***Meditation - PH74-02  
  
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 3:15-16***

Please turn with me once more in your Bibles to Philippians 3:15-16. In this passage, the apostle Paul is calling for Christian unity. We looked at the first part of this last time. In verse 15, the apostle Paul exhorts the spiritually mature Philippian Christians to follow a certain mental attitude which was his own – which characterized the thinking of Paul.

There were some things that the apostle Paul knew about himself. He knew that he had built a spiritual maturity structure in his soul with the divine viewpoint that he had received from the revelation of God. Paul knew that he had moved on to a position of spiritual maturity. Paul also knew that he was not a person who was above sinning. He was not free of sin. He was not senselessly perfect. Paul also knew that it was his mental attitude to recognize sin when it came into his experience; to confess it; to forget it; and, to move on. That was the point of the passage immediately preceding Philippians 3:15 (verses 13-14), where he is explaining to us that his position is to confess; forget; and, move on, with his eyes glued toward the rewards of the Judgment Seat of Christ, and that he is concentrating on that race, and that alone.

**Meditation upon God's Word**

So in Philippians 3:15, he says, "As many, therefore, as are spiritually mature, let us be constantly thinking this." By "this," he means what he has expressed in verses 13-14 about how to handle your spiritual weaknesses and failures. The principles which are revealed in the Bible provide the only framework for relating our lives to God and to His creation. When we do relate ourselves in this way, we have a condition of built-in prosperity. Human viewpoint principles produce only what is destined for failure, but divine viewpoint principles build into us that which is destined for success. For that reason, we pointed out, the Word of God constantly calls our attention to the fact that if you want to be successful in life, and if you want to achieve your goals, the way to do it is by meditation upon the Word of God.

So beginning this morning, once more, in Philippians 3:15: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Then the apostle Paul adds another thing. He says, "And." That's the Greek word "kai" which indicates an additional point. He has, first of all, said, "Those of us who are mature, let us have the same attitude of forgetting the past and moving on, unless you want to have a bad case of mental illness." He says, "Furthermore, not only forgetting (putting behind), but," he says also, "If." The word "if" is the Greek word "ei." It indicates here a first class condition, meaning that this is the case. He assumes, for the sake of argument, that here is a condition which is true. We may say, "If, as is the case, in anything." "In anything" is "ti," and it is just an indefinite pronoun. It simply means "if any particular thing" ('if at any particular point'), you are otherwise." The word "otherwise" is the Greek word "heteros." This is the only time this word happens to be used in the New Testament. It really means "differently."

So Paul says, "If any of you, at any point, think differently." The word for "think" (or "be minded") is the word "phroneo." "If at any point, you are differently minded from the advice that I have just given you." Or we might say, "From what I have talked about, all the way through in this preceding context, about celebrityship; about being famous; or, about being a religious star, all the way down the line. This is everything that I have talked to you about, and I have summed it up in the case of good mental health, by recognizing that you're not perfect; confessing your sins; forgetting them; moving on; and, keeping your eye glued like a runner on a race course for the goal line of the 'bema' Seat of Christ (the Judgment Seat of Christ), and the rewards that are due you there. If any of you are otherwise minded than this."

This word means "to be thinking differently" from what Paul has said in verses 2-12. These Philippians, by and large, were a mature congregation. The Philippian church was a delight to the apostle Paul because it was filled with the spiritual maturity structure type of Christian. All over that congregation, there were these mature, grown-up believers. When you're in a church where people are spiritually grown-up, it's a marvelous place to be. It is a tremendously exhilarating thing to be moving in a church where you have mature Christians.

Well, while this, by and large, was true of the Philippians, some of them may not have been experienced enough with legalism and with legalists to be able to share Paul's attitude when he called the legalists "dogs." You know that that was almost a swear word. To call a legalists a dog, and to call a Jew by a title that was reserved for gentiles, was extremely offensive. To call them evil workers was tough language. To call them "butchers," relative to their practice of circumcision, that was strong language. Paul says, "Now, I recognize that some of you Christians at Philippi may not have, as gentiles, come up against these Judaizers the way I have. So maybe you think I'm coming on too strong when I call them dogs and evil workers and butchers. But I'm going to give you some advice on that."

Perhaps the Philippians were not able to share Paul's utter contempt for celebrityship, because you remember he called that by that terrifically strong Greek word "skubalon" which means human excrement, animal manure, and garbage. Paul says, "OK, maybe I'm coming on too strong for some of you. I'm talking under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit. I'm using extremely strong language of the streets to convey what God really thinks about this. It may be too strong for you."

Paul might have said, "Maybe when you look at your television set, you're impressed by these religious celebrities that are paraded across." Or they may not have shared his conviction over the supreme value of the joy of living out God's plan for your life. There may have been some Christians who thought that maybe they were going to miss something if they lived just God's plan for their life. Maybe there were some who did not share the fact that all success was dependent upon meditating upon the Word of God. Whatever goal you want to reach in life, it's contingent, for you as a believer, upon reaching it through meditating upon the Word of God – through the study and the positive response to doctrine. They may have had mental reservations about the fact that he rejoiced in sharing in the sufferings of Christ in the angelic conflict. Some of those Philippian Christians may have said, "Well, I love the Lord, but I think I'll skip the suffering part. I'd just as soon not have that part. I don't think I want to get too involved in that."

So Paul says, "You, therefore, may not be as open as I am with the world. You don't come into grips with the society in which we move – the paganism about us, so that you avoid the sufferings of the angelic conflict. Some mature Christians may have thought that they had already achieved a state of sinless perfection. They may have been wrong on that. So in any number of these things, Paul says, "You may not be minded as I am. In all these things, you may have a difference of opinion. This is in the present tense – a constantly different viewpoint. It is active – held by some of these mature Philippians themselves. It is indicative of a statement of fact.

"And if in anything, at some point, you be otherwise minded," then what? "God," and it's "theos" with the definite article – "the God," meaning God the Father, "shall reveal." The word is "apokalupto." "Apokalupto" means simply "to make something known;" "to give understanding;" "to unveil something;" or, "to make something clear." This is in the future tense – sometime in the future. "Sometime as you reach perhaps more maturity or more experience," Paul says, God is going to make some of these things clear to you that you may not agree with me on at this point." It is active. It's the Father himself who is going to give you this understanding. It's indicative of statement of fact. God shall make "even this" clear, meaning "also this." "This is the Greek word "houtos." It's a pronoun that points back to this difference they may have with Paul: "This very thing unto you, for your personal advantage." So even Christians with a good spiritual maturity structure still need enlightenment at some point.

So Paul says, "Make this your attitude. Keep your mind open. I've told you some very hard things (in Philippians 3:2-12). I've told you some very severe things. You may find that you can't quite go along with me. You can't go as far as I go. You have some reticence. You hold back a little bit. But I'm going to tell you that if you will not take a belligerent attitude; if you will not assume that you are superior; and, if you will just entertain the possibility that you haven't caught up to me in what I understand of spiritual things, you may yet come to the point where God is going to be able to clarify to you and show you how right these things are."

Paul isn't trying to say that, "God is going to show you how right I am, and how wrong you are." He's not taking that attitude. He's simply trying to convey to them that everybody has to keep moving forward in the Christian life. We all have not arrived at the same point. Therefore, there will be differences. This is why the Bible says there are some Christians who have moved so far ahead in the spiritual life, and that there are other Christians that are just absolutely weak babies. And the Christians who have moved on into spiritual maturity have to be very careful how they treat these weak babies in the church. There are some people in the local congregation that you must speak with in a certain way because they're spiritual babies, and they'll be upset; they'll be torn apart; and, they'll be distressed. You won't see them for a while until they get over their wounds. You just have to be very careful because they're just little children in the spiritual life.

So the apostle Paul says, Take the attitude if you are mature, to be kind to those who have not caught up. If you ever think that you don't ever have to make any further progress, then you will discover that God will not be informing you. Always take the attitude that you're not fully enlightened.

So we may translate verse 15 in this way: "As many, therefore, as are spiritually mature, let us be constantly thinking this (Paul's attitude toward fame and failure). If, as is the case, at some point, you are differently minded about these things, God will clarify this also to you."

Verse 16: "Nevertheless." This is the Greek word "plen." "Plen" means "however." In spite of these differences that we may have on some of these things, Paul now introduces a method of handling the situation of Christians who don't agree. So he says, "Nevertheless, as to," and this is the Greek preposition "eis" which is a directional thing. He's pointing to something.

He says, "As to that which," or "so far as," or "where unto:" "As to that which we have already attained." The word "attained" is the Greek word "phthano." "Phthano" means "attained," but it is not the same word for "attained" that you had back in verse 12 where Paul says, "Not as though I had already attained." There, in verse 12, it means "not as though I had already laid of – sinless perfection." But the word here, at this point, indicates a different kind of attainment. It means "to arrive at" or "to reach some point." It doesn't mean "to reach out and to take hold of" as it did in verse 12. Here it means "to simply arrive at some point. It indicates some point of mutual advance in their divine viewpoint – the extent of their agreement on some issues. So there were some things, he is saying, that we as Christians do agree on. There is a great area in which we as believers have arrived in mutual common agreement.

We may translate this as, "Nevertheless (or however), so far as we have reached (that is, as far as we have gone in becoming the spiritual maturity structure type of believer), let us walk." The Greek word "walk" is "stoicheo." "Stoicheo" is a significant word because it is a word which was used in the military, and it meant "to walk along a line." This Greek word means "to walk," but it means "to walk along a line," and "to proceed along a certain road in a specific way." So naturally you would expect this to be a military word, and it is used of troops marching into battle, walking in line into battle.

So the Christians are to follow along a certain line; single file; follow-the-leader; and one after another. What he is referring to is a line of spiritual life as mature Christians. "Let us walk." It's present tense – our continual action. It's active – our personal activity as grown-up Christians. And it's infinitive. The infinitive in Greek usually indicates purpose. But there is an odd use of the infinitive in the Greek language. When it's used, it really stands out like a sore thumb on the pages of Scripture. Sometimes infinitive is used as an imperative; that is, as a command. This happens to be one of the places in the New Testament where the infinitive is used not to express a purpose, but to express a command in a different way. Instead of using, the normal grammatical form that would suggest command (the imperative mood), it uses the infinitive, and the infinitive to convey a command makes it a very strong expression.

So the apostle Paul here is actually declaring something that is in the form of a command. It is a command that we Christians should follow one another along a certain line of maturity. What is that? He says, "By the same rule." This in the Greek is one word. It's simply the word "autos." It has the definite article "the," so it means "the same" – referring to a level or a standard of spiritual maturity that has been achieved.

So, to sum this up, what the apostle Paul is saying is that, "It is recognizable that we Christians do not all agree on these things that I've told you. I've told you some things that may be too tough for you to accept. But we Christians have also arrived at a certain level of maturity. Now where we have arrived, that's a line we can walk together. Whereas these other things are the line where maybe we cannot walk together. But here is a line of maturity at a certain point that we have reached that we can walk together on." His point is that we are to walk according to that same level of maturity to which we have arrived.

There is no word for "rule" in the Greek. It simply is, "Walk by the same." The final phrase, "Let us mind the same," just take a pencil and cross that out of your English Bible. That's not in the Greek.

So verse 16 says this, "Nevertheless, so far as we have reached a spiritual maturity level, walk by the same line." Paul's command here as an apostle to the Philippians is, in other words, to maintain their same direction in spiritual maturity. What the apostle Paul does not want Christians to do is this: On the path of spiritual maturity, we have babyhood; we have the teenage level; and, we have adulthood, and they have been moving ahead. He is talking to Christians who are up at the adult level. Paul says, "We have walked according to a certain line that has brought us to spiritual maturity. Some of you are at various points of spiritual maturity. But we're on a line that's going to spiritual maturity. Now, while we are not agreed, you are moving in the right direction." Paul says, "I want you to keep going in that direction. In fact, as an apostle, I'm ordering you, as my troops, to keep moving toward that spiritual maturity." What Paul does not want them to do is to start revisionism. That's the point of the passage.

"I do not want to see you start going backwards." One of the things that causes Christians to start backsliding (reversionism) is when they discover that they're not in agreement. It is really fantastic how there are some Christians who simply actually have a cataleptic fit over the fact that they discover that they can't agree with something they've heard the preacher say, or they can't agree with what some other Christian believes. They get all torn up about it. Now, the apostle Paul says, "I know what I'm talking about. I know that these things that I have told you are the mind of God. If you don't think they're the mind of God, at this point, hang in there. He's going to make it clear to you. But in the meantime, keep moving up. Don't let that difference turn you around and start causing you to start reverting backwards to the stage of babyhood. Keep moving toward spiritual adulthood."

**Reversionism**

Spiritual reversionism is letting your spiritual maturity structure deteriorate. How do you do that? Well, you quit feeding on doctrine daily (meditation again). You do not meditate in the Word. You'll start moving the other direction. Or you're negative toward instruction that you receive in the Word of God. That'll cause you to start moving backward. The result is that you degenerate into spiritual instability, and gradually you go all the way down to babyhood.

So Paul tells us to stand and march like soldiers, one-after-another, toward the goal, while keeping our place in line, and moving toward spiritual maturity. There's no substitute for meditating on doctrine if we hope to have cause for rejoicing at the "bema" Seat of the Lord Jesus Christ. So this leads us again to that interesting observation that we have pointed out to you before. It is summed up in 1 Corinthians 4:7, where the apostle Paul has the phrase, "And what do you have that you did not receive?" Most of what people do is learned – not instinctive. Most of what we do is learned behavior patterns. Most of what animals do is instinctive – not learned patterns. But for people, it is learned, and not instinctive. So what we learn determines the nature of our personal and our national culture, and our national civilization.

I want to remind you of something to tie this into what the apostle Paul has said. Paul is asking us to have a certain mental attitude; to be moving in a certain direction; to have a certain attitude toward differences; to preserve, by all means, our walking along a certain path; and, to follow a certain line of action, which is taking in God's viewpoint that produces spiritual maturity. Now, why is he stressing all this? He's going to go even further when we get to verse 17. There, he's going to call us outright to follow him as an example. Now, why this great stress?

**God's Mandate for Man to Build a Civilization**

Well, I want to remind you that in the book of Genesis, in the very first chapter where we have the creation story, God gave mankind a very specific directive. Listen to Genesis 1:26: "And God said, "'Let Us make man in Our image and after Our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created man in His own image. In the image of God created He him: male and female, created He them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'"

Now, what if we were to ask you to explain to us those verses? We might say, "Now, what did God tell mankind to do?" We could sum it up by simply saying, "God told man to form a civilization. Create a civilization." As you read through these verses, you have here a divine mandate to produce a culture. Man had no culture, and man had no civilization. When Adam took that first breath, and thereby experienced what all of us experience as babies now, he became a living soul, he couldn't even talk. Do you realize that? God smiled at him, and Adam might have made whatever sound he could make. He couldn't talk. So God took Adam, and God pointed to the light, and he said, "Day." Then He pointed to the sun, and He said, "Sun." He pointed to the moon, and He said, "Moon." You don't learn the language on your own. You can never learn language on your own. The only way you learn language is because somebody teaches you. The only way you learn spiritual things is because somebody teaches you. You must have some source outside of yourself to get spiritual instruction.

So now God said, "Here is the world. I'm going to explain to you how it works, Adam, and you build a culture. You build a civilization." Well, when sin came along, this mandate was not rescinded. It didn't change the fact that God's order for mankind is to build a culture. God's order for mankind is to build a civilization. You will notice in Genesis 3:17-19, after the fall, nothing has changed: "And unto Adam He said, 'Because you have hearkened unto the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you sayings, 'Thou shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground for your sake. In sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread till you return into the ground, for out of it you were taken, for you are dust, and unto dust shall you return.'"

Now the thing that was changed was that it was going to be harder to build a civilization, but mankind was still ordered by God, "Build a civilization. Put together the skills of all people; organize; and, develop a civilization. It's going to be harder now than it would have been before, because there is now a curse upon nature because of sin."

In Genesis 4:21-22, we have a record of the progress of the building of that civilization. We have a record that, before the flood, this is exactly what mankind proceeded to do. It proceeded to discover the natural laws that God had built into the universe. It began to discover how things work; how metals work together; and, the relationship of the fact of the elements of the physical universe, and man began building a society; he began building a culture; and, he began building the civilization.

Now, after the flood, of course, all this was wiped out. Noah and his three sons didn't remember how to do all these things. So what is commonly viewed in the history book as man progressing from a Stone Age culture; to a Bronze Age culture; and, into an Iron Age culture is simply what we have discovered of how man had to rediscover all of these skills after the flood had wiped them all out. That was the progression back up again of building civilization.

So after the flood, what do we have? After the flood, we have the same mandate repeated again in Genesis 9:1-3. So here again, God says, "You are to take the world that I have created, and you are to put it together into an orderly form of a civilization. Everybody is to contribute to this culture." That's why what you do in your daily work has upon it the sanctifying hand of God. Your daily employment, by which you earn your livelihood, is a contribution to the culture in which you live. You are fulfilling part of this mandate given to mankind in the book of Genesis.

Now the process of building a civilization had behind it a purpose. Why did God want men to build a civilization? It was for one primary purpose – because it would provide blessing. God did not want mankind to put together a civilization which was going to be a curse, and which was going to bring unhappiness into his life. Yet, as we look through history, what do we find? We find a steady stream of civilizations which have done nothing but bring misery and unhappiness to mankind. A prime example of that in our own day are the communist countries. Communist countries have built a culture, and have built a civilization. Seldom, in the history of humanity, has more misery and has more unhappiness been brought to millions of people than under the communist civilization that it has built? Why? Is that the purpose of communism – to bring misery and unhappiness to people? That's not their purpose. What is the problem?

**The Protestant Reformation**

The problem is that there is a key factor in building a civilization if it is to be one of blessing. That key factor is divine viewpoint wisdom. Divine viewpoint wisdom can only be secured in one place, and that is the revelation of God, which we have in the Bible. This is necessary in the thinking of people. This gives a frame of reference so that as man proceeds to take what God has placed in creation and to use it to build a culture and to build a civilization, what he builds will be a blessing. If divine viewpoint is missing in the process of building a civilization, the inevitable result is misery. It always produces a civilization that brings misery and unhappiness into the lives of people. Furthermore, those civilizations cannot last. They are inherently doomed to decay. For 1,000 years, Europe lay under what is called the Dark Ages. Then suddenly there burst upon the scene of mankind the Protestant Reformation. Suddenly there exploded: learning; progress; the printing press; books; and, interest in science and astronomy. Everything that we used to go to the moon were principles which evolved out of the era following the Renaissance.

What caused the great outburst and the advancement in civilization? One thing: Suddenly, because of the Protestant Reformation, the Word of God became an available book of divine viewpoint information. Once the divine viewpoint of the Word of God was injected into the stream of man's thinking, his civilization began to develop according to biblical principles, and blessing and prosperity began to cross all over the countries that had been blessed by the Word of God. It is a clear, clean-cut example.

**Solomon**

But if we go back to ancient times, we have the same thing with Israel. At what point in the history of the Jewish people did they reach the peak? What was the point at which they became the envy of the nations of the world? What point in Jewish history was it when the kings of the earth began coming to visit Israel, and to look in upon this country, and to see what was going on; to marvel at what they saw being built; to marvel at the wealth of this nation; to marvel at the prosperity of the individual person; and, to marvel at the fantastic capitalistic productivity of the people under private enterprise and individual ownership. It was under Solomon. Isn't it interesting that it was King Solomon who is the epitome of divine viewpoint wisdom? It was King Solomon who brought divine viewpoint wisdom to the people of Israel in its final and complete form. It was Solomon who was at the heart of the wisdom literature (as it's called) of the Old Testament: Psalms; Proverbs; Job; and, Ecclesiastes. All of these tremendous books sum up God's divine viewpoint. That's why Israel became such a tremendous nation.

That's why we can go back, for example, to 1 Kings 4:29, and read the description of where this nation had come to under the wisdom information brought to them by Solomon: "God gave Solomon wisdom, and very much understanding, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore, and Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East country, and all the wisdom of Egypt." And those people were no dummies themselves, in these nations surrounding Israel. But they didn't have the key necessary to build a civilization that was bringing blessing to the people, and that was going to last (that would not decay).

1 Kings 4:31: "For he was wiser than all men: than Ethan the Ezrahite; and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, and the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spoke 3,000 Proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. He spoke of trees from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springs out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts and of fowl, and of creeping things, and the fish. There came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom." What's that telling us? That is giving us the key as to why Israel became such a tremendously powerful, impressive nation. She was building a civilization which, in contrast to nations about her, had interjected within it the wisdom of God – divine viewpoint.

**Solomon's Reversionism**

So I hope you will appreciate that. I hope you will not become contemptuous when you hear us speak about divine viewpoint. But I want to tell you something else. Solomon forgot his own wisdom. He backtracked upon his own divine viewpoint. He started fooling around with all kinds of things to find satisfaction in life instead of doctrine – of the divine viewpoint wisdom that he knew so well. It started off well. God said, "What do you want, young fellow? You want to be king, and I'll give you anything you want." And he had the smarts to say, "Give me wisdom. Give me divine viewpoint. God, give me divine viewpoint like no man has ever had it on the face of the earth before." The Lord said, "You've got it. And because you asked for that, there's something else I have to give you. Because I'm going to give you divine viewpoint, there's no way you're not going to become a very productive person. There's no way you're not going to be happy."

We read that in the Bible, and sometimes we think (and I got this impression when I was a kid in Sunday school) that God said, "Okay, Solomon, you have been a really good boy to ask for being smart and to have wisdom. Just because you asked for that, I'm going to give you these other things, too." No, God didn't have any choice. If you have divine viewpoint, then you will be successful. That's the point. That's why the apostle Paul says, "Now, look. The thing that has brought you blessing in your life is because you've walked according to a certain line – the certain line of divine viewpoint wisdom. You have moved toward a place of spiritual maturity and blessing. Now, I want you to keep prospering, even if you don't agree with all the implications of this that I have taught you, by all means, keep moving along with wisdom. Wisdom is the thing."

So Israel, under Solomon's wisdom, became a tremendous nation. Her national culture stemmed from the written revelation, and from the fact that God was with them in the nation (Deuteronomy 4:6-7). The gentiles around about Israel, of course, we're trying to build cultures also. But all they were doing was building with human viewpoint. So what they built inevitably decayed. What they built inevitably brought misery to people. It could not bring blessing. Divine viewpoint wisdom was a frame of reference that enabled Israel not only to bring happiness, but to have a full-round culture: arts; sciences; crafts; literature; and, all areas of life were affected and were interpreted by this divine viewpoint. All of our Western civilization is the product of the influence upon gentile nations of Israel's divine viewpoint wisdom.

Ancient man always thought in terms of superstitious ideas. He did not reason. He did not think logically. When a person got sick, he looked at him and said, "There's an evil spirit in him. Let's get him out. We'll drill a hole in the person." So we find these ancient remains of skeletons where they drilled a hole in somebody's skull to let the demon out. He doesn't reason. Why did he do that? Well, because his tribe had taught him that. The clouds come over with thunder, and they said, "Ah, the rain God is angry." Or, it doesn't rain, and he said, "The rain God is angry." So we have a rain dance to get it to rain. You would say, "How dumb." That was their culture. They didn't reason. They didn't think.

That was all the ancient world until the 6th century B.C. Suddenly there burst upon the world the Greeks, and all of a sudden, out of the Greek people, there came the most fantastic culture; thinking; reasoning; and, art of a marvelous degree. There came concepts of human relationships and social ideals. All of a sudden, you see this dividing line. On one side of the line, we have characters dancing around to try to get rain, or to stop the rain. On the other side of the line, we have people talking about evaporation and clouds and things scientifically being ordered and arranged. You say, "What happened here?" Why did, all of a sudden, in the 6th century B.C., there burst upon the world the fantastic reasoning, thinking, and development which characterized the Greeks and the culture and the civilization they produced?

Well, the thing that happened to them was that the Greeks were in touch with nations such as the Phoenicians who had been in touch with the people of Israel. And the Phoenicians brought divine viewpoint understanding from Israel, and they became the channels of this to the gentile nations of the Western world. The Greeks inherited the divine viewpoint wisdom that had come in its epitome from Solomon through other nations. This is the force that began working upon the Greek mentality so that there burst upon the world scene that which we know as Western civilization today in its full blossom glory. Why? Because God was ordering a plan.

**Japheth**

What was God's plan for most of you who sit here today who are of the Japhetic line? You are descendants of Noah's son, Japheth. In Genesis 9:27, we're told what God's plan is. The Word of God says, "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant. Here we have declared in the Word of God that in the ultimate purpose of God's divine order of building civilization, the descendants of Japheth, the Western nations, are going to be the nations that influence all the world. But they will influence it how? By dwelling "in the tents of Shem." What does that mean? As you know, Shem has to do with the Jew? The Jews are the descendants of Shem (the Shemites). "The tents of Shem," that he is speaking of here, is divine viewpoint. That is the tent of Shem. The Japhetic nations (the Western nations) were to become rulers of all the world because they dwelt under the divine viewpoint of Shem. And the descendants of Ham, the disgraced son of Noah, were to provide the muscle power and the brawn. That was the divine arrangement.

But it was all contingent upon Japheth getting into the spiritual heritage of the Shemites (the divine viewpoint). When that was ready, in the process and the providence of God (when He was ready to interject a divine viewpoint stream of information into the gentile nations), He shot it into Greece, and man's mentality exploded in developing a civilization that we still look back to, and we say, "There is the classical era. That's the classical age." That's what we look back to. That's what they looked back to in the Reformation. After those hundreds and hundreds of years of darkness, they looked back to classical learning. That's what was behind the Renaissance. It was the revival of classical learning. It was going back to what had already once been achieved because previous civilizations had sat in the tents of Shem.

So the Japhetic people prosper today as they continue dwelling in the divine viewpoint tent of Shem. But as the gentiles today abandon this viewpoint, so there is a frightful return to the same kind of nonthinking, illogical mentality that preceded the coming of the civilization through Japheth. What are we returning to? The same kind of superstitions as: the rain dancers; spiritism; séances; magic; and, psychic phenomena. We're going back to the same thing. Why? Because we're going back to human viewpoint.

So here's the contrast behind what Paul is actually saying. When he is calling upon these people to follow the line that they have followed that has brought them to spiritual maturity, he's telling them to stay with divine viewpoint, because you don't know anything about yourself. Only God knows how you were made. Only God knows how you work in your spirit, soul, and body. And only God can give you the information that can make you a complete person of blessing and of happiness. Only God can give you good mental health, and only His divine viewpoint will produce that for you.

So Paul says, "We who are mature Christians, let's keep this attitude of mind: confess; forget; and, move on. Press toward the mark of the prize of the "bema" seat, the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the rewards that are there. If you have some differences on these things that I've told you, God will make these clear to you as you move along. That which is truth will come through to you. Nevertheless, the things in which we have agreed on, in the way of divine viewpoint, are the things that we should line up with and stay with. Let us not abandon those because these are the core of our personal happiness. These are the means to our lining up our thinking and our lives with God's attitude. If we have this (if we walk by this same line), then there is before us nothing but blessing.

So if you meditate upon the Word of God (if you meditate upon divine viewpoint), the Bible says that you will enjoy good success, and you will prosper. If you do not, you'll beat your brains out, and the things that you seek will elude you. They'll slip out of your hand every time, because you have failed to take the key that God says is at the heart of all success as a human being.

This is a divine principle. You are fortunate to be here today to learn it. You cannot beat this principle. You cannot outmaneuver it. You cannot outflank it. Meditating upon the Word of God is the believer's route to happiness and success.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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