***Christian Service
RV18-02***

Please open your Bible to Revelation 2:18-29. This is the sixth segment on the letter to Thyatira. In verse 19, the Lord Jesus Christ is describing the things which please Him about His local church in the city of Thyatira in Asia Minor. Jesus Christ, of course, knows all about the church members by His omniscience. So He tells them, "I know these things about you." He proceeds to tell them six commendable things that He knows about them. These qualities are guidelines for us as Christians today. This is a very fruitful verse in the Word of God, and a very informative one, if you dig below the mere surface words. This often is not done. Some of you who follow commentary studies on what we are doing in our services have undoubtedly discovered that some of the best commentators will kind of mention these words (maybe two sentences), and they are gone. Yet these six qualities are fantastic features not only of the local church life, but, of course, of that which makes up the local church life – the individual life of the individual believer. So we will not pass quickly over this verse, because this is one of monumental importance in its information.

**Good Works**

We found, first of all, that the Thyatira Christians were engaged in producing divine good works rather than human good works. Human good works are the product of the old sin nature, while divine good works are the product of the Holy Spirit working through a spiritual Christian. That which enables us to serve the Lord is ultimately money: money to have the provisions with which to do the work; and, money for divine good works not being squandered upon human good evils which are promoted by Satan through the sin nature. A great deal of Christian finances are squandered on human good works, and in over a quarter of a century of ministry, I have seen vast amounts of money squandered by people who had money to use, who could have made effective tremendous treasures in heaven for themselves, and great impact upon the work of the Lord in the angelic conflict, had they been able to invest their money in divine good production instead of human good production. There is a great blindness which descends upon people very often once they come into the possession of financial means that was not true of them before – a blindness which incapacitates them to being able to invest their money in a way that is productive of divine goods.

So this is a danger that is well worth calling our attention to. At this point, Satan undermines the Lord's work more than at any other point – finances. Without finances, your hands are tied. I don't care what you say; what you think; how you feel; or, what energy you're willing to devote, ultimately, you come to the end of the line. And the Lord's work done in the Lord's time and the Lord's way always has His provision made, but only through believers. Believers bottleneck the flow of funds.

Anytime a church ministry lacks funds to meet the needs of its operation, you can just count on it for sure that Christians have bottlenecked the Lord's work. This is money that they don't need; money that they never will need; money that they'll never use effectively; and, money that will never be of value to them in eternal returns, and which they will squander, because they are not functioning on divine good production.

So this is an important item, and it has many important ramifications in the life of the believer. The time and the capacities of these believers in Thyatira were used by the Holy Spirit in such a way that they were investing in eternal results. So they were producing divine good. These divine good works have values and results in terms of rewards for the Christian. Someday every Christian must stand before Jesus Christ to have the works which he has done in his lifetime classified as human good and divine good. It's going to be a very painful process, and it will be a very painful occasion. For some people, it will be very painful indeed. For others, it will be some disappointment, but mostly joy. It is a good thing, again, to keep reminding yourself that examination day for the believer is coming, and your life works are going to be judged one-by-one. So you can start off tomorrow morning and start listing all of that day's works, and you can just count on it that every bit of it is going to come under a divine evaluation at the Judgment Seat of Christ. For that which is human good investment, there will be huge embarrassment and loss. Human good is worthless for time, and it's worthless for eternity.

A key factor in producing divine good works is, as we say, the money that God gives believers. For this reason, we must be very careful in terms of that. One passage that points this up is 1 Timothy 6:17-19, which says, "Charge them that are rich in this age, that they be not high-minded nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good (divine good), that they be rich in good works (divine good works); ready to distribute, willing to share, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come that they may lay hold on eternal life." That is, that they may lay hold on life which is real life.

So there you have it very aptly and succinctly put, for those who have funds, and all of us do: some more; some less; but, far in excess of other people of the world, because we are God's select nation. We are God's select nation for making His viewpoint known. So we have been personally provided with the capacity and the circumstances to do that. We have a great responsibility as Americans, therefore, to invest our funds in the Lord's work in such a way that we are building for an eternal future. Divine good works take money, and they take your personal investment of those funds to the extent that God has provided them to you. And the extent is the problem. To sit on funds that God has given that are needed now in an era of time when we on the last stage of these final moments of this age of grace is very, very shortsighted.

**Love**

Another thing that the Thyatira Christians were characterized by was the fact they had a relaxed mental attitude of "agape" love: a mental attitude free from ill will toward God and man; a love which is produced by the indwelling Holy Spirit in a spiritual believer; and, a love which is not based upon the fluctuations of emotions, but on the mental convictions which are based upon Bible doctrine principles. This is mental attitude love which does not seek to usurp God's role in executing vengeance on others. That's a relaxed mental attitude.

So the quality of mental attitude love permeated this church. There was an attitude of goodwill; of understanding; of a forgiving spirit between the membership; of living and letting other people live; of a respect for personal privacy; and, of a sympathy for the needs and the aspirations, the hopes, and the problems of those who were in the household of faith. That was a mental attitude of goodwill.

**Faith**

The third factor that pleased the Lord in the Thyatira church was their faith. Their faith expressed itself in their trust in Scriptures as being the inspired and inerrant revelation from God, and thus possessing final authority in spiritual matters. They did not have to look to human agencies to tell them what God thought. They had it in the written Scriptures. They had faith expressed in the fact that they conducted their lives in a way which was compatible with the divine standards of morality, because they believed that these were standards which God had provided for man's blessings, and they were standards based upon reality.

**Faith Rest**

Their faith was expressed, in short, by the principle of faith rest. They practiced the faith rest principle which we read about in Hebrews 4:1-11. This principle, of course, is enunciated in various ways in the Scriptures. It is the principle of trusting God and resting in His provision. Of course, that does not mean that you trust God and rest in Him for some provision that you are supposed to take care of for yourself. If you're a student in school, you don't quit studying and trust the Lord to help you to make good grades. That is not faith rest. Faith rest means having faith in the Lord to rest in Him to do what you cannot do, and to take care of what is beyond your capacity to handle.

In 1 Peter 5:7, therefore, we read, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." What is Peter saying? Faith rest it. Hebrews 13:5-6 say, "Let your manner of life be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you,' so that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.'" How many Christians are incapacitated for Christian service because they do not believe that the Lord will never leave nor forsake them? How many seminary students have I seen drift out of Christian service and out of the Christian ministry because they got themselves tangled up in earning money; tangled up in providing for some future; or, tangled up in getting involved in a business operation so they could secure for themselves a financial base?

There are plenty of people in the ministry who have great abilities to make money, and it is a very constant danger for those who are in the vocational ministry to get sidetracked into making money, instead of saying, "I've got to depend on the Lord to take care of what I really need to have taken care of. Others have to make the money. I must do in the ministry what they cannot do, and that which I have been gifted and called to do." So too for you: you have been gifted and called with certain capacities. Others can do what you have been particularly gifted to do in God's plan. If you get yourself off sidetracked in a life of making money, you will wipe yourself out, and you will come to the end of the line and find that you have squandered a great capacity and great gift. *Your vocation for livelihood is only designed to enable you to minister.* These people have the faith to know that God was going to provide their needs so that they could do His work.

2 Timothy 1:12 is another expression of the idea of faith rest: "For which cause, I also suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." The apostle Paul had suffered many things, but he was persuaded that God was going to be able to keep that which he has committed to Him in faith rest – to depend on the Lord. The Lord would come through.

Philippians 4:6-7 add another expression of faith rest: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." The characteristic quality of a person who is functioning on faith rest is peace and stability. There is a calmness in the soul.

In Matthew 6:25, the Lord Jesus Christ expressed the principle at this point of faith rest: "Therefore, I say unto you, be not anxious for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; yet for your body, what you shall put on. Isn't life more than food in the body, and more than raiment?" Verse 30: "Wherefore, if God so clothed the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you? Oh, you of little faith." The Lord Jesus Christ was enunciating the principle of faith rest.

In Matthew 11:28, we have it again: "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now that's faith rest. It's mixing Bible doctrine and Bible promises with faith, and that produces rest in the soul. This is a very true principle. It is a very sound principle. It is a very critical principle to carry you and me through as believers in the Lord's service.

**Christian Service**

We come to a new principle (number four) that pleased the Lord Jesus Christ about these believers. That is summed up now in the word "service:" "And service." The Greek Bible has the word "kai" which is the word for "and," indicating that another virtue is being added. The word "service" is the Greek word "diakonia." "Diakonia" is the word for "ministry." It refers to the believer's investment of his life in serving God. The Greek Bible has "And *the* service." It uses the definite article "the" to indicate the particular ministry of the Thyatira Christians again.

**Military Service**

If you think about service, you may look in the Scriptures and say, "Now, what is a good analogy to this idea of Christian service that we hear a lot of talk about?" There are few churches where you don't hear a lot of talk about Christian service. If you think about what you have in Scripture that is an analogy to service, you will discover that it is most aptly compare to a military situation. The apostle Paul very effectively compares service to military service. That indeed is a very effective way to think about Christian service. I personally think it is the best way to think about Christian service, because it puts a lot of the pieces into perspective. It aligns our thinking with what God thinks about service, because it is a military experience.

This is indicated to us, for example, in 2 Timothy 2:3: "You, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Here we have another one of those occasions where Paul is comparing Christian service to a military operation. You and I, as believers, because we are in the royal family of God, are automatically also in the Lord's army, and we are automatically, therefore, also in full-time Christian service. You must be very careful about using that expression "full-time Christian service" as if it applied to some select segment within the local congregation in the form of the clergy. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, we have declared to us this principle that all of us, at the moment that we entered salvation were, in effect, sworn into the Lord's army. The moment you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, you did exactly what a man or woman does who goes down to a local military recruiting office and says, "I want to sign up." They have you raise your right hand, and you take the oath of office, and all that's involve in that oath of allegiance to the country, and to defend the Constitution without mental reservations to all enemies, internal and external, and so on. You are then officially joined for that service.

That's what being a Christian means. You've joined the Lord's military service. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, it's described: "For the love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." A soldier serves his commanding officer, and the military organization and the nation that it represents. "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet, now we know Him in that no longer. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things have become new, and all things are of God who has reconciled to Himself by Jesus Christ, and given to us the ministry (the service) of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto Him, and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now that we are ambassadors for Christ, as though Christ did beseech you by us, we beg you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God. For He had made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Each Christian has been brought into full-time Christian service. Here it is described as being an ambassador of Jesus Christ. People who are in the military service, when they have invaded enemy territory, and particularly when they have conquered enemy territory, then move in as the occupation forces, and they move in with military governments, and they indeed become the ambassadors and representatives of the governments that they serve under.

Many Christians, we must admit, serve very poorly as soldiers of Jesus Christ. They serve poorly in part because they are so ill-trained in the techniques of the Christian life. Many Christians are AWOL. This is a serious matter in the military service. It means Absent WithOut Leave. It means that you have just shoved off, and instead of being where you should be, and under the authority where you should be, and performing the service that you should be performing, you have gone over the hill. You shoved off. People who are AWOL are eventually picked up, and they're in very serious trouble. If there's anything that describes most Christians, and perhaps some of us, it's that we're AWOL: Absent WithOut Leave.

One of the greatest signs of being Absent WithOut Leave is not showing up in the local church service. There are scads of Christians who don't understand that one of the things that's involved in the military service is training. And you are under the responsibility of being there for training. If you happen to go to basic training, or you're in a boot camp in the Marine Corps or the Navy, and they have a training program, I guarantee you that you're wrestled out of the sack in the morning, and you're told what you're going to go to that day in the training program. In the service, they know how to deal with that. They have certain appropriate places that they kick around, and you shape up in a hurry. Unfortunately, we're restricted in the Lord's army from doing it quite that way. But who do you think you are to tell the military authorities under whom you serve that you're not going to be out for that training program that day? It is a thing which you must discipline yourself like in anything else where you are under the authority. You are to stand there. It is easy to get to the place where you've got your fill of it. But you are under authority, and until that training program is through, you're going to be in it.

We have people who don't show up all the time: "Why don't we show up? Well, the weather's too cold today. I certainly don't want to come out and perform military service on a cold day." The weather is bad, or the battle gets tough, or our Christian soldiers get tired. You know all the excuses. We're all guilty. And anytime somebody doesn't show up in this hallowed auditorium on Sunday morning and Sunday evening, they've only got the Lord to answer to. You are your own priest. But don't you kid yourself that most of the time you're not guilty of being AWOL. And that's Christian service in its most degraded form. Anybody who's been in the military service doesn't have anything to be proud of if, on his service record where everything is written down, that at one point he went over the hill.

So whatever the excuses are, this business of Absent WithOut Leave in Christian service is a pathetic thing. And I don't care how many high-class churches defend it. You know, in the Body Life churches, that is the movement. Come to church less frequently. Spend more time with your family. That's what's causing so much misery at home now for folks – spending more time with their families, and away from the orientation of the Word of God. So they say, "Come to church once a week." Of course, that's very attractive to the sin nature. We have these hotshot operations coming out of our seminaries here in the Dallas area that are promoting the idea of Body Church – of people ministering in their ignorance to one another, rather than under the authority of the instruction of the pastor-teacher gift, and what God has to say out of His Word. The result is that people are being trained to be Absent WithOut Leave, because the same people who like to strip down how many times they gather in those public meetings for the training sessions are the same people who are incapacitated in the angelic conflict, and who aren't out there doing the Lord's service, and who could not be commended by the Lord as the Thyatira church was for their service.

Many Christians do not respond to opportunities to witness to the gospel and to direct people to the full knowledge of Bible doctrine because they are so poorly trained. Many Christians never serve in local church ministries even though they are fully capable and equipped to make a contribution. Christians who have job assignments do not follow through on those assignments. That's a variation of being AWOL. In a military operation, when a team is assigned a job (an objective) to take, that is what they're supposed to do. If they fail to do it, they have been guilty of dereliction of duty.

In the Battle of the Bulge, one of the generals had to send one of his younger officers to hold a position. He had told him, "My orders are to go to that position, and you hold that city. You hold that line, and you hold it." Just before he left, he walked up and he put his arm around him and gave him some fatherly advice. He said, "Now, tomorrow, the Germans are going to hit you with everything they have. They're going to come screaming at you in all directions. They're going to open up with all their artillery, and all their heavy tiger tanks that they pulled up on the line. About that time, things are going to get so hot, and you're going to start thinking that you better pull out. And when that happens, I want you to remember that I told you not to do it. I told you to hold, and you hold."

This is taking an objective and being responsible for the orders that have been given to you. How many times do we Christian soldiers have work assignments around this ministry – orders, in effect, that have been directed to us, and we drag our feet and never get it done? That's being said again Absent WithOut Leave. That's dereliction of duty. The Christian soldier who participates erratically: I'll guarantee you that in a combat situation, there is no one who's so disliked as the soldier who's sometimes in there fighting and sometimes in their resting behind rocks and trees and staying out of the action. We cannot depend upon the erratic soldier. The Lord's work is conducted on the basis of those who are there; who are consistently there; who are in the battle; who are staying in the battle; and, who are not getting sidetracked with something else. It's really pathetic. We are soldiers on a field of battle. It's almost ludicrous to think that a soldier on a field of battle has constantly to be reminded, "Hey, we're in a firefight. We're in a battle situation. Get back to here with what you're doing," instead of being sidetracked with all the things that constitute our lives that can sidetrack us away from the responsibilities of pursuing the objectives that have been assigned to us.

Many Christians, indeed, are totally ignorant of their status as God's combat troops. They don't even know that they're in the Lord's army, let alone that they're in a battle. That is bad. If you don't know that you're in the army, that's bad. If you don't know that you're in a battle, that's fatal. That is fatal. There are plenty of Christians who don't understand that they're in the Lord's army. They just think they're going to come to church; go home; go about all week; bake their cookies; plant their gardens; read their books; do their leather craft work; raise their horses; do all the things that preoccupy them; and, practice their hobbies, and then they're going to come back to church next week. Are you kidding yourself? You're a soldier in the Lord's army. Don't you think that on your service record, all these things are being taken into account? You've probably got enough troubles in your life as it is with that kind of performance as a Christian soldier. You have plenty of problems that you're struggling and living with.

Don't forget that the whole objective of the Lord's training program is to go to super grace living, and super grace living is summed up in one word: prosperity – in all effects in every direction. When we put our finger on areas of our lives that we can say that we can hardly describe as being areas of prosperity, then you know that something is wrong with your training program, and something is wrong with your performance in combat. Otherwise, you would be finding yourself in a place of prosperity and satisfaction and well-being.

All facets of the Christian life are to be geared to the particular Christian service duty to which you've been called by God the Holy Spirit. And all of us have been called to such duty. 2 Timothy 2:4 therefore says, "No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who has chosen him to be a soldier." Do you understand what that said? Nobody who is in a military operation in a military organization entangles himself with things outside of that service. He's in the military service, and there's one thing he occupies himself with: his training; tactics; practice; learning; physical preparation; mental preparation; emotional preparation; and, spiritual preparation for battle. Everything else in life is extraneous. He doesn't get himself off into military service, and then he's running a business on the side that holds the attention of his life, or something else that's sidetracking him. He is in the service. He doesn't entangle himself. That's a good word because that's what it is. How many of us are tangled up in all the trivia and extraneous factors of life that are not contributing to our military service? It's going to be nice to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ. A lot of Christians are going to really get what they've got coming. All those who've been kidding themselves, and all those who've been goldbricking, are going to get it, and they're going to get it square. So that's OK if that's what you want to do. Just do not kid yourself. Do not deceive yourself into thinking that the Lord does not hold us accountable for our service responsibilities.

**The Pastor-Teacher**

When you talk about Christian service, you immediately come to a key factor that is at the heart of making Christian service a functioning reality. That is what the Scriptures refer to as one of the spiritual gifts: the pastor-teacher. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself provided the training program which enables believers in the church age to serve effectively in His army. This program is centered in the local church with his pastor-teacher who is the drill instructor. The pastor-teacher is the drill instructor in that operation. In Ephesians 4:8, we're told that the Lord Jesus Christ, upon His departure from this world to heaven to sit at the Father's right hand, provided the believers here with gifts: "Wherefore, He said when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." He led those who had been captive in the paradise side of Hades up into the Lord's presence with Him, and He gave gifts to men – to mankind. These were gifts, particularly, that he then describes in this context in the next few verses. Among these gifts which He has given has been the gift of the pastor-teacher that he refers to in verse 11.

Absence from the local church service, therefore, where the pastor-teacher exercises his role as a drill instructor is, as we have indicated, absence from a training program. The orders that have been given to us in respect to this training program are found in Hebrews 10:25, which says, "And not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." Because you are your own priest, we have a voluntary type of army when it comes to the Lord's work. Therefore, indeed you may absent yourself. You may stay at home. You may be absent from these services in spite of the fact that the orders that have been cut for you relative to this matter are very clearly spelled out in Hebrews 10:25, and simply summed up by the two words: "Be there." God is not asking you. He is not inviting you. He's telling you. The only place you are when training is being performed is in the local church service.

It is a pitiful condition, that we must in all reality face that exists in Christendom in general, that the training program of the local church is practically non-existent. It is very rare to find pastor-teachers who understand that they are drill instructors. They are not the friends, and the father figure, and the one in the local congregation that everybody is supposed to love, and they're going to be everybody's friend, and the goodwill will permeate them. A drill instructor is not generally the most loved person in the military service. He is there in order to keep you alive. He's there in order to enable you to survive under dire circumstances on the field of battle. Whether you like him or not is beside the point. Whether you appreciate his personality or not is beside the point. Whether you are attracted to him in one way or another is beside the point. The only thing that's important is that he shapes you up so that you survive. For the pastor-teacher, the only thing that is important is that he shakes you up to survive in the angelic conflict. We have casualties in the angelic conflict. We have casualties in the Lord's military service. These are casualties that are sometimes very severe. These are casualties that in fact are on occasion terminal, and a life indeed of a Christian is even snuffed out in the process of becoming a casualty in the angelic conflict. But it all hinges on the training program that has been placed with the burden of responsibility upon the pastor-teacher drill instructor.

In the Thyatira church, we may conclude that these people had obviously been pretty well trained to receive this kind of a commendation toward their service. They would not have been performing the kind of Christian service as the Lord's soldiers that receive such a high commendation if they had not been well trained by the pastor-teacher who was in authority over them. Every local church is a combat team in the Lord's army. Effectiveness against Satan and against his world are determined by the spiritual combat training which every Christian needs. The individual members are dependent on one another for achieving the divine objectives that the Lord assigns to us. We do it as a combat team. The dope-offs and the incompetents among us hinder the whole combat team from achieving the victories that the Lord has outlined for us.

That brings us to the divine program of training for Christian service. If you'll turn to Ephesians 4:12, we have this program introduced – the training objectives of the pastor-teacher gift: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." In that verse, you will count the word "for" three times. In the Greek Bible, those are the critical words that explain to us the program of training which God has provided through the drill instructor pastor-teacher. These are three Greek prepositions. The first "for" is "pros." The second one is "eis." The third one is also "eis." The grammatical structure is this: That "pros" tells us the basic foundational reason (purpose) of the training in the local church ministries. From that comes two consequences as the result of that training. That is represented by the two occurrences of "eis" (the second and third "for"). If the first "for" is not performed ("pros"), then the consequences of the second and third "for" ("eis") cannot be realized. If the first objective is not achieved, the second and third objectives of the local church training program cannot be achieved and cannot be realized.

In the overwhelming majority of the cases in Christendom today, the first objective is never reached. Consequently, the second and third are effectively undermined. I'll guarantee you that the devil is concentrating right on that first "for" to see that it is never achieved, or achieved in a very shallow way (if at all), so that the Christians cannot be an effective combat team. This word "pros" connotes in the Greek language face-to-face. That describes very aptly the particular kind of training that the pastor-teacher gives his troops. He gives it to them in face-to-face meetings such as this. The reason we do this in face-to-face meetings in public, under the local church organization, is to preserve your privacy. We don't know what's going on in your thinking as you listen to what God has to say. We don't know what positive or negative responses emotionally are coming out of you, but that is not for us to know. That is for you to know, and the Lord to deal with, and for you to act according to your own responsibility. But the training is face-to-face.

**The Perfecting of the Saints**

This face-to-face training has for its objective, first of all, the perfecting of the saints. The word perfecting is "katartismos." This word means to equip. Do you see the military significance? The first thing a pastor-teacher is supposed to do for his troops is to equip them for combat. That is what the word "pros" is talking about. The first "for" (the basic "for") is to equip the people of God. The pastor-teacher, in face-to-face training, effects (equips) the troops for spiritual combat. The people he equips are described as the saints, which means the Christians.

The pastor-teacher training program for spiritual combat is centered on what we describe as the techniques of the Christian life. Boy, would I like to see somebody write a book on the pastor-teacher combat training program centered in the techniques of the Christian life. It is his teaching gift and it is his orientation to what he is called to do for you, the people of God, that is the critical point. The people who happen to be in the church where this is understood, and who have a pastor-teacher who understands and is equipped to train his troops, are people who are blessed of God. You are a select company. That is why you are a very responsible company. You have a great burden of responsibility upon you, because you have insights and knowledge and capacities that few people in Christian churches have, including Bible churches. This concept is often basically resisted. The things that we are going to review just briefly in the techniques of the Christian life next time are things that raise the hair on the back of the neck of a lot of Bible church preachers and Christians. They don't like this idea at all, but this is where it is all at for you.

Therefore, when you go to church, if you do not find yourself in a church where, first of all, you can spot, "There's the pastor-teacher gift, and it's functioning as a drill instructor," then you have nothing. You have absolutely nothing. That's a place for you to get out of, because I'll guarantee you that you will never enter the will of God, let alone treasures in heaven under that situation. It isn't that you had it sometime in the past. It is a thing that you must have all of your life. This is why the Lord always moves us in terms of your training program. Just like in the military service, men are moved from one unit to another unit on the basis of training program and service. You are taken from this program, and you're sent here, because you have received this program of training. You are moved here for this program of training. And it moves you up. It increases your skill. It increases your combat capacities. It increases your professional ability as a soldier. Then you're moved to another situation, either for service to apply that capacity or for further development through experience indeed.

Sometimes the Lord moves you into a situation where it's just experience that you're getting in order to develop your combat capacity, because eventually you must have your baptism of fire. Eventually, you must indeed come into a combat situation where you know what it is to survive on the field of battle, and to put into effect everything that you've been trained and taught. But all of this is always, from your point of training, moving up, wherever the Lord is moving you. God never moves you down. He may move you across laterally, but He never moves you down. So, if you're in a situation where you have combat training, and you recognize that it is indeed according to scriptural principles, He is never going to do that to you. As we review these techniques of the Christian life, and you get them fresh in your mind again, and you see that indeed this is what you've got hold of, and this is what you're functioning on (this is what's making you a winner), you can be sure that God is not going to move you to some church where that's not done. You may have busted up and fractured your spiritual life so completely that you're all out of whack in your spiritual orientation so that the Lord has to bring you under some discipline and put you in the shallow nothingness. But if you have the proper combat training, He's never going to do that to you.

Any time you make a move in life, always remember that the first thing that God considers is your spiritual well-being. You never make a move to a new job because there's more money. You never make a move to a new lifestyle because it's more attractive. If it does not move you along spiritually to at least the same level or up, it is not the will of God. So don't kid yourself, and don't try to kid other people. If you do not have any equivalent in a training program and in a service program, God has not moved you. You've moved yourself. The techniques are at the heart of this, and we'll go into that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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