***The Equipping of the Saints

Colossians 2:18-19

COL-450***

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Our subject is "The Error of Angelic Worship," number 7, in Colossians 2:18-19.

The Christians in the city of Colossae were commanded not to allow false teachers to take them back to the Mosaic Law lifestyle under Judaism. Christians are to protect their church-age, grace blessings of freedom and power, which they have in the body of Christ, the church. The Christians treasure of freedoms and grace is to be protected. They consist of certain specific qualities and privileges which were not true under the Mosaic Law system. And we've been looking at those.

**Positional Truths for Christians**

First of all, there is positional truth, by virtue of a believer's position in Christ. At the point of salvation, he has received (imputed to him) absolute righteousness. He is absolutely sure of going to heaven. Secondly was the spiritual union of all church-age believers as the royal family of God. Third was the indwelling by Jesus Christ of every believer for daily fellowship. Fourth was the indwelling of every Christian by the Holy Spirit, for power and for guidance. Five: the universal priesthood of all church-age believers who represent only ourselves before God. Six: the ambassadorship of every Christian representing God to the world.

**The Completed Canon of Scripture**

Tonight we look at the next one: the completed canon of Scripture. The word "canon" means "standard." In the Old Testament, there are 39 books, and in the New Testament, there are 27, making a total of 66 books in the Bible (the Old and New Testament). And these books are the standard of divine revelation. It is these books which are covered by the declaration in Scripture that there is no mistake. The book has been inspired by God, and is inerrant.

Now, there are other religious books, as you know. They are not inerrant. They are readily proven to have mistakes in them, like the book of Mormon – something like 4,000 times (errors); or, like the religious writings of Islam – the Koran. All these non-biblical books are satanic productions. Now, we're talking about what the Scripture calls "the Word of God." It is what God has said. And what He says is what He thinks.

First of all, John 16:12-13: "I have many more things to say to you," Jesus says to His disciples, as He's coming now to the end of the ministry, on His way to the cross: "But you cannot bear them now. But when He (the Spirit of Truth – God the Holy Spirit) comes, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak. And He will disclose to you what is to come." Jesus says, "I've taught you many things. I've even told you that there's going to be a great changeover now, from Judaism to a whole new thing called Christianity. And instead of the Jewish nation, what will represent Me is a body of believers called the church, who will be the body of Christ." And He (Jesus Christ) will be the head. All this is coming up.

However, that era of the church has doctrines that never applied to the Old Testament, and a way of life that was never revealed. You wouldn't remember all this, and we don't have time to do it. That is what Jesus was saying: "But when the Holy Spirit comes and replaces Me here, in residence on this earth, after I've gone to heaven, He will teach you church-age truth. He will bring these things to your mind. You will have revelation. You will have visions. You will have instruction. And the result will be that a whole new era will begin. And He (the Holy Spirit) will not just speak on His own, making up these things. He will speak the truth of God the Father. And He will deliver to you, and He will disclose all these things, including the last line of verse 13 – future things. He will also reveal prophecy.

That is very important, because any book that claims to speak for God, verifies itself by the fact that it can make declarations about things that are going to happen in the distant future, in multiple details, as the Bible does, and then proves itself to be a product of God, because these things come to pass, and all the details are filled. This has happened many times. And every time, God keeps His prophetic word. And He fulfills it to the letter.

One of the things that the Bible tells us is that in the end times, near the time of the rapture of the church, the nations of the world will come increasingly in conflict with one another, and there will be enormous turmoil over the Jewish people. Do you live in a time like that? Can you relate to that prophecy made so long ago? You can unless you're dead from the neck up. It's happening all around us. Exactly what do you think that the Muslim world hates the United States? It's because we are the friend of Israel. We're the friend of God's people, as the Word of God tells us to be. And we will not stand by, and let a religion of Satan destroy people that are the apple of God's eye.

So, we are seeing the fulfillment of what Jesus said: "When the Holy Spirit comes, He will reveal doctrines to you that now apply to the church-age." That's why we don't go to the Old Testament for this. The Old Testament gives us illustrations of spiritual truth, but doctrines (how we live, and how we function) – that's New Testament and church doctrine. And He said: "And I will confirm all this by telling you future events." If we had a prize tonight to give to the person who could get your hand up first, and tell us what's the next thing that's going to happen in prophecy, would you be the winner? Would you win that prize? The next thing that's going to happen is what? The rapture of the church.

Everything has been fulfilled like clockwork up to this point. We don't know when. The next thing on the docket is that, all of a sudden, one of these days, we are truly going to be, as the phrase says: "We're going to be out of here." And we're going to be out for the most magnificent life that we could ever dream of. We will never regret it. We'll never want to look back and say, "I wish I were back there." You sure won't be. It'll be magnificent.

So, God has given us, on the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ, this book, which speaks for Him. That's why it is called "The Word of God." Now, when you have the Word of God, you have the mind of God. That's why it is terrible when churches strip back their program, and they cut off the evening service. It's a great, great abuse of the people of God. It robs them of another opportunity, which should be the primary focus of the Lord's Day – of knowing what God thinks. If you don't get it here, where on earth are you really going to get it?

So, this book, that we are going to speak from, and is going to represent the Word of God, has to confirm that it is indeed what it claims to be. 1 Peter 1:21 tells us this: that no prophecy (no revelation of God) was ever made by an act of human will. But men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. This word "move" is the same word which would be used about the wind blowing in the sail of a sailboat, and moving that sailboat across the water. When Paul picked up his pen, and when John picked up this pen, and when Jude picked up his pen, and began writing, when that pen touched the paper, God the Holy Spirit kicked in supervision so that nothing they said was wrong: no geographical fact; no historical fact; no doctrinal contradiction; and, no wrong names. It is all absolutely perfect.

This is what happened when Joseph Smith created the Book of Mormon to sound like King James English, if you've ever read it. And he made up all these stories about these Indian tribes that have come over here, and that Jesus had preached to after the resurrection. And all this had been revealed to him on golden plates, by the angel Moroni, that he was able to translate. This was a problem when, after the early 1800s, when the first Book of Mormon was published as an addition to the Bible, people had to come to Joseph Smith in their church organization, and say to him: "Joseph, here in this book over here, you said this, and here later on in this book, you contradicted it." Ah! They fixed it, and they made it match. Is that God moving people to speak, so that He contradicts Himself? No, that's what people do: "Joseph, this fact of history here is not this not right. This is what happened." Oh, in the next edition, he corrected it: "Joseph, the way you said these words, this is bad grammar." Oh, and he fixed it. 4,000 times the Book of Mormon has had to be re-edited and fixed. That is not the way God works. That is silly, ridiculous imitation, and that's the best men can do.

These biblical authors, when they spoke, were moved along by the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, there's another factor that you should be aware of. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." All Scripture – Old and New Testament Scriptures are inspired by God. You may remember that the Greek word here is "theopneustos." And that word means "God-breathed." So, this verse tells us, "Where did these men get the information that they have recorded in the Bible? Where did they get all this church-age doctrine that they, then, recorded in the New Testament epistles? Can you tell me – where did Paul get his information?

Well, you may remember that after he was saved, ironically, God took him out into that Arabian Desert (the same place where Muhammad set up his headquarters on that Arabian Peninsula). Isn't that interesting – that in the same world in which God took Paul aside, and for three years, He ran a class with Paul. He said to Paul, "Here is church doctrine, Paul. Here are the techniques of the Christian life. Here are the principles on all these factors of grace that you'll have to learn to live under now. Here's the power system. Here's the principle of confession of known sins. And one doctrinal principle after another, Paul had to learn from scratch. This was in the same place where Muhammad came along with this false book of the Koran. Satan is always imitating to try to counter what God has done, because he's the big liar.

So, here's the picture. Where did the information in the Bible come from? It was God-breathed into the minds of these men. How did it get written on parchment so that it was without error? God carried them along, like the wind in the sail. He carried along the writers, so that what they wrote was absolutely true.

You and I, in this age, one of the prizes we have, that God tells us in Colossians 2:18, to preserve and protect, is that we have a completed Bible. We have a completed canon of Scripture. It was completed as the standard – all the Old Testament, and all the New Testament, and nothing more will be added to this. It's complete. In fact, do you remember with the revelation says? It says that if anybody adds to this book, you'll end up regretting it in the lake of fire. It's bad business to write a book and say, "This is the Word of God." If you see the Mormon ads in the paper, they invite you to write in to get the "other testament" that Jesus wrote. They'll send you a free copy of the book of Mormon.

You and I have a complete Scripture. All other claims of speaking for God, such as the book Mormon, or the Koran of Islam, are frauds of Satan. Now God no longer speaks to us through dreams. Only charismatic get spoken to through dreams. But then they move in a dream world. He doesn't speak to us in visions. Only charismatics are getting visions. He doesn't speak to us in audible sounds. He doesn't speak to us through angels, because what he has to say to us has been recorded, and no more direct revelations will be added. That's what we're talking about.

This includes ecclesiastical organizations. Church groups do not speak for God, like the Roman Catholic Church claims to add to Scripture. Some ecclesiastical leader, like the pope, cannot sit upon that throne there in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, and speak, as the Latin says, "ex cathedra" (from the throne), so that anything that the pope utters from that throne is doctrine – the mind of God. He is a vicar of Christ on earth – the representative of Christ. And when he speaks, you have God speaking. No. No priest speaks from God to add – and no cult leaders. They're always great at having great additional revelation.

If you don't understand that, then the devil will make a fool of you. We have a completed standard of Scripture. Whatever God has to say today, He has put down in writing, and the Scripture gives us the mind of God. In 1 Corinthians 2:16, Paul call points this out: "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we (Christians) have the mind of Christ." That's magnificent. If I am in temporal fellowship, and if I'm reading the Word of God, and if I am being taught doctrinal principles pertinent to the church-age, I'm inputting into my mind the mind of God. So, when I start thinking of what I should do, God is guiding in an absolutely reality way. You don't know it, and you don't feel anything, but He's guiding. That's why it's so important to stay in the will of our Heavenly Father. And learning principles of the Word of God (especially church-age doctrine), will orient you to God's mind, in all the details of our lives.

**Psalm 119**

Now, the fact that the Bible speaks the mind of God was impressed upon the Jews as well, which is why they understood how important it was that they should be faithful to the Old Testament Scriptures, and that they should treat those as the sacred writings that they really were. The longest Psalm – what is it? Psalm 119. It's a long psalm, and it's devoted to one thing – one subject. It's the longest psalm, and a psalm is a song. When you sing this psalm, man, most of your service is going to be gone before you finish. This thing has 176 verses. That's kind of a long song. And what is it about? It's about only one thing – the praise of God's Word. I want to read two sections to you, as background for an appreciation for what you have as a church-age believer – that you don't have just the Old Testament, but you have the whole thing.

In Psalm 119:9-16, the psalmist says, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" Boy, what a question that is. And how many young men need to know the answer to that? The answer is: "By keeping it your way, according to Your Word." Just do things the way the Bible says to do them. Just do not do the immoral ways that the Bible says not to do them – not what man thinks, but what God thinks.

Verse 10: "With all my heart, I have sought You. Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your Word have I treasured in my heart, that I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O Lord. Teach me Your statutes. With my lips, I have told of all the ordinances of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches." How about that? How many Christians can say, "I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all my silver, and gold, and dollars, and riches. The Word of God is more important than anything else. It's even more important than Sunday night television programs.

"I will meditate on Your precepts." That means to think it over, and to ponder them. You read it at home, and you sit, and think about it. And God the Holy Spirit illuminates that Word, and applies it to your life. I will chew it over: "I will meditate on Your precepts, and regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statues. I will not forget Your Word."

Now go over to Psalm 119:97-104. This is another dramatic, wonderful explanation of the Word of God: "Oh how I love Your law (the Word of God). It is my meditation all the day. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine." That's right. When you learn Bible doctrine, and your receive it with positive volition, it goes from here in the head down to the human spirit, and it's stored as treasure that you will never lose. But if you listen to the Word of God in a church service, and you go negative toward what you hear, or you compromise with exceptions in your case, that doctrine flows right out the window. And when, suddenly, you need it is not there, for the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind.

"Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers. For Your testimonies are my meditation." And in a Christian school, such as we have, sometimes these children come from homes where the parents are not all that well-versed in the Word of God. And the children come home, and they are wiser than the adults, their parents, because they have the mind of God, and their parents do not. And they have to learn to be respectful, because their parents speak and act in a way that is contrary to the Word of God. And his child, in his innocent little mind, looks, and thinks, and says, "You know, that's not the way my teacher at school has taught me about God. I have more insight than all my teachers;" that is, teachers who do not know God: "For Your testimonies are what I think about. I understand more than the aged."

How many young people find that they understand more than the aged? This is one thing I'll tell you about people who are older. They don't like to admit that they've been wrong all the years of their life. They don't like to admit that, especially in spiritual things: that all their judgment, and all their wisdom, and all their human IQ, that they have been wrong about spiritual things. And along comes a child, and this kid knows more than older people around him because he has the mind of God, and they don't. Just because you're older, chronologically, does not make you smart in the things of God. In fact, it makes you very pathetic – to be older, and not to know what's God's way.

"I understand more than the aged, because I've observed that precept. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Your Word." If you're going to keep the Word of God, you are going to stay away from the evil practices of this world system. I am not turned aside from Your ordinances, for You Yourself have taught me. How sweet are Your Words to my taste – yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth? From Your precepts, I get understanding. Therefore, I hate every false way." That's pretty strong. Not only is: "How sweet it is to know the Word of God," but: "I get really emotionally hateful, and I just hate what is against the Word of God, and that which is deceptive, and that which leads people away from God." Because where does that come from? That's the deceit of Satan. And rightly, it should be hated.

So, learning the Word of God is to orient our thinking to His thinking. And a local church is supplied when it is in the will of God with the right pastor-teacher – not just another preacher, but that pulpit, and the right man in that pulpit for that congregation. And when that happens, you have an explosive potential combination of great spiritual development on the part of that congregation. That is because, if the pastor-teacher does his studying, and he gets his ducks lined up to instruct people in the mind of God, they will get it. The Holy Spirit is the teacher. He will not teach what is false. He will not teach that which is injurious to the people. But if that pastor-teacher is conveying the Word of God, then the people of God can go to the outer reaches of the starry heavens in their spiritual development.

This is taught us in Ephesians 4:11-12. Jesus, when He left, gave Himself some people who will speak for Him. He gave Himself some commentators to replace Him. These are called apostles. They were the foundation of the church. We have no more apostles after the original apostles died, including the apostle Paul. And He gave us some prophets – people who are used to predict the future, and also to explain the Word of God. They do both. We no longer have prophets. He gave some men as evangelists. We do have evangelists – those who have a particular knack for going to a frontier pioneer place. These include missionaries on a foreign field, and proclaiming the Word of the gospel, although we are to do it in the local church. Paul told Timothy: "Timothy, do the work of the evangelist."

When you're in that position, and you're looking out there, and you're facing unbelievers, be sure you bring the gospel in, and tell them what they need to know. And this is, in the Greek, a combination: "pastor-teachers." There are teachers in the church. We have them in Sunday school, and in various capacities. There's a combined special kind of teacher called the pastor-teacher, the shepherd, who is capable of instructing in spiritual phenomena or church-age doctrine. And why is he doing this?

**For the Equipping of the Saints**

The result is in verse 12. We've gone over this before, and I'll just remind you. "For the equipping of the saints." This word "for" – I know that every one of you remembers it. It looks like this in a Greek: "pros." It means "for equipping of the saints." That word "pros" is a preposition, and it means "face-to-face," and "eyeball-to-eyeball, where do you think that takes place? In a local church service. That's where you are face-to-face with instruction. That's where you are in the assembly of the believers. That's where you have the warmth of all the other hot coals around you of the believers. And it's different than a Bible class.

**For the Works of Service**

However, then it says, "For the equipping of the saints." Equipping for what? "In order to do your service." That word is hinged to another preposition. This one is "eis" ("unto"). If number one is not done, number two can never be done, which is "for the work of service." You can never serve God, and produce divine good works, and gain eternal rewards in heaven, if the pastor-teacher has not taught you church-age doctrine. You haven't taken the trouble to do that. Does everybody appreciate that? Not on your life. People visit this congregation. You can tell after the service, or sometimes even before the service, they pack up and they leave. They've heard nothing but expository preaching, and they have no taste for it. They do not understand what is of value. They've been conned by Satan down the emotional blind alley and they've eaten it up.

However, if the word is being preached, and he's explaining, now the result is that you're equipped for service. When you go into the military, you get a lot of training. It's face-to-face instruction. For what? So that you can go out into the field, and perform the service of a soldier.

**For Building up the Body of Christ**

Then there's a third one. This also is the Greek word "eis:" "unto the building up of the body of Christ." And if number isn't done, number two doesn't get done. And if number two doesn't get done, number three doesn't get done. It's a chain reaction, and the result is building up the body of Christ. How do you build up the church? With the gospel – bringing in new members people are saved; and taking Christians, and making them grown-up believers, so that they're not patsies in the devil's world to be kicked around without any defense.

So, the local church has been supplied by God with his right pastor-teacher. And if he understands his calling and duty, the people will sit in a service, and they'll walk out, and they'll know a little more about the mind of God. They're going to forget all of his jokes and all of his entertainment, but they won't forget what has been now stored in their human spirit of the Word of God.

**Eternal Crowns – the Crown of Glory**

This is so important, and so honored by God, that it is one of four eternal crowns that a Christian can earn in various ways. This is one of the highest levels of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. One crown is called the crown of glory, and only pastor-teacher are eligible for it. There are going to be a lot of sad bananas out there at the Judgment Seat of Christ – maybe even big-time preacher names. And they're going to find that they're not going to get this crown, because they were not faithful to their flock, to feed them the Word of God, so that they could understand what God thinks (church-age truth), so they could therefore be equipped to go out and perform divine good service with their spiritual gifts, and then they could go down. And with that service, they're building up the body of Christ.

There is also, along with this, 2 Timothy 2:2. What are you to do with the instruction you have? In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul says to his associate Timothy, "The things of God (this is what he is talking about) which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses?" What he is saying is: "Timothy, you've traveled with me from church to church. You've heard me teaching church-age doctrine. You've heard me teaching the Christian way of life. And all this that you have heard, in the presence of many other people who were listening – these things you entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. It's not just good enough for the pastor-teacher to learn it, and to rejoice in it. He has to tell it to the congregation, so that they can say, "Ah, yes. Now I'm equipped to teach my children." Now, if I'm the husband and father, I'm equipped to teach my wife. I'm equipped to be a teacher in the local congregation, and to prepare somebody else to stand up and teach.

It's terrible when people have been in church for years and years, and they're getting up in years, and they're still baby Christians. They don't know basic truth, and they don't know how to respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit. They're still struggling out there in the world system. That's terrible. To be grown up, that is your right as a Christian. And it takes the pastor-teacher to do that.

**Do not be Conformed to this World**

Then we have one more critical verse in Romans 12:2, which says, "Do not be conformed to this world. This Greek word "conformed" means "outward conduct." Well, take a look at your kids. Have you trained them not to be conform to this world system? What kind of clothes do they want to wear? What kind of junior high girls are they, who want to be slapping themselves with makeup, so that they look like the local Barnum-and-Bailey clowns? What is it about your children had? Have they said, "I'm different? I'm a child of the royal family of God. I'm a daughter of the King. I'm not a commoner. And I don't go around dressing like a commoner. I go around dressing appropriately to my status in my royal family." Do your kids have that? Do not be conformed to this world outwardly. Don't do it that way.

**Be Transformed by the Renewing of your Mind**

Then there comes another Greek world "But be transformed." This word means "changed on the inside." It's a beautiful comparison here in the Greek. Outwardly: don't be looking like the world; don't smell like the world; don't talk like the world; and, don't go to where the world thinks you should go, or to what are the fun things to go to. How can that happen? Well, because something on the inside is changed: to be transformed. And how? By the renewing of your mind. Now you're back to the local church, aren't you? There you're back to the pastor-teacher. There you're go back to what you should be able to say: "I came to church at Berean Church tonight. I'm walking out of here. And my mind has been expanded with the knowledge of the mind of God. I know what I should be. I'm walking out this door, and that's the way I'm going to act. I know the call. I know the burden, even while the service has gone out. He has ring a bell in my heart, that's caught my attention. There is something that He wants me to do. There is some way He wants me to change (to act). And I'm going to do it."

"The renewing of your mind, so that you may prove (you may demonstrate) what the will of God is for you." And you won't do the will of God if you have not been transformed on the inside by the Word of God, which is good and acceptable and perfect. The word "perfect" means "mature."

So, that is what the Christian life is all about. And that is what we are called to rise to as believers. And it is all made possible because we have a completed canon of Scripture. You should read the Word of God on your own at home. You should spend time thinking about what you read, and you should act accordingly, because the more frame of reference you have, the greater capacity you have for understanding the Word of God, and saying, Boy, that is for me. God is giving me something that I need at this point in time." And He will do that. That is guidance through the Word of God.

And you won't have to do all of these ridiculous thing. Have you ever been to a charismatic meeting? People stand up, and they give their testimonies. They're not telling you about what the Word of God has proven to be in their experience in some way. They're telling you about this figure that appeared at the foot of their bed. Every now and then, I go to those things, because it's such fun. Some figure that appears like Marley's ghost, from an undigested piece of beef, probably. But they get these messages from God. But when it comes to church-age doctrine, they're the typical dumb do-do. And they don't realize how they've been robbed. You need to appreciate the Bible, and the fact that you have the whole Scripture.

**Mormons**

What if you had been born and raised in a Mormon household? Just think what your situation would be. Just think: you would be so devoted, and you would be so determined to serve God through that Mormon system. I've had the little boys on the bicycles come up to my house, to speak to me, and run the records, and give the presentation of how Joseph Smith is the last prophet of God. If you go to Salt Lake City, you see this great room. It's got all the great prophets: Isaiah; Ezekiel; Jeremiah; and, at the end of it, guess who? There stands Joseph Smith. And those people think it's true. They eat it up. And the only way they would know that it is not true, is if they knew the Word of God. When they know the Word of God, then they know what is truth. They have the standard. They have the canon.

I spoke with that lady in Salt Lake City (our guide). I said that the Bible points out that God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. I said, "But the Mormon Church teaches us that God was a human being who was elevated to the third heaven, and became God, as all of us can be. Isn't that a contradiction?" She turned the little card in that I signed. That's what the little boys came up and talked to me about. And it was so sad to see these guys spending two years of their life, going around promoting the doctrines of Satan. And they were just as genuine and sincere as they can be. They were nice kids, and very moral. But hell will be filled with moral people. If you do not know principles of doctrine pertinent to the church age, then Satan will make a fool of you.

**Meditation**

You have to meditate. The Hebrew word for "meditate" means that "you take it into your mouth, and you chew it over and over," like a cow that chews its cud. You just get the nourishment out of it. And that's what we need – the nourishment of the Word of God.

So, don't let somebody come to you, and say, "Here's something better. It is something superior." Or they may say, "God has given me a new revelation, and a new slant. That's not true. Whatever He has to say to us is recorded in this book. But if you don't know, then it's useless. And if your church doesn't give you a chance to learn it in those services, then you're being robbed. But that is not true of you.

Therefore, I should remind you, before we close, of one more thing. Jesus said: "Your judgment and eternity, and for you as a Christian, at the Judgment Seat of Christ would be less if you had known some truth, and then thumbed your nose at it. The more you know of God's truth, the more you'll be held responsible for it, because you're not in the dark."

So, don't pretend that you can walk, and ignore what you have been taught. The Word of God is alive and active. And the God Who judges will be fair, and He will be rejoicing to honor you with eternal rewards and blessings, or to deny you those to your regret. Nothing is so as what might have been.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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