***Handling Rejection, Adversity, and Stress

RV230-02***

Our subject is "The Second Coming of Christ." This is segment number 4. Please turn with me in your Bibles once more to Revelation 19:11-16.

**Jesus Christ**

All of current world events are rapidly moving to demonstrate that the Lord Jesus Christ is the preeminent person of the universe. God the Father is well-pleased with His Son Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son before all rational creatures: angelic; and, human. Jesus Christ is God's role model for every person. He is impeccable in His integrity. He is morally perfect. He is sound in doctrine, and He is the exemplary, devoted servant of God. There is no greater person is to be found in all the universe than the God-man Jesus Christ. He is the true role model.

However, mankind's primary interest in Christ is to use His name as a curse word. Mankind's primary interest is to degrade Him and to belittle Him. The opinion-makers of the world ignore Jesus, and they view Him as some kind of a fairy tale who has no effect upon reality. The salvation by grace which He offers is viewed with indifference. He Himself is challenged concerning His claims to deity and to saviorhood. The moral laws of God are widely ignored, and approved in that ignoring, by our society. The human race, consequently is gradually evermore deeply descending into a filthy sewer of abominations. Jesus Christ, who is everything in human life, is simply treated as nothing, when He is in fact the center of everything.

All the world today is moving rapidly to the issue of: just who is Jesus Christ; just what role does He play; just how important is He; and, what authority does He bear? God's plan for the universal honoring of His Son will not be frustrated no matter what evil men may do.

In Philippians 2:9-11, the ultimate goal of God concerning His Son Jesus is clearly stated: "Therefore, also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every man should bow; those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." That is God's plan. Yes, they use His Name in curse words. Yes, they ridicule Him. Yes, they ignore Him. Yes, they have nothing but contempt and indifference for Him. But God says that every rational creature, human and angelic, will bow the knee in subjection to Him. All of mankind is on a collision course with the Almighty God, and man will lose in the end. At a point in the near future, Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth for a final confrontation with the evil world system that Satan has created, and with all the people who have decided to join forces with the devil.

**Bible Doctrine**

In Revelation 19:13, our study has pointed out that when Jesus Christ comes to execute the vengeance of God on the antichrist and his rebellious humanity, He will come as the Word of God. And we read that: "He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God." This is a very important identification of Jesus Christ. The life of every human being comes back to this issue – the Word of God, Bible doctrine.

It is amazing to me how many Christians simply can never get hold of this – that their life is sustained by the doctrines of Scripture, and that life revolves around the Word of God. There is nothing else. The Word of doctrine about personal salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ is the beginning point, and there is no other thing that is important for going to heaven except that Word of doctrine. The Word of doctrine about spiritual maturity as a believer is supreme in the life of a Christian who is going to rise to his heritage, or just muddle along through life. The Word of doctrine about the purpose of God in history is the only thing that will prevent us from chasing rabbits, and trying to cause things to come about in society that are not the purpose and the objective of God. It is the Word of doctrine about temporal fellowship that enables us to walk moment-by-moment, arm-in-arm with God, with the capacity of victory over sin.

**Adversities**

Only the Bible doctrine of the Word of God, the Bible, functioning in the soul enables a person to meet the adversities of life. That's what we're talking about. This is the issue that every person faces: adversities. You have had a number of them this week. Satan attacks believers with a variety of adversities daily. He hits some believers with physical adversities. And we've had a lot of that. He hits believers with mental adversities and stresses. He is believers with emotional distresses. He will hit believers with marital tensions. He'll hit believers with the adversity of financial problems. He will hit us with spiritual adversity. He will hit us with social relationship problems. He will certainly hit us with national adversities. Some people don't even like to read our handouts because they inform them about our national adversities, and they think, "I don't want to hear about that."

I knew a lady many years ago. Her husband was a classmate of mine at Dallas Seminary, and unfortunately, he married a lady who was not a suitable person for a minister to have. I remember how she, on one occasion, said, "I don't like going to Berean Church because I hear about all the troubles and terrible things in the world, and I have my own troubles." Here was a woman who knew that adversities were there, toward her and toward others, but she didn't know how to cope with them. That man has long since been out of the ministry, and he has taken his capacities, and he has muddled around all these years because he had a wife who never learned how to meet adversities: adversities in family; and, certainly the terrible adversities that could hit you within your church relationships. And if you don't meet those adversities right, the devil will snag you, and will rob you of your rich heritage, because he will pull you out, and put you in the wrong place.

**Stress**

We're talking about these outside pressures on the soul, which one faces in life, either with success or with defeat. Here's the problem here. We take these adversities, and we internalize them. We put them down into our souls where they begin eating away at us. We do not meet them with appropriate doctrine, either because we do not know doctrine, or we have not metabolized doctrine (that is, a normal functioning within our soul). The thing that happens is stress, and your innards start churning up. You can't sleep. You toss around. And before you realize it, you're not thinking straight. You're flying off the handle, and you are physically breaking down, and you are out of touch with a lot of reality.

If an adversity is internalized rather than to be met with a proper doctrine, it produces stress in the soul of the believer, and it has all kinds of consequences. Stress in your soul will build up to destroy your spiritual life. It will produce mental, verbal, and overt sins. You will do things you couldn't believe that you are guilty of doing, because stress has taken over instead of the peace of God that passes all understanding. It will create mental and spiritual disorientation. You will think that you're thinking right on track spiritually, and you will never realize that the Thessalonians syndrome of the discipline of delusion has taken place. God has brought upon your refusal to be subject to the truth of doctrine, the capacity to believe the lies. And every lie that Satan brings you spiritually, you just eat it up. He shovels it out, and you can't gobble it down fast enough. And pretty soon, you are in a totally disoriented place. You may be in a magnificent religious surrounding, but there is a desert and a starvation in your soul, and you've lost your way, and you don't even know it.

It will drive you away from all of the right associations that you should have in life. It will cause you to take up relationships with trivial objects. I can guarantee you that stress unresolved within your soul will start having a physical effect upon you; it will start bringing you down; and, it will ruin your health.

The issue is that adversity is inevitable in life, but stress is an option. You can beat it with the Word of God, or you can be beaten. And that's what you do. You bring in doctrine, and stress is removed. And in its place comes the peace of God. It's just that simple. Most of you probably have reservations about thinking that that's how simple it is. That's how simple it is to keep your stomach from churning. You keep the adversities on the outside, because you surround yourselves with the doctrines of Scripture. And adversities keep pinging off of you like sonar off the hull of a submarine. It never gets to you.

**Handling Adversity**

The Christian who does not learn how to handle adversity so that it does not become stress, and so that it leads him off in all these wild directions, we all have bad things to say about you. He will say that you have the skin of an elephant. He will say that you're insensitive. He will say you're not compassionate. He will say all kinds of things because you are taking life in stride, and that irritates those who are incapable of doing so. But they're only incapable because they choose not to do so. Everybody can meet the issues of life without stress. He can meet the adversities if he has the understanding of the Word of God. Adversity is inevitable. Stress is optional.

**Rejection**

One of the great adversities we've all faced is rejection. Rejection personally of all kinds can be an adversity which creates an enormous stress in a believer. And the wrong response from a Christian who internalizes the rejection will produce debilitating stress, and you, as a servant of the Most High God, sooner or later, are going to face rejection.

We all probably know what it is to face rejection with our families. We have come to a knowledge of the Word of God in some depth and some significance, and we would like to pass that along. We deal with these bumbling, blind relatives who cannot grasp how out-of-it they are when it comes to the things of God, but because they are in the syndrome of the discipline of delusion, they think they're right. They think they're even more right than you are. They think they're evermore closer to God than you are. Everything that's a lie, they absorb and accepted it. A wrong response from rejection will produce a debilitating stress in your soul.

Hebrews 12:15 speaks of a spirit of bitterness: "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God." The grace of God is the Word of God. It's the principles of doctrine: "See that no one comes short of the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled." What he is talking about is adversity hitting you in the form of rejection, and you react in such a way that you internalize that rejection instead of letting it bounce off you, like water off the duck's back, because doctrine gives you perspective and gives you orientation.

Let me make that a little clearer. Turn to 1 Samuel 8:4. This records for us the time when people of Israel decided they didn't want God to be their king anymore in their theocracy. They wanted a human king like all the other nations. They wanted all the fanfare and panoply. They wanted to have a court, and they wanted to have all the royalty. And Samuel the prophet (the pastor-teacher – the communicator of doctrine) told the people, "You don't want to do that. That would be a bad scene. A king will do terrible things to your men. He put them in military forces. He will make them serve him. He will cause them to die in battle. Young women will be taken for his use. They will become his servants. Your riches will be absorbed by his taxes for his projects and his governmental activities that he envisions. You will be losing out. It will cost you dearly to have a king. Let's just forget the idea. This is not a good thing to do."

Lo and behold, this man who had, over many years, demonstrated that he really did speak for God; he really was a true communicator of truth; he really understood what was going on; and, he was in touch with reality – this man who had never done anything but good in guiding them spiritually, they thumbed their nose at him and said, "You're out of touch, Samuel. You're of the old school, and we don't want to listen to this anymore." And Samuel discovered what it was to be rejected. And the first thing Samuel did was to internalize the rejection. And he comes into a condition of great stress, and probably of some personal bitterness: "How could they treat me like this after all these years? How could they give me the back of their hand as if I was some stupid wimp who had never done them any good?"

It's like Paul, when he spoke to the Corinthians who were giving him that same back-of-the-hand treatment. He had brought them into enlightenment. He had brought them into spiritual knowledge. And now the Corinthians were attacking him, and saying all kinds of terrible things about him. One of them said, "Oh, Paul is a great speaker as long as he's writing letters. But, boy, when he's on the scene, he's not much of anything. He's a meek nothing." And they were chewing up Paul. Paul had brought them salvation. He pointed out to them, "I was your spiritual father. I brought you into spiritual enlightenment. I brought you into spiritual understanding, and into the depths of the things of God." Then that's where Paul coined the phrase which has since become famous: "Well, excuse me." You can just see the sarcasm dripping as Paul said, "Please forgive me for having brought you into a deep walk with God, and a knowledge of the real things so that you're not like the rest of these fools in all these religious groups who are sweetness-and-light, and smiling at each other, and rotten at the core, and useless to God.

So, in 1 Samuel 8:6-9, we read, "But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel (this wanting of a king) when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us.' And Samuel prayed to the Lord." He did do the right thing. Here's a doctrinal principle. When people are going astray, he resorts to prayer for orientation on what to do: "And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you. For they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.'"

When you are rejected for your spiritual service in ministry, this is the verse to remember. They have not rejected you as God's spokesperson. They have rejected the truth of doctrine. And when they have rejected that, they have rejected God. And Samuel, for a moment, forgot that. He was so distressed by what he knew was going to happen if they did this stupid thing. But God says, "They won't be stopped. They're going to have to now learn from experience bitterly how right you were. But in the meantime, Samuel, you must not let this adversity become stress in your soul.

Verse 8 says, "Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt, even to this day, in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods, so they are doing to you also." God says, "After all, Samuel, why should you be upset? They've been doing this to Me since I saved their worthless hides in Egypt. I brought them out of that terrible cauldron of slavery. And what have they done? They got over here, and they looked across, and they saw all this hanky-panky of the religious systems of the Canaanite religion; the immorality; the corruption; and, the abomination, and their sin natures just rose to eat it up." And God says, "I haven't internalized this. I haven't taken this adversity against Me from this people, so that within My being, I'm not distressed. There is still peace. I have a millennium in My soul, so to speak, while there is all hell breaks loose around Me."

So, God says, "Samuel, I know what you're going through. I know what it is to be rejected. I know what it is to have grace and kindness and love thrown aside as if you were some worthless, ignorant creature. And here I am, the God who has provided for them. Now they're doing it to you."

So, in verse 9, God says, "Now then listen to their voice. However, you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them." God said, "Samuel, tell them what's going to happen. You are right on track in communicating the truth. Do not back off and say, 'Well, I'm sorry that I was stressing those things. I won't say those things anymore.' No, stay with it, Samuel. Be on track. Tell them what's going to happen, but don't you take it personally. Do not build up stress within your soul. Understand that they have rejected both you and their God."

Notice 1 Samuel 8:19-20. After Samuel gets through with the reiteration once more of what it will cost them if they put a human king over them, verse 19 says, "Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, 'No, but there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.'"

When was the last time you heard some profitable, effective servants of God who, for one reason or another, received adversity externally from a husband; from a wife; from children; from friends; or, from whatever source, and who internalized it into a stress that could not be handled, and the result was that he abandoned his true loyalties in order to be like the other churches, or to be like the other Christians? How many people have drifted off from us so they could be like the other churches whose emphasis is not by and large doctrine; whose emphasis is programs; whose emphasis is fame and pulpit personalities; and, whose emphasis is everything but what you find in the humility of Christ and in the simplicity of what He has called the Word of God?

In 1 Samuel 8:21-22, we read, "Now, after Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the Lord's hearing." He goes back and reports to the Lord what the reaction of the people was: "And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Listen to their voice, and appoint them a king.' So, Samuel said to the men of Israel, 'Go every man to his city.'" Samuel pulled the stress out of his soul. Samuel took the adversity; put it where it belongs; left it with God; warned the people; and, said, "Now you may make your choice, and you will suffer the consequences one way or another."

Any time you teach the Word of God, you must understand that you cannot force people to believe. They are taught in a group by God's ordination in the local church, so that they can sit there and exercise their own priesthood. Nobody knows whose mind is saying "Yes; no;" or, what in resistance.

One person recently said, "We used to go home and sit for lunch, and have to listen to a whole lunch period of everything that was wrong about what you had taught in church that morning. The problem was that you were right, and they were wrong." You have to understand that people must be left to make their choices, and then they will reap the consequences for good or for evil.

Responding to rejection of doctrine in the right way will increase your stability. It will increase your tranquility. It will increase your power in living. The peace of Christ will possess your soul. Once Samuel understood that it was God they were rejecting, and he applied the right doctrine to the situation, the stress left him; he settled down; his stomach stopped churning; he started to sleep again at night; his whole life was not in turmoil; and, he was back in tranquility, he found that he was more powerful than ever before, which he was because he had met the adversity of rejection in the right way.

Doctrine metabolized in the soul guides to proper thinking, and to meeting rejections in stride. If we don't do this, it is usually a sign of arrogance. We have people who should be in church today, who are at home for one reason or another; and, some of them because they don't want to hear what we are saying. It discomforts them because the word of truth, they arrogantly resist. I know that. When you resist a principle of doctrine, there is some arrogance within your soul that's causing you to do that. You think you know better. You want favor with the world system. You are seeking some advantage. You are trying to say that your case is different: "I don't have to have a family relationship with lines of authority and duties like the Bible stresses and lays out. My case is different. In fact, I have to do this. What would happen if I didn't?" Well, you could trust the Lord. That's what you could do. You could apply the Word of truth and you could do things God's way.

So, what form of arrogance in your thinking is blocking your capacity to internalize doctrine, and to be a winner when adversity has come? There is some form of arrogance when the system doesn't work. It's not God's fault. It's ours.

The apostle Paul spent his life trying to stress to people that Jesus Christ was, as we have seen Him called in Revelation, the Word of God. And the Word of God is the doctrines of Scripture, and that is the priority in all of life. Please turn to Philippians 2:14-16. Paul says to these Philippian Christians, which was an outstanding group of believers: "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." Here he calls upon believers in the city of Philippi, with all their multiplicity of house churches, each with a single pastor-teacher-elder within them. He calls upon the believers of the city to live their lives free of resentment and complaining toward God about their circumstances, and of strife with other Christians. What's he talking about? He's talking about meeting adversity without creating stress within your soul. He's telling them: "Take life in stride. Stop this turmoil. Stop the shouting. Stop the screaming that you do at home and other places. Stop this rising temper and indignation. Stop this eating away at what cannot be changed; what you are; and, the way things ought to be, but they're not." He says, "Stop attacking God for your circumstances. Stop being in strife with other believers."

Notice Philippians 2:15. Here's the reason that believers should do this – that they may be in temporal fellowship: "That you may prove yourself to be blameless and innocent children of God, above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as light in the world." He says, "Take the Word of God, and let it function within you so that you can live in the midst of a spiritually benighted society as shining beacons of spiritual light, so that you may enjoy the peace of temporal fellowship with God. You're walking with Him. You're very much at ease in Him. You're not kind of looking over your shoulder and wondering whether he sees that little bit of resistance that you have – that last thing you heard the pastor say about some subject that makes you queasy and uneasy because know you're not on track with it, and you don't like to hear that kind of stuff. You will suddenly find that you're on track with God when you just do what is right as per the Word of God.

The world today has turned its back upon God and on the truth of Scripture, and the average person is engaged in the pursuit of what is evil. Christians, in contrast, we are told, are to be seen as honorable, and free of deceit and moral perversion as befits children of God. Sometimes Christians have so lost their way. I am amazed at what some people, once in a while, even from our own congregation, will tell me they're doing, and being very pleased how they're getting away with something. It's illegal; it's is wrong; or, it's improper. And they don't even sense anymore what they're doing. At least you should have enough sensitivity and shame for acting like the world system that you don't want to tell the preacher about it. At least, in front of him, you want to try to look like a paragon of virtue. He might be dumb enough to believe it. Certainly, in order to keep you happy and smiling, he'll pretend he does believe it.

Christians should be honorable, and free of moral deceit. Thus the believer, verse 15 is telling us, will be above reproach in the circle of unbelievers. And he will bear a witness to the truth of God's word with a great impact to them. Unbelievers see that you are true to your calling as a Christian. Unbelievers have a high esteem and a high expectation of what a Christian should be – far above anything they would dream of doing. And we have to face that. If you do that, then your word will be taken seriously.

**Focus**

Then we come to Philippians 2:16. Paul says, "Holding fast the Word of Life." The word "holding fast" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "epecho." This word means to focus your mind on something. Get both of your eyes focused on something very specific. This is something that is to become the center of your thinking. It should be your constant mental attitude. This is present tense in the Greek. That means something you do all the time. It is in the active voice in the Greek language, which means that you personally have to make this decision that your focus should be in this direction.

**The Word of God**

What that focus is to be is the Word of Life, or doctrine. The word for "word" is the Greek word "logos." The word "logos" actually means a thought, or a concept. It thus refers to the thought of the mind, and here to the mind of God, which is expressed in words recorded in the Bible. Jesus Christ is called the "logos" of God in the gospel of John, because He is the expression of the mind of God. So, a written word becomes a practical, objective expression of a subjective thought. A though becomes real when you put it down into words. You cannot think without words. Try to think of a thought without words. You can't do it. You have to think of a thought by using words, and words of some language.

Here, focus your attention on the Word of Life. The Greek word for "life" here is "zoe." This is life as a principle or a quality of consciousness such as God possesses. The life of God, because He is holy, is described as eternal life. Sinners, Ephesians 4:18 tells us, that sinners are alienated from the life of God. They have no connection with God and His holy eternal life. They have an existence, but they don't have life. They become partakers of God's eternal life through faith in Christ as Savior (John 3:15, John 3:16, John 3:36). These verses focus upon salvation through Christ so that you enter the eternal life of God.

Doctrine is the wonderful thing in the Word of Life that brings us in touch with the eternal life of God. That also affects your physical body. Corinthians 5:4: "For indeed, while we are in this tent (that is, this physical human body), we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." This physical body is going to be swallowed up by the eternal life of God.

2 Timothy 1:10 says, "But now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to life through the gospel." Do you know what immortality means? It means your physical body living forever.

Someone, after the service last Sunday said, "The body is going to live forever?" I said, "Yes, that's what's so amazing. Eternal life extends to your body." He said, "Well." And I could tell what was bothering him. He said, "Will it look better?" I said, “Yes, it'll be free of all the problems you have. If you don't have a leg to stand on, it'll all straighten out. And whatever the difficulty is, it'll be perfect." He said, "But what about people who have been put to sea?" I said, "Yeah, all the fish are saving the parts, and one firs passes it on to the next." I thought that he was kidding me. Then he said, "Well, what about the cremated ones?" I said, "Well, that's ultimately what God said to Adam. You're going to go back to the dust of the ground out of which I made you, and the cremation just speeds it up." But some people are very careful. They keep all that stuff in urns, they put it on the shelf so that God doesn't have to look too far for the pieces. I mean, let's not be ridiculous. The body is eternal. It is eternal as your soul and spirit are.

Now, for the believer, that's a ball. What a great bonus! What a happy realization! You will live forever. You'll be able to do things in the world that you'd like to do now in your physical body. And the body will be perfect; free of sin; and, incapable of being an enemy of God.

But for the unbeliever, that's bad news. That means all that nervous system is going to be fully functioning in the flames of hell. All the agony is going to be felt. It's not just a mental imagination. As the man, in the story of Lazarus and the rich man, said, "This is terrible. The pain is awful. The flames are here. If I could just have one drop of cool water on my tongue, it would help so much. His heart went out to his five brothers who were just as big of hell-raisers as he was, and he knew where they were going to come.

I know a man that I recently heard is now very ill, and is not expected to live. He's just middle-aged. He didn't expect this. One thing that is characteristic of this man, I notice, is that he is very foulmouthed. He uses the name of God in curse words. I was at a social event one time, and I said something relative to the authority of women over men, and he let out an obscenity that even took me back, especially in that context of men and women here at the table. It was so explosive in his indignation. And I said, "Well, I agree with you. This is not my idea. I certainly wouldn't think about telling women that they can't rule over men, but this was God's idea, and perhaps you could talk to Him about it."

Then one of the men at the table said, "Oh ho ho," because it put it in perspective. What's going to happen to this poor man? He is going to go out into eternity, and I suspect that he's not a believer, and he's going to meet the God whose name he has been using in curse words – the name of Christ, who is the Word of God. Just because this man has rejected the truth of doctrine, beginning with salvation, his future is not very bright.

So, Paul, here in Philippians, is giving us a very important bit of information when he says, "Holding fast, focusing on the Word of life." In Hebrews 4:12, these same two Greek word for "word" and for "life" are used to describe the Word of God as we have it recorded in the Bible. You know Hebrews 4:12: "For Word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as a division of the soul and the spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." The Word of God is living. The word "Word" and the "word" life – there they are together, describing what you have in Scripture.

So, we tell you, "Read the Bible. Get a frame of reference for doctrine." And this is what I get from tapers. Tapers say, "I've been on the tapes for one or two years, and now I can read the Bible." I know exactly what they're saying. I say, "You've developed a frame of reference. You now have a background so that you can read the Scriptures, and you know what on earth it is saying. You're making connections. The Word of God is now proving to you that it is indeed alive and active.

The believer's physical body lasts forever. The Word of Life enables us to live in those bodies so that we meet adversity without becoming victims of stress. We Christians are therefore called to focus our minds on the Word of Life, which is doctrine. Learn it, and let it permeate your soul, and when it permeates your soul, it will affect your mind; it will affect your emotions; and, and it will affect your will – these three facets of the human soul.

The problem is that we Christians are constantly bombarded with objects of false focus from Satan, many of which look like they're very reasonable to us. I know that when I mention these, you're going to say, "I never thought of that. That's exactly what the devil has been doing to me. I've been focused, and he has been able to refocus my attention from the Word of God with this particular thing in this particular way." And it is important for you to be aware of this as one of the wiles (one of the subtleties) of the devil. If you join us next time, we will tell you about those.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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