***The Prodigal Son

Colossians 2:18-19

COL-469***

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This morning, we direct your attention to the mind of Christ as recorded in Colossians 2:18-19: "The Error of Angelic Worship," segment number 26.

**A Prize**

At the moment that a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior from the lake of fire, that believer is given what Colossians 2:18 calls a prize. It is the prize that every Christian gets when he enters the Christian life. It is the prize of a spiritual power system which enables the individual, if he chooses, to live a godly life, and it enables the individual, if he chooses, to store his treasures in heaven for his eternal enjoyment. And I put that right up front: Nobody gets into the Christian life unless you hear the gospel, and you decide to believe it. Nobody gets blessed upon this earth unless you choose to walk in the will of God, and get with it. Nobody is rich in heaven, in spiritual things beyond anything we can describe or understand or comprehend, because you are his stewards: your time; your talents; and, your treasures. You have to decide that you want to take it with you. One of the stupidest things that is found in the human race, and in Christendom, is that people eventually die, and they don't take it with them.

Now, you can't take it with unless you convert it to spiritual capital. And that's what you do with your means. You invest in the opportunities of God's service, and He never forgets your service of love. The Old Testament Saints knew nothing (zilch – nothing) about being able to live a godly life. They knew what they should do, but they had no way of knowing how to do it. They were helpless in the face of the devil. They were helpless in the face of the evil world system. And they were helpless in the temptations of their sin nature.

So, this is really a prize for me and you to be born-again, and God hands you on a golden platter, the ability to be Christ-like, if you decide that you want to be. Most Christians live like the devil. Their focus is the moment. Their focus is things. Their focus is very restricted. And they'll have, as Christians, all eternity to wish they had done better, and had believed what the Bible tells us about what is ahead, and what can be done with the spiritual power system.

A believer, at the point of his salvation, is permanently united to Jesus Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This results in the imputation to that believer of the absolute righteousness of God. And once he has received his absolute righteousness, it can never be taken away from him again, because God has done the whole deal, and it's not dependent upon how we act. It depends entirely on how God has chosen to give this to us, and we are forever secured and saved.

**A Christ-Like Life vs. Worldliness**

Also, the believer is permanently indwelt by the Third Person of the Trinity – God the Holy Spirit. This is for our spiritual power system. This is to enable us to live a Christ-like life. You don't live the Christ-like live by some kind of a self-decision, or by some kind of good-intentioned program. That's what the world tries to do. That's called worldliness – not Christ-likeness. So, the Spirit of God within us permanently enables us to overcome Satan, and to overcome the sin nature within us, and to overcome the world's evil way of life. All of that is the prize.

Most Christians are not able to live the godly lives in God's service. They live, instead, carnal lives. They are defeated by sin. So, they lose their church-age prize of the spiritual power system. Why do they lose it? Bad judgment. You make the decision. You go ahead and muddle your way through life, and you can go ahead and think all the beautiful thoughts you want to think, and you may do all the rationalizations you may want to have for what your lifestyle is. But the bottom line is that God will not be fooled. "This is the deal you made with Me." He will say at the Judgment Seat of Christ: "This is what you chose to do." And, of course, since you are your own priest, you can go either direction. You may decide to capitalize on the prize of the spiritual power system, or not.

Now, we've been looking at these people in the church at Laodicea, in Asia Minor, recorded in Revelation 3:14-22. It's a classic example of a group of Christians who are very rich in material wealth, but they were poor in the spiritual power system. They never capitalize on the prize of the Christian life for storing treasures in heaven. In God's view, the Laodiceans were not really rich. They were spiritually dirt poor. So, he calls them wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. But they had great self-confidence. You couldn't tell them anything. They knew how to tell you to chew the cabbage. They were quite confident. They had been around church long enough. They knew what was what, but they didn't know anything. They were completely out of the loop of divine blessings. And they were so blind that they didn't even realize it.

Consequently, our Lord Jesus says to the Laodiceans, "It makes God sick," so that He is nauseated by these people, and He threatens to vomit them out of His mouth. This is a startling analogy in Scripture for meaning that God's going to remove them from all the blessings of the church-age prize of the spiritual power system. What could have been theirs, both on earth and in heaven, they will lose. They'll go to heaven. They'll be saved. But what the enrichment could have been, they will not have. That's a startling picture, such that God says, "I'm just sick of you – disgustedly sick of you." And He's talking to His own family – children belonging to His family.

Now, for most Christians, unless they've been well-taught in the Word of God, they don't understand that. They don't know how to conduct themselves so that, instead of the Father being disgusted with them, He is saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Come on in here. I want to show you what I've put aside for your eternal enjoyment."

The Lord Jesus Christ cautioned these Laodicean Christians to wake up, and to secure what he called gold – the gold of church-age doctrine for genuine wealth (that is, divine viewpoint), and to get for themselves white garments of experiential sanctification. They have the garment of salvation, but the outer garment of sanctification (their godliness) – they provide that by their works. And then they need an eye salve so they can see spiritual things – the eye salve of the Holy Spirit (temporal fellowship) to discern spiritual realities.

It is interesting that the Lord says that He has a deep affection of an emotional type for the believers in His body. While he looked at the Laodiceans (and they were disgusting), yet the Lord was really saddened. He had great emotional grief over this. And he wanted them to be all they could have been. So, this emotional attachment of our God to his church (to all the believers who are in His body), he reproves them for their carnality. He disciplines them to teach them the right way. And He actually commands them to get hot for the restoration to temporal fellowship, and to change their minds, which is what it means to repent, and to set their minds on human viewpoint, and upon looking upon the things above.

However, it is your will. You don't have to do it. Either you do it, or by default, you just ignore it, and you deliberately refuse. But He is very careful when He tells them: "Get the goal of doctrine; get the eye salve of the Holy Spirit, so that spiritual things as they should be; and, get your white garment of experiential sanctification. That is the way of the Christian life.

**Revelation 3:20**

So, we come to Revelation 3:20. He told them in verse 19: "Those whom I love with an emotional attachment: I reprove; I discipline; I teach you; and, I want you to be zealous – to be hot. And I want you to change your mind about your own stupid lifestyle of being attached to your things, and find yourselves being attached to the Lord Jesus Christ; the Christ-like life; and, to learn what it means to walk by faith – by God's care. A lot of Christians talk about living by faith, but that's because they have a big bank account. Those who do not have so much in life find it much easier to walk the faith way of life in dependence upon God, because they don't know what's over the hill that's coming toward them.

I want to tell you up front that Revelation 3:20 is often misinterpreted, and sometimes deliberately. There's a very famous, public evangelist who has a little booklet that is written about the laws about getting to heaven, and the human problem. And this verse is brought in as a salvation verse. This verse is not a salvation verse. I wish I could get this picture that the artist drew. Every time we're on the subject, I don't know where to look to get this picture, but it's a picture that he drew. And you see Christ standing there. He's knocking on this door. And when you look closely at the picture, there's no door latch. When somebody brought this up to the artist, he said, "This is the entrance to the heart's door of the believer, and the latch is only on the inside. Christ cannot open it if you don't open it to invite Him in." But this is not to invite Him in for salvation. I'll show that to you in a moment.

Please remember: to whom was this written? To the Laodicean Christians – not to Laodicean unbelievers. All of these seven churches were believers. But this is where many Christians in our generation are. They are in the Laodicean stage of the church. And so you have this picture, where Christ is standing at the heart's door. This is a poignant scene. Christ says, "I'd like to come in, My child." But the Christian says, "Beat it. I know what You want. You want to get my money. You want to get my things. You want to get my time. You want to keep me from living my life. I'm not going to open the door." Well, you're going to go to heaven. But do you really want to do that to the Son of God? Oh you wouldn't say it that way. But, in effect, that's what's done.

The importance of this verse is indicated by the very first word: "Behold." In the Greek Bible, this very little word, "idou," is what's called a particle. It's a signal word. It's a word that indicates that an important statement is about to follow. Any time you see "behold," your ears would perk up. The Almighty is about to make a declaration, and I better listen especially carefully when this word precedes the announcement. It, in effect, says, "Wake up. Pay attention."

If you were ever in a naval service, over the P.A. Systems, weather ashore or at sea. You would hear the term, "Now, hear this." And everybody stops, and they listen. That's the signal that something very important is about to be announced. And you need to pay attention. That's exactly what this starts with: "Now hear this." And the Christians who are being addressed to hear this are the ones who are in the condition of reversionism. So, pay attention.

Then the Lord says, "I stand." This is the Greek word "histemai," and that means: "I'm standing there." And as in the picture painted of Christ at the heart's door, you see Jesus standing there outside that door. But the Greek grammar tells us what the English never could. The particular tense that this verb is placed in, called the perfect tense, always tells you about something that happened in the past, and it keeps coming on. So, what you have here is the Lord Jesus Christ, at the point that you went into reversionism (that you went into carnality, when you stepped out of the will of God), He's walking up to your heart's door and saying, "Listen. Just a minute, child. Open up. I want to talk to you." And He keeps doing it; and keeps doing it; and, keeps doing it, from the point that 50 years ago, you made the wrong move, and you haven't corrected the direction since.

So, this tells us that the Lord is not going to go away. While you're on this earth, He's going to keep appealing to you to get your head screwed on straight, if that's possible, and to do the right thing, both by the Word of God in Scripture, and by the leading of the Holy Spirit to you personally.

So, you have that in this tense so that as long as the believer lives, any past action that's out of the will of God, He will continue to deal with. This in a voice that indicates that the Lord Jesus Himself is going to appeal to the Christian to return to temporal fellowship – to fellowship once more with the Father. He is not asking you (He is not standing there, waiting to give you) about a witness for salvation. It's a statement of what Christ is standing by doing. And where is He standing?

Well, He's standing by the "thura." And "thura" means "door." And it means just that – a slab of wood on hinges. It is a door. Here, it has a symbolic meaning, and that is these Laodicean Christians who are deep in reversion and in rebellion against the Word of God and against the will of God. So, He's standing before their hearts door, that was so described in verse 18, where the Lord, speaking to the Laodiceans says, "I advise you to buy for me gold refined by fire, such that you can really become rich (the Word of God); and, white garments such that you may clothe yourself; and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed (the nakedness of your carnality – your experience of sanctification (your day-by-day godliness; and, then the eye salve to anoint your eyes, so that you can see – the eye salve of the Holy Spirit. They didn't have any of these things.

Therefore, they had slammed the door shut in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. And consequently, they were out of temporal fellowship. They couldn't know what God wanted them to do if they wanted to know. They haven't the foggiest notion. Once you're out of fellowship, you're blind as the proverbial bat. You're just another type of unbeliever, in effect. Reversionism hardens a person against Christ. And it hardened these people, and the Lord Jesus Christ is not welcomed into their lives. And they didn't appreciate Him bugging them by knocking on their heart's door.

This is in no way a reference to unbelievers. This is not knocking at the door of unbelievers with the gospel. This is calling upon them to come back to temporal fellowship, and speaking to them as saved people.

As in the picture, that the artist drew from this Scripture, it says, "He stands at the door and He knocks:" "I stand at the door, and I knock." This word is "krouo." And that's exactly what it is. It is making a sound on the door to get attention from other people on the inside. What he is doing is appealing to the Christian to come back to obedience, and to come back to temporal fellowship with Him.

Here's the problem with staying out a fellowship. After a while, you get used to it. After a while, you're way out in left field, and it doesn't bother you anymore. Pretty soon you lose all taste for spiritual things. We look around the auditorium, and say, "Uh-oh, where's so-and-so. I haven't seen that person in weeks." Well, I know. The door has been slammed, possibly, in the face of Jesus Christ. And the knocking is being ignored. And the circle of destruction is now widening for this person. He's now in a tailspin. He's going to corkscrew into the ground in some disaster. Once you're out of fellowship, all of your moves are stupid. Once you're out of fellowship, you're on your own. You have no divine guidance, and you're not on the winning team. Do you want to live like that, and take the consequences into eternity with you?

**The Sin unto Death**

He's appealing with this word, "knock," for the Christian to open up. And it's in the present tense, which means that He keeps doing it. He keeps knocking, and knocking, and knocking. He doesn't give up, and He does it Himself. And what He does is that He raises the pressure. He knocks, and you don't open so that He can tell you: "I want you to straighten this out." He keeps knocking, and keeps knocking. He raises the discipline, and raises the discipline, and raises the discipline. And James says, "At some point, you won't hear the knocking anymore, because you die prematurely." And you go into eternity. It's called "the sin unto death."

So, this business of ignoring the appeals of the Lord Jesus Christ by your rationalization – don't swallow it. Don't rationalize things, and assume that you're some kind of a little pope who can pontificate on what God thinks. No, you can't. That's the picture. The Lord is on the outside. People on the inside have to make a decision now. Once more, we kick in with a personal choice. I'm standing at the door. I'm knocking.

Now, "if." Ah! Here's that wonderful word in the Greek Bible. All of you here at Berean Church know that there are four different meanings for "if." This "if" is what we call a third-class condition. It is the "if" that means: "maybe you will, and maybe you won't." So, what are we dealing with? A choice. Don't blow this off that you were forced to do something. Don't blow this off that it's beyond your control. He is saying, "If, as a result of My knocking." And He's going to tell you the options. And you have the ability to make the choice. So, maybe you will do this, and maybe you won't.

"If anyone hears:" "If a person decides to hear Me." The Greek word is "akouo," meaning "to listen to; to pay attention; and, to obey." If anybody changes his mind and says: "What I've been doing is wrong. My attitude has been wrong. I've been living a lifestyle, such that if you mixed me with a bunch of worldly people out in the world, you could tell the difference between me and the rest of them. I'd been walking out of the will of God, and I haven't realized that I've been out of touch with His divine wisdom and guidance."

So, here again, you choose ("if"): maybe you will, and maybe you won't. If you choose to listen; and, if you choose to pay attention. Then it has another grammatical factor. It's called the mode, and it tells us that there's great potential here for a change. If you do this, the results will be enormous. The results will be fantastic, both in time and eternity. If you decide to return to obedience to Christ, and if you decide to stop shutting the door in His face, and you go back into temporal fellowship, then it has potential for great results in your life. And what is it you're going to do? You stand at the door, and you're going to hear His "phone" (His voice). How do you hear the voice of Jesus Christ?

Well, the Charismatics are always telling us about how God spoke to them. And they mean: "I'm sitting there listening, and I hear His voice." Well, whatever they're hearing, they're not hearing the voice of God. God does not speak to us in direct communication like that anymore. He used to do that. But now we have a completed Scripture. But He does have the Holy Spirit indwelling us, and He does give us intuitive guidance. And if you are in temporal fellowship, boy, you will know that guidance. It will hit you: the cautions of what course you're on, or to back off. The guidance will be there. And that is how the voice is heard now.

**The Mind of Christ**

It is the mind of Christ that we pick up now in Scripture. And the particular appeal here is that, from Scripture, we know how we should get back in fellowship: spirituality; temporal fellowship; and, what we should do when we're under His disapproval and discipline.

So: He says, "If anyone decides to listen to Me, and he opens." The Greek word is "anoigo." A person reaches that latch, which is only on the inside, and he opens the door of his life to Christ. In the Greek language, this is done at a certain point in time – a point in time when you decide that the life you're living is not in the blessings of God, and that the things that you're doing are out of the will of God, and that you've even lost touch with a local body of believers who are there to stabilize you and to guide you. So, you're off making all kinds of decisions about all kinds of relationships in life. And you have no Word of God; no Holy Spirit guiding you; and no fellow-Christian to say: "Do you really want to do this? Do you need to think this over? Have you considered the consequences? Is this the stage of life that you should be doing this?" At some point, you confess, and you welcome what God has said.

This, again, is in that mood of a potential (a subjunctive). Great results will happen when you open the door. Fantastic consequences will be the result. You will open the door to your life. You'll say, "Yes, I'm going to obey." Then what happens? The Greek word is "eiserchomai." This word means "I'll come in." When was the last time you enjoyed having somebody visit your house? When was the last time somebody rang the doorbell, and you opened the door, and your eyes lit up, and your face lit up, with the pleasure of who was standing there, and the first thing you did was open the door wide and said, "Come in, because you were so happy to see that person? If you listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, Who has been knocking at your door, and you open that door to Him, He'll come in. This is not the indwelling that happens at salvation. This is the filling of the Holy Spirit. This is the fellowship of walking with Christ.

So, upon confession and admission and expressing repentance), which signals your change of course, He comes into your life. This is in the future tense. Anytime in the future, when you decide to do it His way, He will come in. The Lord Himself will do this. And the result will be that He'll take charge, and He'll straighten things out. These people that you never see in church; these people who are outer-fringes; and, these people who are stumbling all over their feet, in their agonies of light that they're going through, they're running the show for themselves. All they need to do is open the door, and let Him in, and He'll straighten things out. He will come in and arrange the furniture. He will come in and arrange the relationships of people in the household. He will come in and give you a direction as to how to relate yourself to society. So, when the reversionistic Christian confesses, and thus opens the door, Jesus says, "I'll come in to him."

**I Will Dine**

Then, He says another very precious thing: "I will come in, stepping into the throne of your heart now, and of your life, and I will dine." The word is "deipneo." "Deipneo" here is used symbolically of fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. In the ancient world, the highest point of camaraderie with another person – the highest point of social fellowship, was to sit down and eat a meal together. When somebody like Abraham would see visitors coming up over the hill to see him, the first thing he would do is order the servants: "Prepare a meal. We have visitors, and we're going to sit down, and we're going to have a time of fellowship around the meal." Christ said, "If you do this, I'll come in, and I will have a relationship of spiritual fellowship with you." This is in the future tense. Every time you respond to the Word of God, and to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, He'll be there to join you in the fellowship. And the result will be that you'll have that great experience of sharing the spiritual food of the Word of God together in a camaraderie that's going to kick into action once more, what you have stepped away from foolishly someplace along the line.

**A Meal**

One place in Scripture that points out the significance of a meal is Luke 15:2, which says, "And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, 'This man (Jesus) receives sinners, and eats with them.'" Because Jesus Christ ate with humble people; with sinners; and, with people looking for reality, the Pharisees look down their noses at Him. They their attitude was: "A man of God wouldn't eat with sinners."

So, people look at you, and who you're associated with. And even going out and eating a meal, somebody sees you, and somebody knows you, and they look at who you're with. If they see you sitting there with Saddam Hussein, they're going to think something about you. They associate you with people at the meal. That's the way it goes. And I want to tell you, folks, you never know who's out there looking.

I have a nephew-in-law visiting me. He needed to go out to CarMax to have something done on his car. So, I showed him where it was, and got him set with the checking in, with what he needed to have done. And he was going to have to be there for 45 minutes or so. So, I left. And he told me after I left, a lady came up and said, "I see Dr. Danish brought you over here." Did I know she was looking at me? No. Did I know she was going to look at whom I'm associated with here? No, but she did. Out in this world, people who know you – they're looking at you all the time. It's a regular experience. They look at how you conduct yourself; how you act in a restaurant; how you treat the waitress or the waiter; how you conduct yourself in your business; how you go about through life; how you treat your family; what kind of language you use as a Christian; and, the places you go to.

Some years ago, a group of ladies wanted to bring something nice to a friend. It was Sunday afternoon, and they thought she was kind of down in the dumps. So, they got some nice things together, and went over to visit her. And they couldn't. She was at the movies instead. Well, gee, you can do that on Sunday, but it didn't leave a very good taste in their mouth. People are aware of who you're fellowshipping with. And a meal is a big thing that marks the point of fellowship.

So, the next time somebody comes up to you after church, and wants to know if you'd like to go out to El Chico's or someplace, ask them: "Have they been nice this week?" Check them out a little bit, because someone might see you hanging around with them out there.

In Acts 11:3, the Pharisees are again hitting up on Peter – Peter who was wishy-washy sometimes about being under criticism. When he understood grace, he knew: "I can eat with gentiles." And these people who were criticizing him (other Christians who were Jews) said, "You ate with a gentile?" In Acts 11:3, they were saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and you ate with them."

So, in the Bible, this is a big point of fellowship. That's the whole point here. The association with people at a meal is saying, "I approve of this person. I like this person. I'm here, not on business. I'm here, obviously, in a social relationship. Therefore, I've chosen to be with this person." And that gives a picture of where your values and attitudes lie.

Now, it's nobody's business. You might be out with that person in order to witness to him. It may not be your lifestyle at all to eat out at restaurants, but you have the privacy of the priesthood of the believer. But be aware of the fact that people are there looking at us as believers.

**"Peace and Safety"**

It is spiritual madness to be out of touch with God's divine viewpoint in doctrine, and of the future condition of mankind. We are seeing what is happening in American society, and we're going to see more of this in the world, where people are trying to do a good thing of bringing about peace. Do they understand? Are they in touch? Are they in fellowship with what God thinks? 1 Thessalonians 5:3 points this out to us: "While they are saying 'peace and safety,' then destruction will come upon them suddenly, like birth pangs upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." People are going to hope to bring peace to the world. And you can just bet your bippie that they're going to. The devil is aware of the fact that things are closing in on him. We are in the intensified stage of the angelic conflict, and Satan is bound and determined to do as much injury to Christians, and to believers, and to Christianity as he can. And if we are not careful, we can foolishly assume that something is well when it is not, and not be on our guard.

Notice Matthew 24:22: "Unless those days (the seven-year tribulation period) had been cut short, no life would have been saved. But for the sake of the elect (the born-again people), those days shall be cut short." Now, the church is not there in the tribulation, but people have been saved. Both Jews and gentiles *are* in there. And the things that are going to happen are going to be so terrible in the tribulation, especially at the end, that death will be running rampant. And unless God shortens that seven-year period somewhat, there will be no human being left alive to go into the millennium.

So, is it important to know the Word of God to guide your life? Just think if you are one of these people who thinks that the world is getting better and better. This fellowship with the Father in the Word of God is the alternative to being vomited out of His mouth in disgust and in discipline. So, which do you want? Do you want to be vomited out in disciplined, or do you want to open that door to fellowship, and pay a little attention to the service that He has for you? There is nothing wrong with doing all those other things you do, and all the other things you hustle and do in life. But hustle a little bit for the Lord. At least pass out a few evangelism brochures. At least consider where you can help within the circle of the means that you have for helping.

So, the spiritual meal here is: "If you hear My voice, you open the door, and I'll come into you. And I'll dine with him, and he with Me" – a meal (the Word of God) between Christ and the individual believer. This is the basis for social times. I don't find it much fun to go out to meals with unbelievers. And every now and then, I'm stuck in that position. But even if it's people I don't know, but they're Christians in some social settings, it's a lot of fun. It's a whole lot more pleasant because of the camaraderie in the Lord that is there.

So, a meal that God has prepared for us is waiting: "He with Me." Jesus Christ and the Christian in temporal fellowship, experience maximum fellowship with the Lord in the Christ-like life.

"Behold, I stand at the door," Jesus says, "and I knock. If" – maybe you will, and maybe you won't, but: "If you do hear My voice, and open the door, I'll come in to him. I will dine with him. I will share a great spiritual fellowship with him. I will bless him like a Niagara Falls pouring out upon him in every respect of his need. I will dine with him, and he will dine with Me."

You have something of spiritual value that the Lord Jesus Christ would like to hear about. That's what you're going to do tonight at the Lord's Supper service – the spiritual things that have been significant in your life that He wants to hear you say. That's the food you're going to bring. And what He has brought to you, and done for you, is the food that He has brought to you.

Now, the consequences of opening that door are enormous beyond what we can imagine. And the next verse tries to give us a bit of a picture on that. Please join us next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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