***Frustrating the Grace of God, No. 9

Number your Days - CSP009***

We are studying frustrating the grace of God, segment number nine. The present era of history in which we live in the plan of God for the ages in human history is known as the church age. It has nothing to do with the age of Israel (the Jewish age). That has passed, and that is something separate. It will have an end in the future. But right now, the Jewish program is held in abeyance. It is on hold. God is raising up a brand new group of saints called Christians.

The way of life for the Christian of the church dispensation is governed by a whole new principle of dealing with God, and that is the grace of God. Under the Old Testament, the people were told to be good. They tried to be good, but they couldn't be good. God said, "If you'll be good, I'll bless you." They were always missing out on the blessings of God, because humanly it was not possible to be good, because that meant obeying the principles of the doctrines of Scripture. They couldn't do it. In the New Testament, God says again, "Be good, because I have made it possible for you to be good. I will be good for you through God the Holy Spirit. That is a hard concept for most Christians to grasp, because it is part of what the Bible calls "the deep things of the Spirit of God." Grace is the unmerited favor of God, through which He gives to the believing sinner an eternally secure salvation as a gift, based entirely and only on faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior.

If you are here today, and the Lord Jesus Christ is your personal Savior that you have accepted – that He died in your place on the cross, and paid for your sin, and that's all you're doing, then you're saved. If you're not having water baptism as part of your salvation; you're not taking the Lord's Supper as part of your salvation; and, you're not doing anything else as part of your salvation, then you're going to heaven. If you add anything to that, you are not. If you're trusting anything else, other than the gift of God or salvation, you don't have it. Furthermore, the unmerited favor of God enables the saved sinner of the church age to live a godly life. The Jew tried, but he didn't have the means to do it. He was just dependent upon himself, and the old sin nature brought him down every time.

The favor of the grace of God enables us to live a godly life in victory over the sin nature's lust patterns; in victory over the sin of the society in which we live; and, in victory over the devil himself. The church age has a spiritual power system that the grace of God has provided, which is God the Holy Spirit permanently indwelling every believer, as well as the complete canon of Scripture – the complete revelation of doctrine which is providing for us the mind of God to guide us. That's why studying the Bible is important. That's why memorizing it is important. When you memorize Scripture, you're taking the mind of God and making it your mind. That's why there's so much foolishness among religious groups, and there's so much opportunity for Satan to make fools of people.

First of all, the devil does everything he can to keep you from trusting in Christ as Savior. He'll give you all kinds of substitutes. If you fall for any of them, he's got you. But once you've been saved, he's lost you. Then he has one other purpose in mind, and that is to keep you from living the Christian life under the power system of grace. He wants to frustrate the potentials of the grace of God in your life. Therefore, he moves in and tries to trap you with emotions. He tries to bring you into the emotional setup of the world system.

Years ago, there was a man here in our church. He knew about Scripture, and we got into a series of studies very much like we're doing now. The people were cautioned that our life is what God thinks – not what we think with our emotions, which are governed by the sin nature within us. He was very emotionally oriented. He finally came to the place where he said, "I just feel my emotions are squelched." Well, what was being squelched in him was his old sin nature emotions. But those of us who are operating under the guidance of the Spirit of God and the principles of doctrine, we have lots of emotions. We are very emotionally oriented. It's a joy that is genuine. It's one of the facets of the spiritual maturity structure of the soul. It's called inner happiness. You can't produce that, and the world can't produce it. Only the Spirit of God can give it to you.

So this is what we're talking about. The grace of God is a way of life of the Christian once he is saved. But for him to be able to rise to that is so hard. Isn't it amazing how many people, even in the circle of Berean Church, never show up at the Sunday morning church service where the Word of God is propagated, probably better than anywhere else (I have no hesitancy in saying) in this whole town? People who are here are at a service that carries them yards and yards on the scoreboard ahead of anybody else in this town. I have no doubt about it. That is because of the simple fact that we are propagating and explaining Scripture.

Who are the people who are not here? Those who have learned a great deal of Scripture, and think they've got it all, and that they don't have to be here. What happens is, yes, they know Scripture, but in their lives, they don't have the current application. That's what you get in a church service. Consequently, they're wondering why they can't find what the Scripture says when God says, "I'll give you the desires of your heart." That's what He said to the psalmist. They never get the desires of their heart, and they're wondering, "What is the matter? I'm a Christian. I'm all for the Bible." Their problem is that they are out of sync with the grace way of life. They're not current. You cannot be current if you do not attend a church service such as is conducted here at Berean Church.

God the Father has provided this grace power system for the church-age believer to enable him to live his life under the maximum blessings of God. I remind you that the opening verses of Isaiah 11 tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ putting this power system together, including the various seven basic elements of it. Then He field-tested it in His life here on this earth. He did not live under the power of His deity. He lived as a human being – a person who was operating under the power of the Spirit of God and the knowledge of doctrine. That's all. That's what it was all about. That was constantly being refreshed in His mind as a human being by the instruction that He received from His parents, and that He received in the synagogue school.

God the Father has provided a system of spiritual power that is beyond anything that any previous age of believers ever could even dream of. This grace power enables a believer to serve God with divine good works, which are produced through him by the indwelling Holy Spirit. This kind of service is a fulfillment of your divine life's mission, and it earns the believer great rewards in eternity at the Judgment Seat of Christ for him to enjoy for all eternity.

I have, in almost 50 years of ministry, constantly seen human beings who had great potential for God and who had great natural abilities which God would use under a spiritual context, and they blew it because they were not into the fellowship of the local church with the church service, and the learning of the Word of God. Therefore, their mission never became clear to them, and therefore, they never had the capacity to win. Every Christian, at the point of his salvation, is called as a believer into full-time Christian service. Nobody here is laity. This pulpit is not different from anybody else. We do not have clergy up here in this pulpit. We only have laity. We have the common ground of people saved by the grace of God.

What does that mean? In Acts 1:8, Jesus said, "I'm leaving now, and you're going to be my witnesses to the grace of God; to the gospel of grace salvation; and, to the grace way of life. I'm going to send you the Holy Spirit to be the Teacher who will enable you to live this life yourself, and to tell other people about it. That's what life is all about.

If you think you have some other mission in life, you just go ahead and stumble through and use up your life, and I guarantee you that you're going to be one of the people whom the Lord will be wiping away tears from your eyes at the Judgment Seat of Christ. You will look back upon yourself and realize what a terrifically gifted person you were, and what a terrifically honored person you were, because you were on the inside with the understanding of the grace way of life; you were on the inside of understanding that the Bible is the Word of God; and, you were on the inside to understanding that there is a system of life here that is true only from Pentecost to the rapture. And you could have been part of it.

However, the great hazard of the Christian life is that the believer of this age will so often choose the life of carnality, and that puts him outside of the plan of God. Such a believer frustrates the working of the grace of God in his life. The great plans that God has are never fulfilled. Boy, that's going to be the kicker. That's going to be the kick in the head in heaven at the Judgment Seat of Christ: "Sam, here it is. This is what I wanted to do. You were going to be this, and you were going to be this, and you were going to be this in life. You were going to be a voice in society. You were going to be an influence. This is what I had, but you frustrated My grace. You kept Me from being able to carry through for you." This kind of a carnal believer wastes his life span, and thus he loses the life potential for blessings here in time, and storing treasures forever in heaven.

**The Great Commission**

So then, we Christians have a divine mission, and some of us never catch on. Let's take another shot at it here. We commonly refer to Matthew 28:19-20 as the great commission. Here is the grace way of life. Here's where we frustrate that grace in our lives. I'll tell you right up front that Matthew 28:19-20 is true for every Christian. This is your life mission. This is why you were conceived, and this is why you were born. Jesus says: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." By the divine authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, each Christian is born into the world as a witness of Almighty God in the church age to the grace salvation, and to the doctrines of grace wisdom for living in the world.

**Jack Smith**

The Christian is to go about his life, evangelizing the lost, and guiding the believers to become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ as His servants. "Go, therefore, and make disciples (followers) – people who follow the principles of living by the church-age grace doctrines. The converts of the Christian will be the result of however you give the gospel, whether through the brochure, or through an opening to speak the Word. Some people have an exceptional ability. Our brother, former Marine and Kentucky state prison guard Jack Smith, has a great ability to speak to people one-on-one with the gospel. One of his spiritual gifts is discernment. He calls me, and he forgets that I'm on Central Standard Time, and he's on Eastern Standard Time. And he's jumping and jiving pretty early in the morning with his table in the kitchen all spread with his books and his study materials, and his Folgers coffee cup. He's off and running. He has to call me periodically to let me know how things are going.

A couple of days ago, he called about a girl in the grocery store line, and he said, "The lord just laid it on my heart that that girl checking out right there is it." So when he got up to the checkout, he asked her how things were going in life. She replied that they were not very good. He said, "Well, what's the problem? Maybe what you need is a little help from God."

She said, "Well, I could use that."

He said, "Maybe you'd like to know about what that is in the Word of God."

She said, "I sure would."

He said, "I'll tell you what. I'll make a cassette tape. Can you play that?"

She said, "Yeah."

He said, "I'll bring it back to you, and we'll let you listen to it, and we'll talk about it." Bingo. He's got her set up. He's ready to follow through. That's his technique. That's the way he lives. For some of us, handing the brochure is the easiest and most convenient way. All the information that people need to follow through, even to send for tapes is all in that brochure now. Just do it.

We are to go and therefore make followers of all nations. But before you can be followers, you have to be in the family of God. These converts are then to publicly profess their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior by being brought into the local church, where they're introduced to the profession publicly of water baptism in the name of the Trinity, thereby symbolizing their union with Christ in His death and His resurrection.

That is not too big a thing for us in this country. But if you were in a Muslim country, that is a dangerous thing to do – water baptism by immersion, proclaiming that you're a Christ follower (you're His disciple). After that, as Christians move through life in the world, they are also to be taught the doctrines of Scripture relative to the church age.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them (in their public identification) in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." That's exactly what we do in water baptism. We quote this passage, "I baptize you now in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

Then verse 20 says, "Teaching." What this is telling us in the Greek language is that as you go, through the society in verse 19, what you do to them, having brought them the gospel, is you teach them. They are to be taught the doctrines of the church age. "You teach them to observe all things that I commanded you." That is to open the doors of instruction, whether to get them in here, sitting in Berean Church services, or getting them on tapes. A new convert may not be in a situation to be able to come here to Berean Church. A new convert has to start from scratch. That's why what you do with somebody new is that you march them up to the tape room, and you get the basic doctrine series. That was designed to take you from zilch (babyhood) through basic doctrinal concepts to make you a mature Christian.

It's so simple. Just say, "Here, study this, and check with me if you have any questions." The Lord Jesus Christ promises to be with the Christian in fulfilling this divinely ordained service to the end of the church age at the rapture: "And lo, I'll be with you always, even to the end of the age." The end of what age? The end of the church age. The Lord Jesus Christ, who indwells us, says, "I'll be right out there. While you're acting as My missionary, I'll be right out there, and I will fulfill My will with you. It may be, as happens sometimes, that some of you will end up as martyrs in the process of fulfilling your mission in life. But even if that happens, it will be because I am there, and you are a winner.

Some people do not accept God's offer of free grace salvation by trusting in Christ. Those people are going to be lost forever in the lake of fire. There will be no second chance for them after death. So this is a very serious business that we're about. I cannot emphasize enough to you that this is not some mission for the clergy. This is a mission for the laity of God. There is no such thing as clergy and laity in the Word of God. That's a man-made division. We're all in the same boat of responsibility.

**The Cost of Discipleship**

Now, let's go over to Matthew 16:24-27. This also is true of every Christian. Don't assume that, even in the circle of Berean Church, there's nobody who would take issue with the fact that Matthew 28:19-20 apply to every believer personally. We have in our circle, near and far, people who say, "Wait a minute. I already have a life. If I do what you're talking about, I won't have the life I have now. I have a life out in society. But if I start doing this, that's a whole different life." You bet it is. It's a life for which you were born, and the one for which you will regret in eternity that you did not pursue. Everything in this life is going to be burned up and gone.

Notice the cost of discipleship in Matthew 16:24-27. I have a life yet. It's going to cost me something. Verse 24: "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him denying himself and take up his cross and follow Me." The Christian is to set aside his own ambitions and pursuits in life for the purpose that God has for him. That's it. "If you want to come after Me, and you want to be My disciple (which will then make your life significant, in time and in eternity) then take up your cross." That doesn't mean to suffer for Jesus. You may do that. The cross refers to the mission. The cross of Jesus Christ was a mission to die to pay for the sins of the world. The Christian cross is your mission of service to the Father, which He ordained for you before you ever born. For Jesus, it was to die for the sins of mankind. For you, it will be something specific, and it will be compatible with the natural abilities God gives you with the spiritual gifts you are given for service at the point of salvation.

But you can say, "No, I'm going to keep my life. I'm not going to give it away. I'm going to save my life for myself. I'm not going to go around thinking about what I can do in God's service first."

Verse 25: "Whoever wishes to save his life for himself shall lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it." We are to say, "OK, Father, my life is Your life. I will serve you. I will fulfill my call. What is it?" The Christian who saves his life span for his own plans and ambitions will forfeit the potential of earning eternal rewards in heaven. The Christian is to live to fulfill God's preordained works, which is what Ephesians 2:10 says we have: "We are called for the works which He has ordained beforehand for us to perform." The Christian who does that will save the value of his life for eternal rewards and treasures in heaven. A Christian can have his life potential for rewards in heaven, or he can waste his life in the pursuits of grasping earthly rewards. Which do you want? Grasping earthly rewards, or grasping eternal rewards? It will be one or the other. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, every Christian will be rewarded for his service to God, or he will suffer great loss of rewards for his service to himself. The Bible is explicitly clear on that (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Peter says, in his book, "I tell you these things by way of refreshing your pure minds to remember what you know." That's one of the reasons you keep coming back to be taught the Word of God on Sunday services – because you tend to forget. Sometimes simple verses are mentioned, and people will come up and say, "Where was that verse?" I'll read these little summary verses before the service. And regarding just that little gem, separate from everything else, people will run up and say, "Where is that?" And what has happened? Well, all of a sudden, in a certain context, some familiar verse rings a big bell in the life of that believer.

2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." Boy, one man out of this congregation got mad at me for reminding him (and all of you) that some of you are going to get rewarded in heaven, and some of you are not. It really took me aback why anybody would be indignant at me (one of the last of the all-time nice guys) for reading Scripture to people and telling people, "Here's what it says." Are you going to get mad at me for verse 10? "We must all appear (we Christians) before the Judgment Seat of Christ (which comes after the rapture, when we're all in heaven), that each one may be rewarded (recompensed) or not rewarded for his deeds in the body.

This has nothing do with salvation. This is for what you are doing as a Christian according to what you have done, whether good (divine good) or whether bad (human good). You've gone through your life in society and you've pumped out human good out of your old sin nature, and you're as pleased as punch with yourself. You thought you were a real compassionate person in society. God says, "It's evil. It came from the good side of your old sin nature, and anything that comes from the sin nature is tainted. So what you are being proud of, in your human good, I condemn." But there is a divine good that Christian performs, and that's what his life is all about.

Then Colossians 3:1-2 have this to say: "If then you have been raised up with Christ (and you have been – all of you believers have been raised from the dead in Christ), keep seeking the things above." Don't be groveling around to the things of this life on this earth, and make those the main thing in your life. Everything associated with this world is to be the execution of God's purpose for the life in the next world. "Keep seeking to things above," where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. He is seated there, not on His throne, because His throne is on the earth here. It's David's throne, and He'll be seated on that throne in the millennium. Right now He shares the Father's throne. What is he doing? He's waiting for you to let the grace of God be fulfilled in your life to the degree that God has planned it. He's trying to watch you and walk you through the grace of God blossoming out in your life, instead of your frustrating it by your preoccupation with things below.

Verse 2: "To set your mind (your focus) on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." Now either that's true, or this is an enormous lie. Either this is what you are going to do, and you will set your mind on the things above, and the grace of God will be magnificently fulfilled in your life; or, you will set your mind on the things below, and you will frustrate what the grace of God could do in your life.

It's not possible for me to describe for you and to give you an idea to convey to you what that means. Only in the presence of Christ at the Judgment Seat will you realize what it means to have your mind set on the things above rather than the things on earth. This doesn't mean that you don't have any fun in life. In fact, it is the Christian who has the most satisfaction in life. It is the Christian whose mind is set on the things of God – His purpose for that believer in life. That is the Christian who has more satisfaction and fun than anyone else. And you don't have forever. This is the shock that people are getting: "Hey, I can get sick. Hey, I can be cut right down. I can be threatened with life itself." That's what the doctor does when you go to him when you're ill. The first thing the doctor does, if you don't understand what he's doing, he's checking everything out to be sure that one thing is secure – your life.

I remember one time when I had visited the doctor. I can't even remember what it was, but he put me in the hospital overnight while he checked some things out, and he said, "Well, here it is now. Once I was satisfied that your life was not in danger." And I looked at him, he said, "Not that I ever thought it was." But that's the first thing he goes for – to see that your life is not in danger. Then he explains what the problem is, and what he's going through to secure the life, and what needs to be done to get well.

Well, the Christian, first of all, should be focused on the fact that his life potential is not in danger, and that he's not going to waste his life and find himself grasping for what is nothing here on this earth. One of these times, you are going to become ill. One of these times, the body is going to step up to the line. I like to think of God looking at us in the way that some places had signs before the year 2000, and they were clicking off the time between the current time and the year 2000. The lights were flashing constantly, running down the seconds. In each of us, there's a similar sign across our chest. God looks down, and He says, "Well, boy, we've clicked off so much time, and we've got that much time left." That's the way it is.

But sometimes, as Solomon said, "Why would you have your life span shortened? Why would you cut short what God allotted for you? As long as you have any hope of being able to use your life to fulfill God's desire for blessing upon you in His service, you're going to stay alive. Once you cross that line where it is beyond your return, I guarantee you that you're going to check out of this life. You will breathe your last. And I don't care how old you are, you'll be off into heaven. So you can forfeit both your life and your life potential for your rewards in heaven for a life that is extremely joyful, satisfying, and fulfilled here.

Don't tell me that there's some fulfillment in the life that goes by year after year, earning big money; buying things; building more things around you; adding more things around you; and, carrying on with all the accoutrements of life that you can grasp and think that you have something significant in life. Yet Christians, especially if they go to an elitist church where there are elite people so that they feel they're rubbing shoulders with the people who also are oriented to the things of this world, then they feel comfort that that's all they are. I'm telling you that the people that count with God are those who are pointing the lost to heaven, and pointing out Christian doctrine. Who can do that? Only those of us who know that that's where it's at.

So at the Judgment Seat of Christ, each of us will either be rewarded, or we'll experience a great loss because of how we lived our lives. All the days of our lifespan are allotted to carry out our mission. He gave you enough to do the mission, and no more. And that time is going to be used up, and sooner or later, punch out time will come, and it'll all be over.

Job thought about this. When he had that terrible illness and all those boils over him, he didn't know whether he was going to make it. He didn't understand how a man that was as serious for God and as devoted to God as he had been should be suffering this way. But he understood the transiency of life. When you're feeling good, if you're one of these characters who takes vitamins; exercises; and, eats the nutrition food, you think you're going to live forever because you have vitality; you have energy; and, you have the zip and the go. Job was down in Job 14:1-6. Listen to this man: "Man who was born of woman is short-lived and full of turmoil. Like a flower, he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain." That's it. I don't care how long you live. It's nothing in terms of eternity.

**Number your Days**

"You also open your eyes on him, and bring him into judgment with Yourself. Who can make the clean out of the unclean?" No one. "Since his days are determined; the number of his months is with You; and, his limits You have set so that he cannot pass. Turn Your gaze from him that he may rest until he fulfills his day like a hired man." What a poignant statement! "Fulfill his days like a hired man."

Psalm 39:4-5: "Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the extent of my days?" Wouldn't you like to be able to look at your palm there, if there was a computer there clicking off your days to see how many you had left? No, I don't think we'd want to do that. "Lord, make me to know my end." That is to remind me that I do have an end. "What is the extent of my days?" Let me know how transient I am. "Behold, you have made my days as handbreaths, and my lifetime is nothing in Your sight. Surely every man at his best is a mere breath." Aren't you glad you're here to be reminded that in the turmoil and the hustle and bustle of all you're trying to do in life, you don't have much time in which to do it? So what are you going to choose: the things below; or, the things above that you can really take into eternity with you? You can walk through society as a man or a woman who makes an impact. People will look to you; they will listen to you; and, they when the time of crises come, you're the one that they will want to talk to.

Psalm 90:12: Again, the Spirit of God speaks through this psalm: "So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom." Our days are numbered. Why do we wait? Someone this morning thanked me for coming by to visit a member of the family. They said, "This person is now very bad. I'm so glad you came a few days ago, in the last week or so, and reiterated the gospel with him to orient him to the things that he knew. We were all so pleased that he talked with you more than he's been talking to anybody. You got his attention." He said, "Now, you couldn't talk to him. His mind is almost gone, and death is near. His days are numbered." If you play around with the gospel, you will come to the point where the Spirit of God will no longer try to intercede. When your mind goes, you're not going to be a believe anything.

**Spiritual Gifts**

The same is true for your service. The time will come when you have a body that can do it, and the time will come when you have a body that cannot serve. Then it will be downhill. Are you going to be happy to enter the presence of Christ on that basis? "Teach us the number of our days." All your natural abilities are allotted to you at birth to enable you to carry out your assigned mission. All of your natural abilities belong to Him. They don't belong to you. They belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. They were given to you. All of us know that – what our abilities are. We can spend quite a bit of time for people to talk about finding out things about yourself. You could tell us, and we could confirm: "Yes, you have a knack for this."

One lady told me one time, "It's too bad, Dr. Danish, that you were called to be a pastor. You have a knack for humor. You would have made a good clown." Well, some people think I am that clown. I know what she means. It's true. Just without my having to think, I give a humorous turn of a phrase that someone uses. Mr. Havens, at band practice yesterday said, "Dr. Danish, I'm going to take a break." I said, "Where do you want it?" Everybody thought that was funny, and I'm sorry we didn't give it to him. God is going to use all of your natural abilities under the spiritual gift of ministry. Your natural abilities are not spiritual gifts. But whatever it is: administration; singing; teaching; or, whatever it is, the gift of ministry takes that and it uses it in God's work.

**Your Body**

Romans 12:1 says, "I urge you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies." That's what it takes to serve God. It takes your body, your brain, and the whole bit. "A living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." Do you want to worship God? There are a lot of these clowns who are worshiping with ritual in churches. You worship God by saying, "Here's my body, now what do you want to do with it?" When was the last time you told Him that? But how many times have you said, "Here's my body, get out of the way? I've got something to do. I'm off and running." The place that body needs to be, Sunday night and Sunday mornings, is in the instruction of the Word of God. Don't sell yourself short. I'm telling you, you're going to be sorry for that for all eternity.

All of your spiritual gifts, however, are received at the point of salvation. They are given to you for your particular mission to God. As your natural abilities belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, so do your spiritual gifts. They are not yours. Please notice 1 Corinthians 12:4-7: "Now there are varieties of gifts (spiritual gifts) but the same spirit (one Holy Spirit) gives those gifts. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons." So you've got God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in these three verses, dealing with your spiritual gifts. "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." God gives you a spiritual gift with which you are able to serve Him.

Take a look at Ephesians 3:14-17: "For this reason, I bow my knee before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses all knowledge, that you may be lifted up to the fullness of God." This is what the Christian is to rise to in his service for the Lord.

Then there is Colossians 1:9-14: "For this reason, also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you. I ask that you may be filled with the full knowledge of His will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding, that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Boy, what a life that is. "Strengthened with all power." That's physical and body power. "According to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience, joyously giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

All of our spiritual gifts and abilities and powers are delivered to us for this kind of a mission. All of your physical vitality each day comes from God the Father, and your physical vitality belongs to Him. Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." This is physical capacity. "I can do all things."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own, for you have been bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body." You are not your own. Your body is not your own. It is to be used in His service. If you do not do that, then you frustrate what the grace of God is trying to do with you. How about your money? All of your money comes from God, and it belongs to Him for His use, after your livelihood, for His work. Boy, am I glad there are some people who aren't going to hear this? They don't like to hear this kind of talk.

1 Corinthians 4:2: "In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy." Each of us is a steward of God's money. It's not your money. It's yours for your livelihood. It is provided to you for the service of God. This is one of the places within the family where the man has to be the leader, and, say, "This is what this family does with its money, because we are His stewards."

**Money**

Philippians 4:15-19: "And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed for Macedonia, no church shared with me in the manner of giving and receiving, but you alone." Paul says, "Philippians, I want you to know that I'm out there in the field as a missionary, and nobody is sending me any money. In all the Roman Empire, nobody was sending me money here. But you did. Congregation of Philippi, you were pouring the money into me because you were real good true stewards. For even in Thessalonica, you sent a gift more than once to my needs. (After I had left Philippi, I was in Thessalonica, and you were sending money after me there.) Not that I seek the gift itself." Paul says, "I'm glad for the money, but I don't want you to misunderstand me that I'm all excited because you gave me funds. But I seek for the profit which increases to your account. What makes me happy is that this is going to come to your great reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. But I have received everything in full and have an abundance. I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent (the pastor-teacher from Philippi), a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God."

When you put money in that offering box, folks, it determines the size of your spiritual sacrifice. By how much you give? No. Remember the widow who gave two little copper coins? And Jesus said, "She gave more than all those rich Pharisees," and they were pouring money into the box. What's important is how much you have kept for yourself; how much you have left over; and, how much you're holding back, as the steward of God, from letting Him use His money. "And My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." I'm sure glad He put that in there. You'd be surprised how many times I've had people tell me, "Well, I've got to take care of myself. I've got to put things aside. I grew up in the Depression, and we never had anything. I never want to be like that again." Hey, "My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." What makes you think you could do a better job of providing for yourself than that?

Verse 20: "Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen." All your money comes from God, folks. It all belongs to Him. So let us act accordingly. That's what it means to live under the grace of God.

There are a couple of very sobering points that we need to touch on, but our time is up, and we will pick that up next time. We still haven't gotten to the most horrible factor, which we will in the next session – the problem of bitterness. We will talk about Christian bitterness, and how much of that circles around among us, and how much devastation comes when that happens.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1999

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