurrection of Jesus." Now, do you understand what he said? No, you don't. Watch the trickery. This is what goes on, and is going on even now as we speak, in these liberal churches, such as the United Methodists represents – the trickiness of words that make you think, "Oh, yeah, that's what I believe." And then you stop and think for a moment, and you realize that this is the kicker, and this is not what the Scriptures teach us.

The bishop said, "I believe in the resurrection of Jesus. But I cannot believe that His resurrection involved the resuscitation of His physical body." You could say, "Bishop, where is Jesus?" He would say something like: "I don't know. His bones are in some Syrian grave out there. But he is not back in the physical body."

Well, is this what Scripture teaches? I mean, that is a real stretch of not taking the words of Scripture according to what they mean. Does the Bible imply that the dead body of Jesus, placed in that tomb, was, exactly 72 hours later (just as 72 hours later, Jonah was in the belly of a whale), that body came back to life? That's exactly what the Scriptures teach.

**Lazarus**

How about Lazarus? Were Mary and Martha having a lot of happiness, upon what the Bible calls "the resurrection of their brother, Lazarus?" What came out of that grave when Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth," if it was not the body that had been dead for three days, was now alive again?

Don't forget that Jesus said, "Because I live (I am alive again from the dead), you live. You will be alive from the day – you who are in Me. You who have trusted in Me. You who, by an act of the Holy Spirit, have been placed into Christ.

Our young man (in that letter that you will read), was confronting the Lutheran pastor in the group. I was pleased to notice that one of the things he stressed was that salvation means that God the Holy Spirit has placed you into Christ. You had nothing to do with it. It is an act of God, and it is called "new birth," and you can't reverse it.

Well, when the Bible speaks about resurrection, I can tell you that the words mean a physical body operating again, which was dead.

Then the bishop says, "I am certain that the miracle of the resurrection, preeminently that of Jesus, is not tied to bodily resuscitation. The linking of resurrection with bodily resuscitation is to make a literal religious proposition of a metaphorical symbolic expression of truth itself. This is the kind of idolatry from which I dissent." He is saying, "Now, if you believe that Jesus was actually, literally raised, you are an idolater. You're worshiping a physical body of Jesus." Is that what you find when you read the Scriptures? This is no joker. This is one of the highest spokesmen of the United Methodist Church: "Jesus was not literally brought back to life. It just says that He was, meaning that His influence went on. His power went on. That's how He was resurrected." But that's not how the Bible speaks of resurrection. He says, "This is idolatry." And the United Methodist bishop, in contrast to the rest of you yo-yos, is not an idolatry. He doesn't worship a resurrected Christ, Who says, "What happened to Me is that I am the pattern, because I am the first one firstfruits of the harvest (of resurrected human bodies). You're going to come in that line eventually.

The bishop continues: "I must dissent from Christo-centric (Christ centered) exclusives, which hold that Jesus is the only way to God's gift of salvation." It gets worse: "Such an arrogant claim stands over and against the inclusive Jesus of the Synoptics, and limits God in ways that humans cannot, and must not, do." "The Synoptics" refers to the first three gospels: Matthew; Mark; and, Luke. They are very similar to one another, in what they did with. The gospel of John is the gospel written to church-age believers. It is dramatically different. It is a whole different system. Whereas Matthew, Mark, and Luke are still in the Old Testament frame of reference. That's what he means by Synoptics.

So, he does not believe that, when Jesus said, "I am the way; the truth; and, the life, and no man comes unto the Father but by Me," that He meant that He was the only way to salvation. Well, what do you think a statement like that would mean? Jesus said, "No man comes under the Father, but by Me." He did not say, "No man comes to the Father, but mainly by Me, but also by Joseph Smith; Mohammad; Confucius; Bob Short; or, whoever." How ridiculous can you get? And the United Methodist are not poor people.

Do you see what's happening down the street, at the Citadel of the United Methodist Church in this city – the enormous cathedral which is going up? I guarantee you that that pastor does not have to get up and say: "Our chalkboards need replacing. We need a gift of $1,200, so that we can replace these boards for our children in our school." Well, they don't even have a school, but he wouldn't have to ask for special funds. I guarantee that.

So, to the Methodists, it is such an arrogant claim to say: "That Jesus is the only way." Jesus was so exclusive.

Then the bishop said, "Our personal and communal lives will give credence, or lack thereof, to our witness, and call others to, or repel them from the Jesus way, which I believe is unique and normative, but not the only way to salvation." He says, "Jesus is not the only way to salvation." He puts it just like that: Bingo! He says, "I don't want you to misunderstand me. Jesus is not the only way to salvation. Therefore, He is just someone that we can use as an example in our witness."

Finally, the bishop says, "In conclusion, simply stated, Jesus was fully human, and fully divine." Do we believe that? Yes, he was fully human. He was fully divine. And you might say, "Well, what's the problem? They're just like us." And here is the subtlety of the twist. Their words do not mean what you think they mean, from your biblical frame of reference. You never want to fall into that trap.

**Divinity**

The bishop said: "In conclusion, simply stated, Jesus was fully human and fully divine. His humanity was given in His misconception and birth, through the natural processes of procreation. Jesus had a human father, not through the supernatural procreation of the Holy Spirit. (That's what the Bible meant, but that Bible is not literal – that's an inspirational thought.) So, Jesus had a human father somewhere." And the bishop would perhaps say that His father was Joseph (his foster father): "His divinity was derived, given as a gift from His relationship of trust and obedience with God." That's right out of Mormonism: "He became a human being, Who became a God, because of His worthiness.

Mr. Wildmon closed his article with this sentence: "And if you are members of a mainline denomination, don't feel too smug. You can expect to hear a similar report in the future."

This is American Christianity. It is on the slippery slope. And why is that? Because they have bummers in the pulpit, who do not explain the Word of God, on the basis of the original languages, within the structure of premillennial dispensational theology, which means that Israel and the church are two different programs in the work of God. And they have two different lifestyles, and two different objectives.

The focus today is not on church doctrine, as taught by an expository preacher – a pastor-teacher who understands grace orientation, and who is not trying to squeeze people into a mold, and who is not trying to strong arm people to do things, but is calling upon them: "Rise to this. You don't have to if you don't want to. Go ahead. Go your way. Do you know what you'll have? You'll have a bummer lifestyle. You'll have a bummer marriage. You'll have a bummer lot of children. You'll have a bummer association with the people you're with socially. Your whole life will be a bummer deal in in your livelihood. Go ahead and do it that way. But if you want to be grace-oriented to the power system of knowing the mind of God in doctrine, and having the Holy Spirit free to work in your life, because He has filled, and He is in control."

All of this comes only from one place, folks: the inerrant Scripture. If you do not know what the Bible says (and it says it literally), then you're out there on your own, and you will find no problem with following the Methodist Bishop.

Christian Fellowship today is not in sharing the mind of God the Father, as found in the Word of God, but in social activities, with a pizza party finish. Christians do not come to church to be learners of God's Word, and thus, to know what the will of God is for them. They come to be entertained. They come to be emotionally excited – touchy-feely religion all the way.

If you don't think that's it, then you don't know going on out there? Some of these religious groups have vast groups of young people that gather together on certain nights. And they had the guitar strumming, and they had the singing, and they have the hoopla, and the noise. But they have no Word of God orientation, or just a little devotional. But boy, they have lots of pizza to eat. They have a lot of focus on the physical aspects. And this is called youth work? It's not youth work if the mind isn't being introduced to the doctrines of Scripture.

Now, in the Old Testament, we've been observing that the worshipers, under the Mosaic system of rituals, portrayed by the very thing they were doing, often without fully realizing and understanding it – what they were portraying was the coming Messiah Savior. He was portrayed in all those rituals, and all those celebrations. It was the way of life of the Mosaic Law to say, "Here He comes: the real Messiah Savior. And as the Mosaic Law indicated, He would be a God-Man, and He would be born of a virgin. It told it all in the Old Testament. And He would be sinless. He would not have Adam's moral guilt imputed to him. So, He would not have a sin nature. And you would again have a sinless human being, Who would then live His life without sin, and therefore, be qualified to bear the sins of all of humanity, because he was not just human, but He was one Person, a God-Man.

The Mosaic Law foreshadowed all the spiritual realities which were to come with the arrival of the Messiah Savior Jesus Christ. The sacrificial system of the Mosaic Law was therefore a visual aid, portraying the future work of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, Who would die to pay the divine penalty for human sin. And then, two of those sacrifices were to demonstrate maintaining your fellowship with God as a believer.

**The Burnt Offering**

So, we have looked at the burnt offering, which pictured the work of Jesus Christ in dying for the sins of mankind. It also signified the work of propitiation, satisfying the justice of God, which demands death for sin.

**The Meal Offering**

Then we are currently looking at the meal offering, which pictured the very nature of Jesus Christ as the sinless God-Man. He is one person with two nature: God; and, man. They are not mixed together. They are both acting independently and separately. He walked this earth as a man. He didn't call upon His Divine nature. He walked the way you and I have to walk, under the power of the Holy Spirit. And what He did, you can do. That's the church-age beauty.

The meal offering also deals with satisfying the justice of God propitiation. But the meal offering is non-blood. The one who died on the cross, as a burnt offering of God, was absolutely sinless, as shown in the burnt offering. And He was without sin, as shown in the meal offering. We pointed out that the elements of the meal offering, as we see it in Leviticus 2, is first of all, the offerer would bring to the priest at the temple fine flour, which had been carefully sifted, and was without lumps, without any interruption of its fine uniformity. This symbolizes the stability of the sinless humanity of Jesus Christ. There was no sin nature to create any lumps and bumps in the person in the humanity of Christ.

Then the worshiper would pour oil on the fire ground flour. This was a symbol of the Holy Spirit, as we know in Scripture, Who indwelt that humanity, and constantly filled Jesus Christ with power. Is that any different than you and me? No. It is know exactly the same thing. We have the Holy Spirit within us, and the Bible says, "That's being filled with the spirit when He controls, and He guides the life. That's why things work well when God is guiding the life. It's not a bed of roses, but you're in the field of battle, and you take it in stride.

**Frankincense**

Then the third thing the worshiper would put with this fine flour and oil is frankincense. That was a perfume, symbolizing the pleasing aroma of the humanity and works Jesus Christ to God the Father.

It is interesting that at the water baptism of Jesus Christ, as recorded in Matthew 3:16-17, all three of these elements of the meal offering were present: "And after being baptized (water baptism by John the Baptist, and He was baptized by immersion, down in the waters of the Jordan River), Jesus went up (that is, he got walked back out of the river) immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were open, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, and behold, the voice out of the heavens saying, 'This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.'" There you see the fine flower, which is portraying the sinless humanity of Jesus Christ, which was present there in this God-Man. There you see the oil in the form of God the Holy Spirit, as a dove resting upon Jesus Christ, showing His anointing to His mission as Savior. And there you see the frankincense with the Father saying how he delighted in the sweet aroma that His Son was to Him, and he was pleased with Him.

It is so nice to find that your children don't stink. It is so nice to find that your children are, to you, a sweet aroma. Why are they a sweet aroma? Well, if you were a godly parent. It is because they are walking in a Christlike life. It is not because they are making big money. And it is not because their fame and fortune is significant. But it is because they are standing for the Word of God, and they're walking with Jesus Christ. So, all three of these elements were there, and this is what was happening. Every time they brought the meal offering, it was portrayed at the baptism of Jesus Christ.

Going over to Leviticus 2, here's the procedure for this meal offering. All of this (the procedures), and all the elements, we're not just arbitrarily put together by God, but they were put together, such that, later on, we could look back and, "Aha. That's what was being signified." The more godly Jews probably caught on. They put the thing together. Leviticus 2:1-2: "Now when anyone presents a grain offering (that is, a meal offering, or flour offering as an offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flower. He show pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it." That's what the man prepared before he came to the temple with his offering: "He shall then bring it to Aaron sons, the priests, and shall take from it his handful of his fine flower, and of its oil, and all its frankincense. And the priest shall offer it up in smoke as a memorial portion on the altar – and offering by fire of soothing aroma to the Lord." This was a sweet smelling offering: "A handful of this preparation the offerer would give to the priest, who would put it on the flames.

So, the meal offering mixture of fine flour, oil, and frankincense brought to the priest at the temple grounds. The priest took a handful from the offerer and of the mixture, and burned it on the offering as a memorial. This offering pictured the sinless person of Jesus Christ, given in sacrifice on the cross, for our salvation from the lake of fire, and having to spend eternity with Satan. The Jews in this offering were portraying that approaching a holy God for salvation had to come with somebody else's merits than their own. You can't come to God on your own. You are not qualified. It had to come with what this offering portrayed: a sinless person acceptable to God. It was not by their good works or their good character.

If you were to ask the Bishop of the Methodist Church, whose article, we read this morning: "Give me the bottom line. What do I have to have to get to heaven?" He would say, "Be a good person. In the Masonic Lodge. You are taught the number one principle of relationship with God, because the Masonic Lodge is a religious organization, whatever they may like to portray. The key principle that you are taught is that a life determines a character, and a character determines a destiny. Is that true? That's Satan's words. A life (how you live) determines what kind of character you have. If you're of good character, it'll turn your destiny of heaven, and if you're of bad character, you'll go to the other place. Many good works are done by the Masons. But are they a work of God? Not on your life.

The meal offering did not portray the works of the worshiper, his good character, or his senselessness. It portrayed somebody else who was going to come, and do it for him, namely the Messiah Savior Jesus Christ. The meal offering was a memorial of Who and What Jesus Christ was. The Lord's Supper, in the age of the church, is a memorial of what He did. It is the same thing. The meal offering was a memorial, for what was coming when Christ came. We look back now with the Lord's Supper, the same memorial. This memorial of the sinless Son of God was a fragrant aroma to the Father, who delighted in the Son, Who is so dear.

You know, in contrast, to something like Islam, which is based upon a lot of bloody brutality, and imposition against the will of people, and shoving-it-down-your-throat religion, I couldn't help noticing, recently, the reading the prayer of Jesus Christ. This was the upper room. They are completing the last Passover meal together. They're about to leave now. He was going to kneel down, and wash all their feet, and show them that he was their lord, He was the leader, but he was their servant. And because He was a servant, that's what made Him their leader. That's what brought him the respect: that He was their servant, not the Lord lording it over them.

Then they were going to get up; walk out; and, they were going to go to the garden of Gethsemane. And there He would pour out His heart one more time, to the Heavenly Father, saying, "If this can be done some other way, Father (Christ, in His humanity speaking,) please do it. I don't relish this. I, who am a sinless man, having imputed to Me, and actually physically experiencing the horror of having the sin of every human being imputed to me, and impacting upon my whole being. But it's got to be done your way, Father, so your will, not mine." There was a tenderness even in that. But here, in John 17, as He closes this prayer, when they're still in the upper room, beginning at first 24, Jesus says: "I'm complete this tender prayer on behalf of the church-age saints which are now to come, a new things to be begun, to be begun.

"Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given me, be with Me, where I am, in order, that they may behold My glory, which You have given me, for You did love Me before the foundation of the world. Heavenly Father, you loved me, throughout all the Koran . . . and the teachings of most of Muhammad. There's no indication (no suggestion) that Muhammad is a God of love. Isn't that interesting? Nowhere does it say that: "Muhammad is love." They like to say, He is merciful, and he is kind, but they don't say that he is love." This "agape" love, which inherently is a mental attitude which creates a sacrificial quality.

The soldier in combat suddenly finds a grenade come flying through the air, and it lands in the area that they're crouched down. And every now and then this happens. And a soldier, with a mental attitude decision, leaps up, and falls on that grenade, and takes the mental attitude. That is mental-attitude love. And out of that does flow an emotion. It was driven by an emotion from God. But here You, "Father, You're a god of love." It's a terrible thing that's going to be done to me now, the next day. And I remember that You loved me. And that you are doing this to me, because beyond me, that would be the expression of the love that you want to give to the whole world." You don't find that in the religions of the world, folks, and you certainly don't find it in Islam.

Verse: 25: "Oh Righteous Father. Although the world has not known You, yet, I have known You. And these have known that you did send Me." There's a little play on words here. The word "known" in the Bible has a connotation of "great closeness," or "intimacy." In the earliest book of the Bible, we read, "And Adam knew his wife, and Eve conceived." It is used of the intimacy of sexual relations, and the word is repeatedly used in that context, in that particular application. But its application is broader in: "I have known somebody, and we are very close to one another on the human level."

So, this is a word Jesus uses with purpose – the intensity of the closeness between God and what? The sun. No. Between God and this Man, Jesus. Yes, He knew Him back as part of the Trinity before the incarnation. Now He knows Him in the intimacy of His incarnation: "Oh, Righteous Father. Although the world has not known (which is another expression of the depth of their love), I have known You. And these have known that You did send Me. And I have made Your Name known to them, and will make it known that the love wherewith You did love Me may be in them, and I in them."

So, Christ is going to be very intimate and close to those of the believers who want that closeness. Do you want the indwelling Christ to walk with you? He's going to do that. Do you want Him to be your guide? He's going to do that. And He's there for your fellowship. The Holy Spirit is there to guide you. He lives within you. Christ lives within you to be your friend, and, to be your comrade. You're not out there in life on your own. This is the fun of being together.

Now the remainder of this meal offering, which connoted all these tender expressions between God and man, was then given to the priests. Leviticus 2:3: and the remainder of the grain (the meal offering) belongs to Aaron and His Sons: the thing most holy of the offerings of the Lord by fire." And in this, this is where the priests got their food. They did not have any fields. The Levitical priest had no fields on which to grow their grain. They lived by what came through the offerings of the people at the temple. This was stored in the appropriate place. And from this, the Levitical families were fed. And here's an offering to God (food to God), which now becomes food for man. And God and man share the blessings of the sinless humanity of Jesus Christ. A divine and human fellowship was portrayed in this very offerings.

Today, we have the application. We can look back, and we understand this better than the Jews did. The believer priests of the church age also enters into fellowship with God. How does he enter into that fellowship with the Father? With a sinless person of Jesus Christ? That's the agent. It is Christ who is qualified to be the go-between. Christians who have grown in spiritual maturity, and have reached what James calls the super-grace level, really know the joy of fellowship with the dwelling Christ. It is on a lot of fun to walk with the Lord. It is a lot of pleasure to have the wholesomeness of the association of this wonderful person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It isn't like old bummers that you meet in life, and that are very famous, and that are very important to the world system, but who are a joke to the realities of God. It is really a great life to walk with this person. The Holy Spirit indwells us, and sustains and to guide the believer into this fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who brings to your mind, and sets the alarm off, and says, "You're out of fellowship. That was a wrong thing for you to do. That is a wrong thing that you're contemplating to do. That is an evil that you are engaged in. Confess it to the Father. And get back on-track with Him, so that you are again walking with the Lord Jesus Christ. You're off in Goonie land. You're off in the boondocks. Christ is standing there on the trail, waiting for you to get back on the trail, so that you're ready to go on.

If you were in Yellowstone National Park, for the analogy here, you better stay on the trail. They are very carefully marked. There are boardwalks. If you get off those trails, you're liable to find yourself at the bottom of a boiling pool of water as you break through the crust. And that has happened to some people.

Many years ago, when we were up at the Yellowstone Park, shortly before we had arrived, had jumped off the boardwalk, excited by what he saw, and went right through into the boiling water, and was killed. And if you do this in the Christian life (that's what you're doing: you're stepping off there, and you want to walk in the devil's world, off the boardwalk of the safety of Christ?). Well, any time you're going to walk out of fellowship, and any time you're going to walk as a person of this world, you're not stupid. You know what the world does. You know what the world's ways are. You know where the world has its entertainment. You know what it looks at. You know what it talks about. You know what its ambitions are in life, and how it wants to spend its time; its talents; and, its treasures. Do you want to do that? Fine. Just remember that you've stepped off the boardwalk of the safety of Christ. And you're out there in the devil's world. And you'll go through. He'll bring you down. And you'll say, "Why did I do this? Why did I enter this relationship? Why did I make this choice? Why have I invested my life like this on this?" Well, it's because Satan has caused you to lose your way. You've forgotten the meal offering of fellowship between God and man.

Now, the food of God, which is shared by believer priests of the church age, is the Word of God. That's it. That meal offering represented the mind of God. It is the Word of God. For example, 1 Peter 5:1. This is speaking to a group of people in the local church who have an official position. They are called "elders: "Therefore, I exhort the elders." These are the pastor teachers: "I exhort the pastor-teacher among you." And Peter says, "I too am a communicator of the Word of God, and witness personally of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed. I too am going to heaven. I too am one of you pastor-teachers, who is going to experience the glory of Christ."

1 Peter 5:2: "Now, therefore, you have upon you the responsibility to shepherd the flock of God among you." He says, "It is your duty, as pastor-teacher of that local congregation, to shepherd them." What does a shepherd? He leads the sheep to where they can feed – where nourishment will be found for them, so that they will be able to be sustained; be physically well off; and, be able to move through life in physical well-being. A shepherd guides to good food the flock of God. You exercise oversight, not under compulsion. You take charge. You lead the people. They're the sheep. They look to you. Don't stand around and play games with them. If they want a pizza party church, and call it spirituality, and call it Christian fellowship, you sound the alarm. And if they won't listen, you move on. This is not under compulsion in this leadership of caring for the sheep, but voluntarily. Knock yourself out, by choice: "According to the will of God, and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness: Not so that you'll get material returns, but do it eagerly for them, for their enrichment at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and thereby for your own – not yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

Then, pastor-teachers, remember this first. Verse 4: "When the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, appears (at the Judgment Seat of Christ), you will receive the unfading crown of glory." That is one of the four crowns. And this one is reserved for pastor-teachers who do their job of explaining the mind of God through expository teaching.

Then, how do we feed? Matthew 4:4: "Jesus answered and said, 'It is written: man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Aha! There it is. Every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. It is doctrine, and doctrine, and doctrine. You can go ahead, and fellowship in some church that is nice, and the people are friendly. That's one of the driving forces: user-friendly churches. People love that. And you're comfortable. You're not feeling guilty about what you're doing with your life and your resources. You can go ahead and do that. But boy, will you regret it at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God never moves you out of your place of nourishment. Remember that. You do that to yourself. He never moves you out of the place of spiritual nourishment in depth. You choose to do that to yourself.

I've seen that tragic trail of broken bodies, and useless lives, stretching out across the desert, like when the children of the Exodus generation walked across the desert, and there, streaming behind them where all these bodies who had fallen by the wayside, because they did not stay at Kadeshbarnea, where the Word of God was to enrich their souls. They did what they liked to do. And they'll have all of eternity to regret it.

Let's look at one more. 1 Peter 2:2. How do we have fellowship between God and man? How do we feed the people of God? "Like newborn babes long for the pure milk of the Word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation. You do not grow by social parties that the church runs. You grow by hearing, as you have this morning, what God thinks. And then you say "Amen," or "No." But now you are enriched. And if you come tonight, you'll be enriched again. You will not be denied the nourishment of the mind of Christ.

So, it's the written Word of the Bible, which is the channel (the fellowship) with the living Word (the only channel) to Jesus Christ. It's not emotions. American Christianity play on emotions. And When you play on emotions, then the Methodist bishop can have his field. God the Father and His church-age priests, together, enjoy the perfection of Jesus Christ in this way. They get to know Christ in the intimacy of the implication of that Word. Paul said, "To know Him," Paul said, "that's all I want – to know Him in the power of His resurrection." That is the ambition worth investing your life in. And it's all a bunch of little things you do like. But Paul knew what he was talking about – to know Him, and the power for His resurrection. Then Paul said: "in the fulfillment of my mission."

That is the closeness available to every one of us. It's a meal offering in its finest moment of nourishment.

Father, we thank You for this time in the Word of God. We pray that You will help us to appreciate the Word that we have heard, and to thank You for the symbolism of the meal offering – that fine flour; the oil of the Holy spirit; the frankincense pleasure of our Father in us; and, the fact that we share this food (this spiritual food) of the Word of God with You, so that we become human beings blessed in every way, and eternally rewarded in heaven. In Jesus' name, we thank You. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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