***Distractions from Satan

RV231-01***

We are studying Revelation 19:11-16. Our subject is "The Second Coming of Christ." This is segment number five.

**Jesus Christ is the Word**

John 1:1 is a familiar verse to us, but one which makes a very important statement: "In the beginning was the Word. The word was with God, and the Word was God." Here is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is described by this Greek word "the Word." This word looks like this in the Greek language: "Logos." This was a word which was in common use in Greek philosophy, which is why John used it. It conveys the idea of a thought or a concept. A "logos" is a thought. A "logos" is a concept. So, "logos" really means speaking a message of thoughts, and conveying them in concrete words.

Here, the Lord Jesus Christ is called "the Word" in terms of the fact that He is the concrete exemplification of the godhead. When you think of deity, and when you think of God, and all the power in the attributes of God, Jesus Christ is the concrete expression of that thought of deity.

So, here in the opening verse of the gospel of John, we're told that Jesus Christ, the Word, existed eternally as the expression of deity: "In the beginning was the Word." You might describe this as the unbeginning beginning – a beginning which had no beginning. In other words, this was in eternity past. Jesus Christ has eternally existed as the expression of deity. Jesus Christ the word, furthermore, we're told, was in eternal fellowship with God the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Trinity: "And the Word was with God." The word translated as "with" here, in our Greek Bible, is the Greek word "pros." This word means face-to-face. So, we are told that Jesus Christ was face-to-face with the Father and the Holy Spirit as a member of the Trinity.

Then thirdly, we're told that Jesus Christ, the Word, was indeed deity from eternity past: "And the Word was God." He always was God.

In Revelation 19:13, we have had pointed out to us one of the names of Jesus Christ (a most significant name). Here in Revelation 19:13, He is called the Word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is referred to here in His role as the expression of the mind of God. Christ is the Word of God. He is the concept of God. Here He is referred to as the one who is the concrete example of the mind of God as a word that you speak as a concrete expression of some thought that you have that you're conveying.

**Bible Doctrine**

The mind of God for believers today is to be found in the doctrines of Scripture. Jesus Christ is the key to Bible doctrine as the depository of the knowledge of the divine viewpoint thinking of God. The church-age believer's relationship to Jesus Christ is entirely through the knowledge of doctrine. You need not talk about Jesus Christ; what He thinks; what He wants you to do; or, anything at all about Him if you do not know doctrine. You cannot know Christ apart from doctrine, because He is the Word of God. He is the concrete expression of the mind of God.

In 2 Peter 3:18, therefore, Peter closes this epistle with the statement, "But grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." That's the whole of the life of a believer. Some of you may not quite have grasped that, and are not ready to believe that and act upon it. But when you do, you will find enormous transformation that takes place in your human experience, when you understand that your life is doctrine. Your life is feeding upon the Word of God. And when you do that, you are drawn close to Christ. And when you do that, you are capable of meeting the issues of life that come upon you so that adversities do not become internalized stresses, but they are taken in stride, and they are used to make you stronger as a believer. Once you have grasped this, especially when God begins to take you through the crises of life, this will become an extremely meaningful concept – the Word of God as the sustaining power of the believer.

Our friend Jack Smith calls me pretty regularly from Kentucky. We discuss some of the stresses of life that he's going through. He attributes some of those to the fact that he is touching some very significant areas of life among world movers and opinion-makers, and he has brought himself to the attention of Satan. I can almost hear the tears in his voice as he describes the oppression and the adversities that are coming upon him, but the glory of the fact that the Word of God carries him through. He cannot express the depth of his appreciation for what Berean church ministries have provide for him through the tapes – the access to the Word of God that gives him the access to the mind of God, that enables him to take adversities without stress. The worst of them roll off, and he takes them in stride. You'll find that that is true. He tries to express that by simply repeating, "Doctrine really works." That's true. That's exactly what it does.

We find that when Christ comes to judge the world government of the antichrist, He will come as the Word of God. Doctrine will commend or condemn everybody who comes through the tribulation. The Christian's daily life in the devil's world is a function of doctrine. That's what we're saying. When you function on that, the results are terrific. When you do not function on the principles of doctrine, either because you're ignorant of them, or you have chosen to suppress them with some arrogance in you that you don't want to accept a particular point of doctrine, then you will find that life becomes a great misery. Every adversity which will hit a believer externally has to be met with the principles of doctrine, as we showed you in the previous session, and with the spiritual maturity that doctrine has built in the soul. If adversity is not deflected by the divine viewpoint of the Word of God, you will internalize that as stress in your soul, and the results will be bad. Your soul will be churned up with all kinds of agonizing problems so that the tranquility of the peace of God will be lost, and spiritual breakdowns of various kinds will follow.

The application of doctrine, however, to external adversity will protect you from falling victim to internal stresses, and to undermining the peace of God which is in your soul. Philippians 4:7 points out to us that: "The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." You know what your heart is, don't you? It's your thinking. And when your thinking is guarded by doctrine, then you are a winner in life every time. But when you do not take adversity and deflect it from becoming stress, then you become a victim because the peace of God is dissipated.

**Hold Fast**

So, all of one's anxieties are committed to God through the guidelines of doctrine with prayer and Thanksgiving. Focusing upon the Word of God is to be the continuous mental attitude of every believer. Philippians 2:16 says, "Holding fast the Word of Life so that in the day of Christ I may have caused to glory because I did not run in vain." Here in this verse, the apostle Paul stresses that our main preoccupation, as the frame of reference in all we think moment-by-moment is to be the Word of Life. This word of the living God is permeating the mind; permeating the emotions; and, permeating the will produce godly living, and produced divine good service to God. It is a terrible thing to waste a Christian's life – a life which could be used to earn enormous rewards in heaven. It is a terrible thing to waste that life because you build stresses in your soul instead of preserving the tranquility of the peace from God. Apart from the internalized Word of God, a believer has no basis for stability in the devil's world.

**False Focuses of Satan**

So, let's take a look for a moment where the apostle Paul, in Philippians 2:16, says, "Holding fast," which means to focus upon the word of life – doctrine. The devil comes along and says, "I've got some better things for you to focus on.

1. **Emotional Experiences**

One of those, obviously, is an emotional experience. A lot of people want to get close to God by some kind of an emotional orgy – an orgy which will drain the emotions through human manipulations because it feels so good. You put your hands over your head, and you swing and sway with Danny Kaye, or whoever happens to be playing that night. You get yourself hyped up, and you just have a wonderful time in God.

Many years ago when Berean Church was still back in the old days (in the ancient times), we still had the bench up front covered with the army blanket as our altar, to which my predecessor would call the people to come forward, to kneel before, and to pour out their hearts before God, and to find the Spirit of God. I remember after one service, one lady came up in a Pentecostal inclination and tinge (as many of those people were in those days), and she said, "Couldn't you just feel the spirit here?" And her eyes were rolling, and she just had such a wonderful time in the spirit, because the emotions had been played by the pastor like somebody running the fingers over the strings of a harp. The only spirit I sensed was the spirit of the devil. Yet, she was acting like she was on spirits, but it wasn't the Spirit of God.

So, having an emotional experience is one thing about which Satan says, "Focus on this. This is the way you'll be able to take life in stride and avoid stresses. The reason that the tongues and healing claims are so vital to charismatics is because these are keys to emotional titillation. Christians lacking the tongues and healing factor, however, in many congregations, play the same thing. They don't go for the tongues and healings. They're called Bible churches. But as you listen to that preacher, you just see how he is manipulating and playing the emotions of people, and giving them a lot of little kicks and good times, so that they'll go home and feel that they've had a wonderful relationship with God. I guarantee you that when you come into the crisis of life, and when anxiety sets you external, your emotions are not going to deflect it.

1. **Programs of Social Activities**

Another false focus that Satan holds up is programs of social activities. We have people who no longer attend Berean Church because we don't have enough social activities for people in their age group. Usually, it's somebody who's looking for a mate, so they want a wider field to roam around. These are generally in churches where the Word of God is lacking, and where they admit it's lacking, but they have a lot of potentials to look over.

I told one of them recently, "I just pray God that you do not find somebody that you will marry out of that group, and have a life of misery to regret it, because that will be a very shallow individual who is not up to your standards, but which you are degenerating and degrading in yourself."

Some churches cannot wait to provide the old folks with a trip through the Santa Elena Canyon, or to provide the single people with an outing to some exotic place, and maybe a cruise. That's nice. There are churches that have people on their staff who do nothing but create social programs for various categories of people. This can even be done by Bible churches who think that they have to provide for the social life of people. It is not the duty of your local church to provide for your social life. That is a duty that is yours to care for on your own. But it is the duty of the church to be preoccupied with teaching you and feeding you the Word of God. You can't do everything. And if you zero in on social programs of activities, that's what substitutes for the real thing.

1. **Religious Rituals and Ceremonies**

The third thing that comes up with this is your religious rituals and ceremonies by which you think you can appease God and gain access to Him. In primitive society, these rituals are very gross. It's cutting the chicken's head off, and watching it run around, and the way it falls gives you an omen, a message from God. Then, of course, you have to drink a little of the blood to really get the full message, and it becomes very gross. This is religious ritual and ceremonies to gain access to God.

In other cultures, like ours, this is done in a more refined way. But it is all of pointless mumbo-jumbo, making men appear to merit something from God. You cross yourself, or you sprinkle yourself with holy water. Periodically, in a pious way, you say, "Holy mackerel," or "Holy Cow," or something that shows that you're an environmentalist with deep feelings for the animal world. These are religious rituals and nonsensical ceremonies. Vast denominations are built on the exactly that. That's the only access to God they have.

1. **Sharing Experiences**

The fourth way of a false focus that Satan gives you is to share your experiences to prove that God is real and working in the world. The reality of God is not established by our experiences. It is established by what the Bible says. What the Bible tells us about God is what is true. How God functions is in Scripture. That's what's true. If your experience doesn't happen to match up to that, there's some other reason. But your experience is not an access to the truth. Experiences are the playground of Satan, and they are the distortions of your sin nature. Most Christians know so little doctrine that they're too shallow to even share much of spiritual enlightenment with others. So, don't stand up in a testimony meeting and use your experiences that God has given you (which may be very legitimate) as some proof of truth. Just enjoy it. Enjoy the blessing. But don't think that your experiences make something true about God. God is true because of what He is, apart from any experience we may have.

1. **Star Personalities**

Another false focus is following the star personality in the Christian life. This may be someone who has written a religious bestseller. You follow that person, and that becomes your lodestar. That becomes the North Star to guide your travels. It may be someone who is a smooth pulpit personality. But unless you listen carefully, you miss the fact that he only dispenses the milk of the Word of God. He has little inspirational talks (sermonettes, or Christianettes) that he gives out on a regular basis. It makes him very popular, and gets a large crowd. You find yourself following this star personality rather than the Word of God. Very often, what Christians will do is start pitting one teacher against another to champion one that tells you the things that you like to hear.

I was telling someone today that when the weatherman speak, if I don't like the weather that one weather man is giving, I turn to another one. I just flip the channel to another station, and get one that's giving something better in the way of the weather. That's what people do with the preachers.

When we have elections, if I am listening to the returns that do not sound good for the person that I voted for, I turn to another channel, and get a reporter who is giving better returns. You see the nonsense of that. It does not change reality. Following the star personality in your life is not going to change your realities.

1. **Public Relations Techniques**

Then Satan focuses you on chasing public relations techniques to promote the Lord's work. He tries to get you hot on the latest procedure (technique) invented by some Christian education leader. How many things within our own experience have we seen? Scads of books have been written on the latest way to go. And everybody's pursuing it, and then it just filters away, and it's all gone. This is the idea of glamorizing Christianity so that the high and mighty of Satan's society will give Christians a tumble. We don't care what the high and mighty think. We don't care what the high and mighty have to say. We only care about glorifying Christ, and we have to do that through the Word of God, because that's the word of truth. When you start using public relations techniques, you start accommodating to the old sin nature lusts in people. And while you may appear to blinded individuals (unbelievers) in that way, for the Christian, it only locks him into his sin nature enslavement. You don't reach God by chasing public relations techniques of various kinds.

**Distractions of Satan**

1. **Your Church**

There are also distractions that Satan causes to change your focus from the Word of God. One of the distractions is for you to be careless about what kind of a church you attend. We've talked about this many times, and yet our experience has demonstrated how easily Christians will switch off from a place of instruction in the Word of God to one in which they simply are treated as shallow idiots. Remember the keyword "HICEE" preaching. This is extremely important. This is one way that that Satan causes you not to focus upon the Word of Truth.

**Hermeneutics**

The "H" in the acronym "HICEE" stands for hermeneutics. Hermeneutics means principles of teaching. It includes how you preach; how you present things; and, how you convey things so that people can remember them. There are principles by which to present the truth.

**Isagogics**

The "I" stands for isagogics. Isagogics is extremely important. A few Sundays ago, we talked about the church as the bride of Christ, and the steps by which the marriage will be brought about between Christ and the church. To understand that, you have to know the background of the times of Scripture – how marriage ceremonies took place. You have to know geography. You have to know the customs of the day for you to understand something you're reading in the Bible, which you would not understand unless you have this background material. Isagogics is terribly important. If your preacher isn't telling you, "Here's how they used to do it in those old days," you're going to have to pass a lot of Scripture over without fully being able to enter into what it's saying.

**Categories**

The "C" stands for categories of doctrine. Every now and then, it's important to stop and say, "Here is the doctrine about the blood of Christ, in so many points. And you lay it out for people because you have studied and brought together, from all over the Bible, the principles that deal with that particular doctrine. This is a very key thing. If you attend a church where the preacher never gives you a category of doctrine, that's a bad sign. He is not concisely bringing together what you need to know about a subject so that you're not misinterpreting Scripture by taking one verse out of the context of the whole doctrine.

**Exegesis**

Then the first "E" stands for exegesis. Exegesis has to do with the grammatical interpretation. The grammar of the Greek and Hebrew languages is what guides us to what the Holy Spirit said. That's why you need the pastor-teacher who can take this and explain it to you. Isn't it amazing to know, for example, such a little thing that there are four different "ifs" in the Greek language, and when you read it in English, you don't know which one it is. So, when you read about Jesus in the wilderness temptation, the devil says, "If you are the Son of God, make these rocks turn into food (bread)." When we tell you that that is a first class condition "if," you will remember that first class is true. When it says, "If you are ... ," you can translate the word as "Since you are the Son of God." The devil was admitting who Jesus was. The devil was not questioning, as it might seem from the English. He *is* the Son of God.

However, if you take 1 John 1:9 about the confession of sin, and it says, "If we confess our sins," and I tell you that that's a third class condition, now you know that that's a condition of maybe you will and maybe you won't – but if you do, this is what's going to happen. And if you don't, this is what's going to happen.

So, exegesis is very important to have you get the explanation that you understand what is being taught.

**Etymology**

Then, the last "E" stands for etymology. Etymology has to do with the meaning of words. We constantly try to give you what the meaning is behind some English translation. It is important that you have the meaning of the words from the Greek Bible and from the Hebrew Bible.

So, failure to attend a church where the preacher is obviously following the HICEE technique of preaching is going to distract you from focusing on the Word of God.

1. **Your Personal Living**

Your personal living in the state of carnality because you have unconfessed sins, and you are building spiritual callouses on the facets of your soul (your mind; your emotions; and, your will) will cause you (because you are of out of temporal fellowship) to be distracted from focusing on the Word of Life.

1. **Moral Distractions**

Then there are the distractions of Satan and his demons throw in of a moral, human, chemical, or material nature. Satan will throw in a moral distraction. Satan will throw in some human conflict distraction, or he will throw in some drug distraction, or he may throw in something of a material nature. For most Christians, that is a very prominent one – handling their material resources in a way that they are not slaves to it.

Somebody came to me the other day and said, "Boy, that lesson on the tape about the mastery of details of life – that is the greatest thing I have ever heard." This person was a slave of material things, and suddenly that doctrine gave him the focus on the Word of Life.

1. **Lack of Self-Discipline**

Next is the distraction in the form of lack of self-discipline to organize your life to be a student of Scripture and to learn doctrine; to organize your life so that you're here in church; and, to organize your life so that you have time to read the Word of God yourself. When you have built up your own background (your own frame of reference), you can understand what the Word is teaching.

1. **A Rebellious Attitude**

Another distraction is a rebellious attitude toward what the Bible teaches, and to have a rebellious attitude toward the pastor-teacher or whoever the communicator may be. Perhaps you don't want to separate from the world system of Satan in some more respect. So, you try to keep one foot in the world, and one foot in the camp of the people of God. That rebellious attitude is arrogance. You have an arrogance at some point that causes you to reject what God is saying, and then you take it out on the person who has told you the truth. This is as in the ancient days, when the runner came to the king with the word that his armies had been defeated, and the enemy was on the way, the king killed the runner. He killed the communicator for bringing the bad news. That's what people do who are rebellious against the Word of God. They take it out on the communicator.

1. **Bad Health**

Another distraction that will keep you from focusing on the Word of God is your bad health – poor health habits resulting in physical incapacities. I've been watching the tabloids as I go through the pay-out at the drugstore and other places. There I've been seeing the tabloids, and there is the picture of John Candy. He was a very humorous entertainer, and one who made vast sums of money. And there's the sad headline, "How He Eat Himself to Death." ... He ate food that caused him to become a monstrous creature of over 300 pounds. And in his last days, he was on a big eating orgy. That's sad. When you have poor health; when your physical capacity breaks down; and, when you treat your body in a way that you can't even digest your food, you have to remember that if you don't digest, you just die. Someplace along the line, John Candy failed to digest, so he just died.

There are Christians who can't attend church services because of the physical treatment that they have given themselves in the way they live. They stay up late Saturday night watching the latest greatest television programs. Saturday night is when they run the greatest ones. Satan sees to that. ... They have all these that they throw out there. So, you're so dog-tired, you decide to sack it in. And people who have physical debilitations because of their own way of living – that will take your focus off the Word of Life very quickly.

If you'll turn to 1 Timothy 4:16, you'll see the same principle reiterated by Paul again: focusing on the Word of Life. That is our life. Paul says, "Pay close attention to yourself, and to your teaching." And the word "teaching" there is the word "doctrine." Pay close attention. Remember in the previous session that we showed you this same word "epecho:" pay close attention. Everything within your being was focused on one point. It says for us to pay close attention to yourself, and to what you're doing with doctrine. It couldn't be clearer, unless you've got some arrogance such that you don't want to believe that. Pay close attention. Focus on yourself and on the Word of God.

Then: "Persevere in these things. For as you do this, you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you, because you will be a source of true doctrine." This word "epecho" here is an imperative. It's a command. God is commanding you to focus upon His Word. Such attention to doctrine is a thing which brings spiritual blessing and prospering to yourself and to others in terms of eternal matters.

There is something more in Philippians 2:16 that we should notice. Paul says, "Holding fast (focusing) upon the word of life." Why? "So that in the day of Christ." If you remember, "the day of Christ" is a technical term in the Bible for the rapture and for the Judgment Seat of Christ. Paul says, "Focus upon doctrine for this reason. So, that day that we must all face before the Judgment Seat of Christ, the day of Christ, refers to the rapture of the church and the Judgment Seat of Christ which follows. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done, whether it is divine good or divine bad."

So, Paul is saying, "Focus upon doctrine so that at the rapture, you may have cause to glory." This word "glory" here means a ground for glorying. It does mean glory in itself, but that you will have a basis for glorying. Why? Because Paul says, "I did not run in vain." Here he is using the analogy of a footrace to win a prize of a reward. And Paul runs for rewards to be received at the Judgment Seat of Christ for what he did as a communicator of doctrine. Paul says, "I don't want to run my Christian life in vain." The word "vain" means "to no purpose" – serving God to worthless human good works, not divine good: "And to have toiled in vain." This word "toiled" here is the Greek word that refers to physically tiring work in God's service. It is a weariness of the soul and the body in serving God in whatever capacities of your spiritual gift – to work in vain.

I am humbled as I look upon our congregation and members of this congregation who consistently, doggedly, and without anybody having to pump them up or to cheer them on, serve in a capacity. They have a gift; they have ability; they have a heart for the Word of God; and, they have the capacity to meet a need. That's all they need – to see the need, and to know that they have the capacity to need it. And what do they do? They put themselves into that capacity. Sometimes it is just physically exertion, and it's tiring, and it's draining. But God says, "Do it for the glory of Christ, and do it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and you have tired yourself out with purpose, because God will not forget your labor of love."

What Paul is saying is something that we all need to know carefully. Paul is saying that he did not want to spend his life in worthless human good words in which he exhausted himself without earning rewards in heaven – losing his life potential. All these people are engaged in creating church programs and entertainment events for members of the congregation in various categories to enjoy, knock themselves out to what avail? To give people something that is not the province of the local church to provide. If Paul led Christians to focus on doctrine, there is ground for him to rejoice. And he will look back, as he did, and say, "I've fought the good fight." And he could say, "I've run my course." It can be a terrible thing to suddenly find yourself in eternity. And you could do it just like that, you know. Suddenly, you don't wake up on this earth. You wake up in heaven. And you think, "Oh, there was so much I wanted to do, and so much I wanted to take care of. I didn't really realize I'd be checking out so quickly."

Paul said, "Whenever I go, I don't want to be sad. I want to rejoice in how I used my life." For a communicator of the Word of God, there's no ground for satisfaction in a lifetime of Christian service that has not been spent to teaching people doctrine. Preachers do all kinds of things. They engage in all kinds of activities. They exhaust themselves in a variety of ways. And I can guarantee you the preparing instruction that has some depth and quality to it is tremendously exhausting. It is a problem when you've hit a mother lode of some germ of truth, and you're making some open field running, and then the time has come to go to bed. That's when you find how intense has been your labors in the Word of God – when you can't settle down, for one reason or another, and be able to fall asleep, because you have focused on the important thing – God's mind to the minds of the people of God.

So, what I'm telling you is that no matter what successes a pastor-teacher (or any of you) may achieve; what fame we may gain; what honors will be bestowed upon us; what prestige we may carry; what material prosperity we may enjoy; what influence we may bear on others; or, what all we may produce by our speaking – if we do not communicate the word of life in usable form to the people of God, we have no ground for glorying, rewards, and happiness. And that special crown that is reserved in Scripture for pastor-teachers who have done the job of communicating the Word of God is going to be missed by a lot of famous personalities that you see on television, who trivialize the Word of God, and trivialize the potential of believers. It's fun to listen to them, and you laugh, and it's exciting. You must stop and realize how often you're looking at some strutting peacock who is putting on a show in the midst of his large congregation for you; who is manipulating the emotions of the believers; and, who is leaving them starving for the food of doctrine so that they cannot survive in the angelic conflict, so that when adversities come, they succumb to stress.

This is the reason why the requirement is placed in 1 Timothy 3:2 that those who are going to be pastors must have the ability to teach. In describing an elder-pastor-teacher, here he is called an overseer: "An overseer then must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, and (then the zinger) able to teach." This is not just a characteristic of Christians.

I once read a little booklet by a Dallas seminary professor who didn't like the idea of a pastor-teacher as an instructing authority, and their importance to the local church. He took this word, and translated it as "teachable," and made it a general quality of Christian character – that that leader had to be teachable. Well, that's true. But in the Greek language, the subtlety is really great, because the words "able to teach" and "teachable" (they're two different words in the Greek) have only one letter different from each other. To this day, I'm not sure whether he missed that one-letter difference, and when he looked the word up in the lexicon, he missed it, and just went to the word that said "teachable," and didn't realize that it was one-letter difference from the Greek word for "able to teach." But the meaning is totally different. I'm telling you that in 1 Timothy 3:2, the word is "didaktikos," which means to be able to teach. So, the primary job of the pastor-teacher is to be a communicator of categories of doctrine.

So, if you find yourself in a church where your pastor-teacher is not operating in a HICEE technique, and where he is not skillful in teaching, or he chooses not to be skillful in teaching in order to attract the crowd, you should find yourself another pastor-teacher. But if you have one that does that, then you should not be staying at home. You should recognize that this is a gift from God for your eternal profit. I can assure you that when the day of Christ comes (that rapture takes place), and you stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ, you will be thankful for all eternity for every moment that you spent under the instruction of the Word of doctrine.

So, you see what great meaning lies in the statement in Revelation 19:13 that calls Jesus the Word of God. Once more, that's the significance of John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word (referring to Christ). The Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:14 says, "And the word became flesh." This pre-incarnate Christ took on a human body: "And dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory – glory as the only begotten, from the Father, full of grace and truth. Jesus Christ came as the Word of God in human form, full of grace and truth.

1 John 1:1 says, "What was from the beginning; what we have heard; what we have seen with our eyes; and, what we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning Word of Life." Isn't that interesting? John begins his first epistle with the same emphasis that Christ is the Word of God. He is the exemplification of what God is.

Now, here is some isagogics. At this point in time, when John wrote, one of the first heresies of Christianity arose called gnosticism. One of the things that the gnostics said was that Jesus Christ never rose from the dead. You have seen Him as a spirit being. It was only a spirit being that was with the disciples after the crucifixion. If you had gone up to Jesus Christ to shake His hand, you would have closed on your hand right through Him. He was just a spirit. It was not somebody you could handle and feel. However, right off the bat, John says, "We've handled Him. We touched Him. We have seen the wounds in His side and in His feet and in His hand, and we felt Him, and He was a physically alive human being. He is the Word of Life."

To preach doctrine then, and for you to learn doctrine, is to enter into the living Word of God. That's why we tell you that the focus of your life as a believer is to be doctrine, so as to experience fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be capable of producing divine good works. Sincerity; emotionalism; carrying on about praising God; and, giving glory to Him does not make false doctrine and false practices acceptable to God. You have plenty of relatives and plenty of friends who are victims of false doctrine and false practices, who think they are in the know with God, but they are not. For that reason, it is important to know that we must focus upon the word of life. That is our life.

General MacArthur, in making his last speech to the cadets at West Point, closed his remarks by saying that when he crosses over the river (meaning to death), his last thoughts would be upon the long gray line – the cadets in their gray uniforms at the military academy. He said, "As I cross the river, on my mind and in my memory, as always, will be my devotion to the army, and the army, and the army.

When Christ died upon the cross, we find that what carried Him through, across the river of death, was doctrine, and doctrine, and doctrine. He was repeating Old Testament Scriptures, and His final words were a quotation from the Old Testament: "Into Thy hands I commit My Spirit. It is finished." What carried Him through that terrible ordeal on the cross was doctrine. And it will carry you through whatever comes into your life. But you must be aware of the fact that, as you say, "When I go out, it will be doctrine, and doctrine, and doctrine," that the devil is listening. And as you become a devoted follower of the Word of God, a fan and a zealot for obeying the Word of Truth, you will then find what adversity is as you've never known it before. But you will have the capacity to take it an enormous stride.

"Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world." Greater is the Spirit of God who can overcome the spirit of Satan. Make doctrine your life. Outside of that, nothing has any meaning. With it, your finest hours are always before you.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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