***The Defense against False Teachers, No. 1 - Jude 17

JD12-01***

We pick up the study of the book of Jude with Jude 17. We are going to look for a few sessions at the subject of the defense against false teachers. We saw last time, in Jude 16, five hallmarks of an apostate:

**5 Hallmarks of an Apostate**

1. We found first of all that they were murmurers. They were malcontents who grumbled constantly. These are people whom we may describe as being in a slow burn.
2. Secondly they are complainers. They are discontents who complain about their lot in one way or another. Many of the things about which they complain are imagined grievances.
3. Third, we were told that they walk after their own lusts. That is, they pursue the lust patterns of their old sin nature. This is the motivation of their lives.
4. Number four, we found that the apostate speaks pompously. He is a smooth talker, seeking to dignify his deception and his errors with sincere convictions that he projects to people who will listen to him and who will pay attention. The apostate has a way of saying things that makes it sound so right.
5. And fifth, he holds persons in admiration for gain. So he's willing to flatter in order to secure the support he wants. He is willing to appeal to the old sin nature. A great deal of the Lord's work is conducted on the basis of appealing to the old sin nature within people in order to get them to do what we want them to do.

So apostasy as, Jude presents it, is obviously very insidious and a formidable foe. The question is, "Can it even be stopped?" Is it possible for you and me as believers even to live in an age of apostasy and cope with it? The answer that Jude gives is a resounding, "Yes." We must understand the voice of apostasy, and above all, we have come to the point where we are smart enough to recognize that the old sin nature always puts on a front. It's easy to deal with a character whose old sin nature is strong on the lascivious side. He's running around and we can see what kind of a character he is, so it's easy to spot him. But that Christian who operates on the other side, where he's more of the ascetic and where he projects a good image, that Christian is the one that's tough to deal with.

I hope you are smart enough to know that there are no great Christians. There is only great grace. I hope you are smart enough to know that nobody plays it straight with you. Everybody puts on a front when he comes to be an apostate. When it comes to being a resister of the Word, he's always putting on a good image front. This is what causes you (when you forget that) to say, "Wow, I'm shocked over so and so. I'm really surprised. I expected something better." When you get savvy, you know that there is a lot you don't know. There is a lot that you don't understand relative to the image that was projected. If you could look behind the scene, then you would say, "Oh yeah, I see the progression." You would even see the steps, and you'd say, "That's fantastic. It is really fantastic. The steps began here. They took this step and this step. It was inevitable that the outcome should be this."

That's what Jude is trying to say. He is trying to say that if you proceed along these lines and if you bear these hallmarks, you will come out to a certain place of separation from the place of God's blessing for you. If you associate yourself with people who bear these hallmarks and these characteristics, and you permit them to influence, they will influence you away from God's blessing for you. In Jude 17, he says, "But, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." He speaks, first of all, about the apostles' words, and he introduces it with this word "but." This in the Greek is the word "de," and it is a word to indicate a contrast. It is interpreting here the difference between the apostates and that which may be true of us as believers.

And he calls us "beloved." The word beloved in the Greek is "agapetos." You can see that "agapetos" comes from Greek word for love, "agape." It refers to the Lord Jesus Christ who is called the beloved in Ephesians 1:6. And because we as Christians are joined to Him through the baptism of God the Holy Spirit, we are in the beloved. So it is fitting that we should be addressed by Jude as the beloved. He is talking about people who bear a permanent relationship to Jesus Christ in being placed in Him. Because we have a permanent relationship, everything that Christ is, is what God sees we are. All of the merits and protections of the Lord Jesus are attributed to us. So he calls us "the beloved."

Because this relationship of being in Christ (in the beloved) is an eternal relationship, God the Father has provided us with a means to defend ourselves in our experience against the apostasy. Apostasy is never going to touch your position in the beloved. That's faith. That's secure. Even God Himself couldn't change that relationship that you now bear to the Lord Jesus Christ because of your accepting of Him as your Savior in behalf of your sins. However, in our experience (in our daily walk), that is another ballgame, and there we can experience the disasters of apostasy. Because we have a permanent position, God our Father says, "I want to provide you with a means to make your walk equal your position."

So he says, "But (in contrast to the apostates) you who are the beloved (you have a permanent relationship to Christ), remember the words." There is the first keyword. In defense against apostasy, the first word is "remember." Remember what? This is to remember the principles of the Word of God that we refer to as Bible doctrine. To recall the spoken words of the apostles is to recall what is now the written record of the Bible as we have it today. The words of the apostles are now recorded for us in Scripture.

**The Word**

So 1 Corinthians 2:13 says, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches." This is comparing earthly things with spiritual. The Apostle Paul declares that the words that he and the other apostles spoke were words that God the Holy Spirit gave. In 2 Peter 1:21, the apostle says, "For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The first defense against apostasy is to recall the words of the apostles which are the words of Bible doctrine. "The words" that we are asked to remember here is a distinct word. In the Greek, it is the word "hrema." The word "hrema" refers to what is spoken or to what is uttered. It refers to what somebody has explained to you. It is in the plural, and in the plural, it particularly refers to a discourse. So this has reference to the instruction in Bible doctrine that you receive in various ways, primarily through the assembling of a local church, and in the expression of the teaching ministry of the pastor-teacher.

There is another word for the word "word," and that's "logos." This is not the word which is used here. The word "logos" refers to an expression of a viewpoint, and "logos" here applies to the word which is recorded in the Scripture. In other words, what you have in the Bible is "logos," but when you sit and are instructed in the Word of God, and you hear the explanation of the Word, then you have "hrema." This is the word that Jude uses. He says to remember the "hrema,"--the utterances or the explanations of Bible doctrine, or the teaching sessions that you have experienced. That is the thing that is important for you to remember. Until the New Testament was written, the oral teachings of the apostles carried the same authority as the oral teachings of the Old Testament prophets. Until the canon of the New Testament Scripture was completed, it was the oral teaching of the apostles that was the standard. Today, words of the apostles are now recorded as "logos" in the Bible. Today we learn these recorded words as "hrema," or as the utterances or the explanation of the pastor-teacher gift.

**Colossians 1:9-10**

There is a parallel passage that gives us the background for what we're going to be looking at here in this personal defense against apostasy. It is in Colossians 1:9. The apostle Paul is writing a letter to the Colossian church. He has received a report concerning this church from the pastor-teacher, Epaphras, who reports to Paul (among other things) that they are having a real problem with one of the original heresies in the church, the heresy of Gnosticism. Gnosticism used to pride itself on the fact that they were in the know. That comes from the Greek word "gnosis." The gnostics were very proud of the fact that they could give you information. They had inside understanding, and if you became part of their group, they would share with you their "gnosis."

In Colossians 1:9, the apostle Paul says, "For this cause, we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding." "For this cause" means "because of this." That is, because of what Paul recognizes concerning these colossal Christians, which is that they are a very commendable group of believers. He hears about their love in the Spirit; that is, the filling of the Spirit which characterizes this congregation so that it can express this mental attitude of goodwill and camaraderie toward one another. The Colossian Christians have been standing up against apostasy in the form of Gnosticism. They have been responsive to the utterances of their instructors.

Now Paul wants to direct these Christians to a means to maintain their spiritual stability, particularly, in the face of the apostasy of Gnosticism. So Paul says, "Because of this condition that you face, we also (Paul and his team of workers), since the day we heard it (since the report of the spiritual status of the Colossian church came to him), do not cease to pray for you." Literally it says, "Do not cease to pray in your behalf." What does he pray? Our translation says, "And to desire that you might," and the word desire here is the Greek word "aiteo." And "aiteo" does not mean "desire." "Aiteo" means to ask.

So what he is saying to these Christians is, "I do not cease to pray for you, and to ask something specific in your behalf." This is in the present tense which means he's continually and repeatedly presenting this petition, and this petition (that we are going to take up now incidentally) is a very good petition for you as believers--to pray for one another in the local assemblies. If God would answer this prayer on an extensive basis of one Christian for another, it would bring the local church closer to the millennium than you could ever dream it was possible--if believers would pray for this thing for one another that Paul is going to ask for here.

**Be Filled**

He says, "I ask for this, that." He introduces the thing that he is praying for. "That you might be filled. The word "filled" is "pleroo." "Pleroo" has several meanings--variants of a basic meaning. The meaning that we are interested in is the meaning "to fill up a deficiency." There is some lack within these believers for which he is going to pray that there may be a filling. This is something that they need and something that he wants to have filled. Well, every Christian comes to the Christian life at the point of salvation with a certain deficiency in his soul.

Remember our diagram of concentric circles. There is an outer circle of eternal fellowship. There is an inner circle of temporal fellowship. At the point of faith, a Christian moves right into the inner circle of temporal fellowship as well as the outer circle of eternal fellowship. At this point, all of his sins are forgiven. At this point, he is filled with the spirit, and he is in complete fellowship with God the Father. However, there is deeply within his soul a certain deficiency, and that deficiency is a lack of divine viewpoint. Here he is--born again. Here he is--filled with the spirit, in full fellowship with God the father. However, he doesn't know up from down when it comes to God's point of view. You do not, by nature, have God's viewpoint. Just because you are a Christian does not mean that now you understand what God thinks; that now you understand what God has for your life; or, that you have guidance for your life.

You immediately face the problem that when you sin, you pop out of this inner circle (but you stay in the outer circle), and you are now in a state of carnality. (The inner circle is the state of spirituality.) You pop out of that inner circle, but you're still within the outer circle of your internal fellowship. You don't lose your salvation, but you are now in a carnal state, and confession brings you back in again. Still, even with all that, you may confess and be fully back in fellowship in the inner circle, but you still have a deficiency. That deficiency is something that you cannot think yourself out of: "What does God want me to do? What is God's plan for me relative to this situation in my life? Well, I'll just reason my way through and think this through." You won't come to God's mind. "What does God want me to do? Well, I'll just stand around, and I'll wait and see what doors open, and I'll just muddle my way through." But what doors close? That's a dangerous game to play. I'll tell you that you get hurt very badly that way. You need something that we, by nature, do not have in order to enter what God has for us.

This word "to fill" is in the aorist tense which means there's of point in time on earth when a Christian must develop spiritual maturity through the gaining of divine viewpoint. This is an experiential deficiency. How are we going to fill it up? How will you get God's thinking? There is only one way, and that is as you take into your life Bible doctrine--as you learn the principles of God's viewpoint. This is in the passive voice which means that a Christian receives this knowledge through grace. This is not a provision that we either earn or that we deserve. This is not taken in because we have a good IQ. It is done strictly because God provides it, and God makes it possible for us to learn His Word. He makes it possible for us to do this apart from any human capacity, and that's just absolutely great.

However, I have to warn you that you can fill up this deficiency, but this deficiency is also expressed in what we call the subjunctive. The subjunctive means its potential. This depends upon your attitude toward the Word of God. It requires your positive response to what you hear. The apostates are negative. One way you can be negative and you can never fill up the deficiency in your life is by the simple practice of staying home from church. Nobody can go to church too often. I know that believers have not grasped the seriousness of skipping a morning or an evening service. Usually it is for the most trivial of things, and they don't realize how costly and how desperate they are in the deficiency that is in their souls.

Very frequently, some Christian who views himself as a pretty strong believer and a person who feels like he can really take it; walk it; and, know what he's to do. He knows how to get along on his own, and he can't believe what has taken place in his life. He finds himself cooperating with sin that he can't believe that he would ever cooperate with something like that. Why? Because there is a deficiency in the soul that he was negligent of. I'll tell you that when you sit at home, you likely are not going to sit at home and be studying the Word. When the services are around, you're not going to be there listening to a tape. You're there for some other reason. It's pretty hard to come up with a reason that is justifiable to exchange for solving this problem in our lives. No matter how far you go in your Christian life, this problem is always with you.

I grant you if you stay in the Word; if you're occupied with the things of the Lord; and if you are responsive to teaching, you will come to the point where your deficiency in spiritual viewpoint will gradually diminish. It will become less and less. As a matter of fact, you will come to the place where you will be able to go on your own considerably in the study of the Word of God. You will always need instruction. There will always be areas that you need explained and clarified, but you will come to the point where you will begin functioning as an indigenous Christians. And that's the whole point of the Christian life.

**What is the Most Important Thing for a Christian?**

Therefore, we can ask the question, "What is the most important thing in the Christian's life here on earth? What is the most important thing you're going to pursue this week? Tomorrow morning, you're going to start a new day. What is the most important thing that you're going to pursue that day? There are several things that you don't have any choice over. You're going to have to be at certain places and do certain things. But there is a certain segment of freedom of time over which you have choice. What are you going to do with it in terms of what is the most important thing in your life? You might say, "Well, I know. The most important thing is for me to exercise my role as an evangelist. The most important thing is for me to see how many people I can witness to." If you think that's your calling and that's the most important thing that you have to do, you're mistaken. That's an *expression* of the Christian, but that's not the most important thing to do right.

You might say, "It's to be a spiritual person and to maintain the filling of the Spirit through the confession of sin." This is a necessary condition for you to fulfill the main role, but it is not the main role that you have. You might say, "It is giving. It is giving my time. It's giving my money. It's Christian service." Christian service, again, is an expression of the Christian life. It is not the main thing that God has called you to do.

A lot of you Christians have a way of getting guilt complexes over the fact that, for some reason, you come to a certain situation in life, and you're not in Christian service like maybe you once were. Well, that is your responsibility; it is your business; nobody is to think ill of you; and, no spiritual Christian would because you maybe are not doing something that you once did. Or, maybe you should do something that maybe you could do that needs to be done. That doesn't mean that you're the one to do it. I have Christians who are forever apologizing to me for the fact that they can't do this, or they shouldn't do this because they think I'm sending reports up to the front office that are bad fitness reports on them. They are trying to get me to put in a little better word up there for them, and to explain what's going on.

Your main calling is not to be in service. That's secondary. There are many things that are true as expressions of the Christian life, but they're not our primary duty. Here is what the Word says: Paul says in Colossians 1:9, "For this cause, we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to ask *that you might be filled (and here it is--the biggest thing in your life) with the knowledge of His will*." The word "knowledge" here is the Greek word "epignosis." "Epignosis" means full knowledge. It means truth that we obey. It's what James talks about when he refers to being doers of the Word.

A Christian has a human spirit within his being. At the point where he is born again, this human spirit is empty. There's nothing in it. It is a reservoir. This is the problem when he is born again. Down here in his human spirit, which is supposed to be filled with divine viewpoint, he has exactly nothing. It is empty. He may be a spirit-filled Christian. He may be very dedicated to the Lord. He may be very gungho to serve the Lord. However, his human spirit, which is where God speaks to us (it is God the Holy Spirit who speaks to our human spirit--that's our point of contact), is empty. There is nothing in it. This is the deficiency that we suffer under.

Therefore, God came along and provided something. He gave us the Bible in its original languages, and that is "logos." That is the Word in its written form. God the Holy Spirit gave us this in an absolutely accurate form. He then led in the gathering of the specific inspired books that He wrote to create the New Testament canon of Scripture. I think you've heard enough about that. I trust that you understand the realistic historical procedure by which that came about. What He put into this book as the Word of God, He put with the purpose that we should understand it. There are some things that are hard for us to understand, but there is nothing in the Bible that we could not understand. If we put it all together properly; if we have the perspective; and, if we were open to the instruction, everything in it is to be understood. Furthermore, everything in it is to be communicated. He didn't put anything in the Word of God that we were not to share.

When I was in Dallas seminary, I used to have a professor who would read, once in a while, what we might call the racier portions of Scripture. He would always say, "Now I'm going to read this since we have all men in here, and I would not read this in a mixed audience." He was saying that there are some parts of the Bible that are X-rated when it comes to teaching the believers. I never could understand what he was going to do with that in a Bible class. It sure was going to be kind of hard to be doing word-by-word exposition, and then get to some of these sexier parts and you're going to block it out. That's not the kind of thinking that God the Holy Spirit has. It is His Word. He put everything in it for our understanding, and it is purposeful. If we understand it, it means nothing but blessing to us.

So this is the Scripture. It's "logos." It's for our learning. He has also given us then within the local church structure a pastor-teacher. It is the pastor-teacher's primary job to study the Word, and as a spirit-filled believer, he is to explain it to other spirit-filled believers. He has to take this Word and explain it. Now the pastor-teacher in himself is nothing spectacular. He is simply a communicator. He is not a great person in any way. He was not selected for this job because he filled out an application form. He was not selected because he thought that he had a splendid smile, and he is going to go into the ministry.

Now a lot of people do that. Some people in the ministry make you sick when they smile. But that has nothing to do with the role of communicators. They make you sick for other reasons too. That has nothing to do with their role as communicators. They're not there because their personality boys. They're not there because they deserve it. They're not there because their mother read the incident of Samuel, and then one day said, "Oh, I've got 15 girls. I'd sure love to have a boy." So she prayed and said, "Oh, God, if you give me a boy, I'll dedicate him to your service." And sure enough he grows up and goes to seminary. However, it was not because of that. But a lot of people think like that.

I'm telling you the communicator is nothing. There are a lot of communicators who don't take the trouble to examine and to learn the Word of God which is very hard work. I find that the more intense you want to be at studying the Word and the more careful you want to be so that you can be clearer and more definitive, the more discouragements you will have. You can just inevitably be sure of it. As you move into wanting to be preoccupied with your business, you're going to get distractions; you're going to get crises; and, you're going get things that happen.

You wouldn't believe if I told you things that have happened in school the last week just to keep me preoccupied, in one way or another, from the things that I need to be doing, and the pressures that people will put upon me with their little pettiness; their little business with their child; and, all of their little seeking for a place in the sun in one thing and another. Many a communicator who does not prepare covers it up by being dignified. He will get up, and if he's got a nice voice, which is one reason he went into the ministry, he will recite Scripture passages. It's easy for him to memorize things, so he will get up there and speak to you, and you'll think he's one of the fellows downtown at the radio stations saying. "Hello, we're broadcasting from the Southland Life building here looking over downtown Dallas tonight," and you will have a very inspiring moment. You'll go home and say, "My, wasn't that nice?"

Now, God has provided, and this is no small roles, and it is not one to be held in disrespect or contempt. A lot of people do. This is the most contemptuous job in the local church. This is not without reason. It is at this point right here, that if this job is done right, people are going to be confronted with themselves; they're going to hear the thing the way it is; and, they may even go along for years kidding themselves, but finally they will come up against the realities of the shallowness of the clichés; of the platitudes; of the ridiculousness of their own lives; and, they will finally come and say, "Wait a minute. I've got to make a change, or I've got to go someplace where I don't have to make a change and still be comfortable in what I am." If this job is done right, God's people are blessed. If this job is not done right, heaven help that congregation.

**The Mind**

God gives us this means of instruction from the Word, and this instruction is delivered into the mind of the Christian. This mind has a perceptive side, and it has a directive side: one side that learns; and, another side that makes command decisions. We listen, and under the filling of the Holy Spirit, we take in the Word of God into that perceptive mind. The Bible calls this word for "mind" our "nous." We take things into our minds as believers, and that's why we tell you to confess your sins before the service.

Now you sit; now you listen; and, now you hear. God the Holy Spirit helps you to understand. The truth gets through to you. You sit there and you have understood the doctrine explained. You haven't made any move about it, for or against it, but you do understand it, and the Bible calls this "knowledge." The Greek word for "knowledge" is "gnosis." That's the word that the gnostics used to love so much. So Paul is deliberately taking words here, and he's going to rub it into the noses of the gnostics who are parading themselves as the real spiritual wonders in the church at Colossae. So this which we learn is knowledge or "gnosis."

Now the question is, what are you going to do with this knowledge? You've understood it. Your perceptive mind is simply a preparatory area. This is simply a gathering point. It's like during World War II when there would be a staging area. Perhaps some of you remember the pictures, for example, from England before the Normandy invasion. There were just acres and acres of trucks and various tanks and various kinds of military equipment just stacked up. That equipment wasn't good. It was of no use here at the staging area. It was simply there lined up for preparations to be moved out of there into combat. But while it sat there, it wasn't one bit of good for winning the war. However, it was a necessary step in order to get ready for the Normandy invasion.

So that's what's the perceptive part of our thinking is. It is simply taking the Word; learning it; and, understanding it. You may have to ask a few questions, but when the service is over, you've got some "gnosis." I've got some knowledge. Now, what you do with that knowledge at this point determines what happens next. Let's say that you go positive. You take an act of faith; that is, you believe it. The Greek word is "pistis." This means that you believe what you have been taught. You accept this piece of Bible doctrine. Immediately as that happens, God the Holy Spirit moves in and He begins filling up the deficiency in your human spirit. This truth is now placed in the directive side of your mind in compartments and classifications of the truth as it comes down. Gradually, as you open yourself to receiving the Word, you're going to fill up this problem that you enter the Christian life with. Your deficiency is gradually going to be removed.

As your deficiency is removed, something else happens because when the "gnosis" gets to the directive side of your mind, it becomes what Colossians is talking about when Paul said, "I pray for you that you may have "epignosis." Here is where "epignosis" come in, and this word means "full knowledge." "Epignosis" is full knowledge. Now this is something you believe. This is where you have become a doer of the Word. Now you're moving out the equipment from the staging area. From the preparatory area, you are moving out the Word of God ready for use in spiritual combat. The way that God the Holy Spirit does that is that He cycles this truth up to the decision-making mechanism of our mentality.

Here in our minds, we have a frame of reference. He puts that doctrine into that frame of reference, and that gives us divine viewpoint. So then we have the capacity to make decisions. I don't care what the decision is that you have to make in life. It may be about school; your job; a boyfriend or girlfriend; or, service for the Lord. It all stems from having a mind that's oriented to divine viewpoint. Along with it, there is your conscience, and your conscience is fed God's values and God's standards so that you have a conscience which is functioning on divine viewpoint. All of this will constitute your divine viewpoint.

Now, with that viewpoint, you can go into action. You make decisions concerning your life. That's exactly what Paul is saying here, that he is praying for these believers that they would "be filled with the "epignosis" of His will" (of what God's plan is for them). Now this reservoir that we fill is also the basis upon which we build a spiritual maturity structure which we will not go into in detail here. That has several facets. You may think of it in the form of a pentagon with five sides because it's a place of defense, and it's a place of offense. It gives us our orientation to the grace of God. It helps us to learn how to handle all these details of our lives that are secondary to learning doctrine. It helps us to know how to have a mind free of bitterness that is relaxed. It helps us to know how to love God, the opposite sex, and other people. It helps us to enter in. It enables us to build a happiness that is on the inside. While on the outside, you are in all kinds of tribulation, trials, and a murderous experience, in your soul there is a millennium all the time.

This comes as the result of information you have in your perceptive mind. Can you see why some people never grow up spiritually? Do you see why some people can go hacking it out in church for 20 or 30 years, and all of a sudden they're acting like a bunch of juveniles? This is serious business of filling up this deficiency, and it is hard business. It is not an easy thing to do. However, I guarantee you that if you do it, this works. You will come to spiritual maturity, and you never come to it any other way. Consequently, there is no stability in a life without spiritual maturity. You are a legalist, running around, all up in arms because some college band is going to play "The Sound of Music" in your sacred auditorium. Or, you are all up in arms because somebody is acting like a fink and not appreciating you.

So you can't relax about it, and say, "Well, Lord, I commit this fink to you as you will deal with him," and let it go at that. You don't know how to handle money in your life. The first thing you do when you get married, what do you do? You start planning how much income you can make so you can start building a citadel; so you can build a nice house and have a lot of nice things, and be equal to your parents, and a little ahead of some of your friends. You lose your perspective of the values of life that you should have, and so on. You can't get to that unless you have this deficiency filled; and, let alone to get to making decisions. That is pathetic to even think about.

**Fill the Deficiency**

So what happens here is that this is the objective. This is the main objective of the Christian life--to fill this deficiency. That's a simple statement, isn't it? And maybe some of you crackled with a negative response. I have found that this is a point of great resistance. I found from people that I would not expect this to be an issue with, that they find this a very great issue when you tell them that the greatest duty and responsibility of the Christian life is to fill up the deficiency in their human spirit with Bible doctrine. Yet, what does the Great Commission tell us to do? We as believers are to rock the countryside in order to make disciples. What is a disciple? A person who can follow Jesus Christ. And how can you follow Jesus Christ? When you have a spirit that's oriented to God's viewpoint. That's how. Therefore, your mind is given the directions it needs in order to follow Christ and to be a disciple.

So when you find people who resist this, they're really resisting what God wants us to do. When a pastor-teacher fails to supply this information, he has failed to prepare the flock against apostasy. If he does supply this information, and the flock goes negative, that's where you'll break off. You'll short-circuit the whole thing. Nothing will happen. You'll have a lot of "gnosis", but you won't have one bit of "epignosis." The result will be that you'll be totally unprepared to meet these apostates with their characteristics when they come into your life. You won't recognize them, and you won't be able to handle them if you did.

Furthermore, memorizing the word of God is not enough. I'm not badmouthing Bible memory work because I think it is important. It has a value. But Bible memory work must always be accompanied by exegesis; by exposition; and, by explanation in order to know and to understand what it is you're teaching. Don't ever teach a child a verse of Scripture without explaining to him what that verse of Scripture means. Then it is useful memory work. Then it will provide him with that "epignosis." There are some people who can spout off all kinds of long passages of memory work, but it doesn't mean a thing when it comes to giving them divine guidance. Once a Christian has built this reservoir, he can stand on his own pretty well as he keeps feeding it and as he maintains this structure of spiritual maturity. "Gnosis" is a hearer of the Word. "Epignosis" is a doer. "Epignosis" gives us great happiness. It gives us peace and orientation to life, and it enables us to be producing divine good in the realm of the angelic conflict that we are in.

So when Paul was using this word "epignosis" here in Colossians, he was trying to hit these gnostics with the promise of "gnosis." What he's asking for is for this to come into God's "thelema" which is the will of God; specifically, the plan of God. There is no way that you can come into that plan without the "epignosis" filling up the deficiency in your human spirit. You cannot understand God's signals; you can't reason; and, you can't enter His plan in any way. All of this, he says, is that "we may enter the full knowledge of His will in all wisdom," and this is the Greek word "sophia." "Sophia" means "epignosis" up here in the directive mind where it is ready for action. That's "sophia." That's wisdom. It's up here where it's ready for you to use. Spiritual understanding is "sunesis." "Sunesis" means application in practice. "Sofia" is divine viewpoint, standing by and ready to go. When it kicks into action, you've got spiritual understanding. You've got "sunesis" taking place. This is application in practice.

Colossians 1:10 says, "That you might walk worthy of the Lord;" that is, to walk in a way that is acceptable to him. You have to have "epignosis" to do this. "Unto all pleasing," that is, pleasing God in all things and enabling yourself to respond to Him. Again, you need "epignosis" to do that. "Being fruitful in every good work," that is, bringing divine good through the activity in your life. "Increasing in the knowledge of God." Increasing means to keep on growing. It's present sense. It's a continual thing. It's passive voice. You don't do the growing by your determination. It is what you take in the way of the food of doctrine that causes you to grow. That means that you keep on growing and learning so that emotion does not dominate.

"In order that you might increase in the knowledge of God," and guess what it is. It's "epignosis." Paul finishes on this note, saying that this is what it's all about. It's gaining the knowledge of God and of all that God has for you. "That you might walk worthy of the Lord (in a way acceptable to His plan), unto all pleasing (in divine favor and commendation), being fruitful in every good work (productive of divine good), and increasing (constantly growing as a result of what you feed into yourself--increasing in what?) in the full knowledge of God, and all that that will connote."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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