***Reversionism  
  
RV60-01***

We are studying the letter to Laodicea, segment number four, recorded in Revelation 3:14-22. As we have seen, the local church in the city of Laodicea is addressed by the Lord Jesus Christ in a letter which is dictated to the apostle John who is on the island of Patmos in exile under the authority of the Roman government. The island of Patmos is in the Aegean Sea off the coast of modern Turkey.

The Lord has no word of commendation for this church congregation at all. They are born again spiritually, but they are in a gross state of carnality. It is a church which was located in a prosperous and intellectual city which was steeped in human viewpoint arrogance. It is a church with a very smug and sophisticated view of itself as being relevant to its society by accommodating to the human viewpoint of the pagans around it.

The Laodicean believers were indifferent to the fact that whatever Jesus Christ, as the divine spokesman, has said, has an irrevocable Amen upon it: So be it. When He has spoken, there is nothing more to be said. They have forgotten that what He has told them has the Amen of Almighty God upon it. The Lord introduces himself to them, therefore, as "the Amen." The Laodicean church has not only played loose with the Word of God, but it is reminded by Jesus Christ that He speaks to them as the official and legal witness of the Godhead. His testimony as that witness is declared to be genuine; that is, that is it is complete and it is true. It is declared to be a testimony which is reliable and genuine: complete and true. The relationships of sinful man to a holy God are based upon what God reveals, not upon what man thinks they should be. In Laodicea, they were making their own rules. In Laodicea, they were making their own judgments as to how God should treat them.

So, the Lord Jesus Christ says, "I am the official authorized legal witness of the Godhead, and therefore My testimony is the one by which you will be judged. The Laodicean church had no reason to feel intimidated when the pagan religious opinions were contradicted by God's revelation to them through the Lord.

The Lord Jesus also points out that He is the Creator of all the material things that the Laodicean church were putting ahead of Him. Jesus Christ holds the place of preeminence in all the universe because He made the universe. Earthly celebrities of any kind are simply a joke, and they are an example of a sinner's arrogance. In all the universe, there is only one celebrity, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 15:14, the Lord Jesus describes one of the most pathetic conditions to be found anywhere in the human race. It is well, as we study the letter to Laodicea, to observe that condition. Jesus, in speaking about the religious leaders of Israel, said, "Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind; and, if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." These are spiritual leaders, who are blind to divine viewpoint truth, trying to lead the spiritually blind to God, and having no idea where they are going.

That condition described in this verse is true of all liberal churches today: period. It is true of every liberal church today. It is true of every cult group today. It is true of their preachers, and it is true of their religious leaders. They are spiritually blind. I don't care how much reputation they have. I don't care how much education they have. I don't care how men hold them in esteem. I don't care how good they are as human being individuals, nor how sincere and how dedicated they are. The liberal orientation is a blind orientation to divine viewpoint truth. Most of what goes on in religious circles today, in our country, is the blind leading the blind. The Lord says that both the blind leaders and their blind followers are doomed to self-destruction. These are unsaved preachers leading unsaved church members into hell.

In Laodicea, as if that condition were not pathetic enough, it was even worse. It's bad enough when you have an unsaved preacher who is blind to divine truth reality, leading unsaved people (supposedly) to the living God, and instead, leading them straight into hell. That's a pathetic condition. But in Laodicea, there was something that was even worse than this. Here, you had a pastor-teacher who was not blind to divine viewpoint truth, and who was leading his flock into carnality. Here was a preacher who knew the realities of the Word of God, and who was guilty of leading them into a carnal situation. These were church members who knew the Word of God, and they were willing to follow a leader blinded by his own carnality. It is even more pathetic when you have Christians who know the truth, who act as if they were blind to the truth. That is as low and as gross as any human being can get. These are Christians who abandon God's truth to gain something that the world is dangling out to them. They are suffering from a self-inflicted blindness.

Today, we have Christian men and women who are choosing unbelievers or carnal individuals, and saying that that is God's will for them. They are following after Christians who are in carnality, and saying that it is God's leading of them. It is a terrible thing to know the truth, and to be willing, like a stupid pig, to have a ring stuck into your nose by that carnal gang, and have the rope yanked, and for you to follow in a docile way after them. The Laodicean Christians were just that kind of group.

We have seen that they were neither icy cold (unsaved), nor were they boiling hot (spiritual believers – believers in the inner circle of temporal fellowship). They were what the Bible describes as lukewarm, which meant they were in a status of carnality. The Laodicean church followed its pastor-teacher messenger into a status of reversionism – backsliding from spiritual maturity. The church members were out of temporal fellowship with God the Father, and they were minus the illumination and the leading of God the Holy Spirit.

**Vomit**

Revelation 3:16 expresses divine revulsion – the absolute stark picture of an offended God: "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth." The word "will" is the Greek word "mello." That word means "about to," and it signifies the intention to do something. It is in the present tense. This is God's attitude toward this particular church in Laodicea. It is active. God Himself is going to do it. What He says that He is going to do is "to spew them out." The Greek word is "emeo." "Emeo" means "to vomit." It's only used once by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, and that's probably enough. When the Holy Spirit uses a word only one time, it has a particular strong significance to it.

This word expresses the utmost abhorrence by God of the spiritual reversionism in the Laodicean church. It was a bad situation. It also refers to the future status of this church in God's plan. It is in the aorist tense, which is the point of no return from reversionism. When Jesus Christ comes to act in discipline, that's the end of the line. Furthermore, it is active, which is indicating that Jesus Christ Himself is going to do the regurgitating, so to speak. It is He who is going to spew them out and wash His hands of them. It's in the infinitive mood which indicates that that is God's purpose.

So, this church, as with all of us, can get away with a lot that is out of the will of God until the point when God says (aorist tense): "At this point now: discipline is to be applied." Then you can fall on your knees, and you can beg, and you can plead, and you can promise, and you do what you wish, but when God kicks discipline into operation, it's going to roll. That's what this church has been told: that when you're beyond the point of no return, the discipline is going to be executed. It's going to be "On you," which refers to that local church. It's specifically going to be "out of." That is the Greek preposition "ek:" "Out of My" (referring to Jesus Christ), and out of His "stoma." This is the physical origin for eating. So, if you can put that picture together, you've seen people throw up. Here you have the stark picture of a vomiting God to express His total revulsion toward spiritual reversionism.

The Lord of the Laodicean church, Jesus Christ, said to them that He couldn't stomach them, and therefore, that He was going to vomit them out. The King James writers didn't want to be too offensive. Very often, the King James translators adjust the language of the English into something which is not quite what is said in the Greek or the Hebrew. The Greek or the Hebrew becomes so shocking sometimes that the King James translators softened the blow. Here's one place where they did. Instead of using the clearcut word of vomit, they use the words "spew out." In Elizabethan times, they even had a stronger word for "vomit." That was "puking," as Shakespeare described "Those mewling and puking infants."

That is the picture that you have here in Scripture. You have the sobering picture of a vomiting God – a God who is just puking, because this God is being portrayed as nauseous. Nausea is something that is contaminated. That is something on one's stomach which upsets a person. So, in time, he can't hold down the thing that's upsetting him. He can't hold down this contaminated thing. Here we have the picture of a Holy God who cannot stomach a reversionistic church. It makes God sick.

This is a very forceful Scripture. Maybe you have been taking this lightly: "Well, sometimes we don't do what we should. Sometimes we get carnal, or sometimes we get careless with the things of God. Sometimes we're indifferent toward the Lord. That's reversionism." The word "reversionism" should strike a terror into your heart. It should make the hair stand up on the back of your neck. It should be a nightmarish word to you. If it isn't, you're out of touch with reality. I would suggest that you make correction in a hurry. You would not be so lackadaisical, and so easy-going if you had God's feeling for reversionism. The Bible tries to make it clear. The Lord Jesus uses the strongest language he can. He says," I'm just going to vomit you up. I cannot stomach you in the status of reversionism."

The stench of reversionism of Christians in God's nostrils is forcibly portrayed by this analogy. I need not remind you what regurgitation smells like after it comes up. The next time you get a chance to check that odor out, remember this verse. Don't do it now, but remember this verse. It'll help you get a little feeling as to how God feels about your carnality: your little itsy-bitsy indifference toward the principles of the Word of God; your little compromises; your little neutrality; your little sophisticated thinking it over; and, your superiorities when God has spoken.

The local church conditions in general today, I remind you, are depicted by this Laodicean church. This is the condition that exists in Christendom, by and large. Only here and there you find the Philadelphia type of believers in a congregation. What you have is, by and large, the Laodicean type that simply is regurgitation in the eyes of God. Here you have a church which is a stench in the nostrils of God, and it is the product of a pastor-teacher who is disoriented to the divine viewpoint of the Word of God. It's not that he doesn't know it, but that he is willing to play the blind leader to lead people blindly on to their own self-destruction in terms of their eternal rewards. He can't lead them to the loss of their souls, but he can lead them to a monumental loss of their personal rewards, and of their medals of honor that God has for them in heaven.

The Laodicean church had a totally different view of itself than the stinking pile of regurgitation that the Lord Jesus Christ said it was. It thought of itself as a very cultured group, and a very sophisticated intellectual group. It was pleased with its prosperity. It was pleased with the fact that they all had a lot of love for one another, and they were pleased with their human good production of all the things they were doing for people. They were dominated by emotions, and they thought that this was spirituality. They thought that this was a wonderful thing because they could feel so warm toward one another, and they had such deep-seated feelings that expressed their attitudes toward the Word of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ forcibly warned these reversionistic believers of His intention of casting them aside as a ministry. That's what the Lord is saying to them: "I'm going to cast you aside as a church, and I will cut you off from your existence. They were in for divine discipline as a group, and they were in for divine discipline, as Christians always are, as individuals. They were in danger, as a matter of fact, as individuals, of the judgment of physical death, for they were guilty of the sin unto death.

So, this business of backsliding or reverting into spiritual immaturity is a very serious thing with God. It is the most disgusting thing that the Lord has to deal with, with individual believers.

**Reversionism**

So, now let's look at the road into reversionism. To do this, we have to turn back to Ephesians 4:17-19. This is a very critical, important area of the Word of God. We'll begin with Ephesians 4:10 first.

**Spiritual Maturity**

What is the nature of spiritual maturity? That's the first thing we're interested in looking at. Jesus Christ from heaven has made provision for your spiritual maturity. He has given you a provision that is absolutely fantastic that no other group of believers in any other dispensation has ever had. Only you who live in the age of grace have such a provision for moving ahead in spiritual maturity. In Ephesians 4:10, we read: "He that descended (the Lord Jesus Christ) is the same also that ascended up far above the heavens, that He might fill all things." We have a key word here in what the Lord Jesus Christ is doing in heaven, and what He made provision for before He returned to heaven: "To fill all things."

The word "fill" looks like this in the Greek language: "pleroo." "Pleroo" means "to fill up a deficiency." A new convert, as you well know, has a total spiritual deficiency in his soul. He has little divine viewpoint understanding beyond the gospel. That is why a new convert, or a person who has been a Christian a long time but uninstructed in the Word of God, does not have anything to say. A new Christian or an untaught believer is practically zero in divine viewpoint. He has nothing to say. That's what's so ludicrous about getting some famous personality (somebody in the entertainment world) who suddenly has enough brains to accept the gospel (because of the Holy Spirit), and get born again; and, then suddenly he's put on the speaking circuit. Meetings are held, and they're built around this star personality. Here is this great athlete who suddenly has become a Christian, and he becomes a speaker at various functions. The guy's a zero. He's as ignorant of divine viewpoint as your baby is of the multiplication tables. He knows nothing, and he's got nothing to say. And you should not be willing to sit there and be humiliated, and be treated in such a way at gatherings where these star personalities, who have recently come into the Christian life, are featured as speakers.

I could give you quite a history of the disasters of that practice – of people who were exalted in the public eye, who later on have fallen flat on their face and proven to be anything but what they were portrayed as being. Some of them are not even born again.

You come into the Christian life with a very serious spiritual deficiency. The Lord said, "I'm not going to leave you like that. You can stay like that if you choose to. But I'm not going to leave you like that, like you were some dumb dog animal. I am going to give you the means of transporting yourself from that deficiency into the fullness of the image of My Son. I made you in the image and likeness of God." That's what you're destined to be. Therefore, we have to put something into your soul in the way of divine viewpoint in order to bring about the reflecting of that image of God.

So, deficiency of divine viewpoint has to be corrected by the building of spiritual maturity in the soul of the believer. It is the instruction of the Word of God (doctrinal principles) that make this maturity possible. This Greek word "pleroo" is in the aorist tense, which means that it is a point action. The point here is when the Christian is using the grace system of perception to study Bible doctrine under the pastor-teacher. It is also in the active voice, which means that God the Holy Spirit is the one who is doing the teaching of the believer, which enables him to correct the deficiency. The mood is subjunctive. The subjunctive mood means that there is a potential development for the believer. Obviously, there are an awful lot of believers floating around who have never gone very far in removing this deficiency in their souls. And that's sad. Christians go year after year after year, and they never grow spiritually.

Ephesians 4:10 says that the Lord Jesus has made provision that He might fill all things. The "all things" here refers to the spiritual maturity in the believer's soul. By the context you will see that, in the very next verse, he proceeds to explain the gifts of communication that are essential for a Christian to remove his spiritual deficiency. So, he describes the gift, included in which is the pastor-teacher gift, for the instruction of the saints, which is at the heart of removing this deficiency. Ephesians 4:11: "He gave some pastors and teachers." Some have the gift of teacher. Some have the gift of pastor and teacher – a combined gift.

**The HICEE Technique**

The pastor-teacher is the one who instructs his flock using the HICEE method of instruction, which is the only kind you should be willing to sit under. If you are ever removed from this place, and you have to find another church, you ought to visit around, and you ought to watch. You ought to sit in a service, and you ought to analyze to see whether you can spot that the preacher is teaching from the HICEE technique. If he isn't, get out. Find another place. If you can't find one, do the best you can with what you can find, and supplement it through tapes or some other means.

1. **Hermeneutics**

The HICEE technique means that you've got a preacher who is teaching you on the basis of observing hermeneutical principles. That's what the "H" stands for. Hermeneutics are the guidelines for analyzing Scripture. Such a principle, for example, is that everything in the Bible is to be viewed in a literal sense first. That's a hermeneutical principle. If you spot a preacher who is always symbolizing the language of Scripture, you want to back off from him. He is violating a basic principle of hermeneutics. There are many principles, and we have reviewed these before, that help us to arrive at what God the Holy Spirit thinks.

1. **Isagogics**

Secondly, you should watch for the "I," which is isagogics. This is the believer being taught on the basis of the background of Scripture. You should know what the conditions were at the time that the Bible was written. You should know what these things mean that are referred to in Scripture in terms of the historic context. That's very important for you to understand what's going on.

1. **Categories**

Then you should watch for categories of doctrine (the "C"). You should watch for, once in a while, a stopping and a summarizing, drawing together from all parts of the Bible, what the Bible says on a single subject. The Bible is not a book that teaches by classifications. You have an instruction on a subject here; then another writer here; and, then another writer here. Somebody has to bring all that together. Then you have to say, "Here is what the Bible says about how to pick someone in marriage," for example. Then you go: one; two; three; four – here are the guidelines that the Bible says. You have to say, "When a nation has to go to war, there are certain guidelines that should be followed. It is the Bible doctrine of warfare: one; two; three; four." You go down the line, and you draw from all Scriptures what the Bible gives on that subject.

If a preacher is not doing that, you're never going to get the pieces together so that it makes a portrait. When he hops around from verse-to-verse and from book-to-book, and never stops to bring it together – even if he goes through a book, and never stops to bring an area of truth together, he is forever handing you a box that is a jigsaw puzzle with all the pieces detached. You've just got a box full of the pieces. You know that it makes a picture, but what the picture is, you don't know. Someplace along the line, he needs to give you the picture. Most of time, when you buy a jigsaw puzzle, on the cover of the box is the picture that you're supposed to come out with. The category is there. So, you know how all the pieces are supposed to fit together. Without that, you're not going to get very far.

1. **Etymology**

Then you have the first "E" here which is for etymology. Etymology is the meaning of the words. We don't care what the English means. I sat right here in this hallowed auditorium almost 30 years ago, when I was still a Dallas seminary student, and they had a fella here teaching an adult Sunday school class, and he was talking about Paul going to "diverse places." The Bible talks about diverse places. He said, "Now, what that meant was that the apostle Paul was the kind of evangelist that didn't mind going into the honky-tonks. He didn't mind going into these "dives" in order to reach the people. I thought that was a very interesting exposition. But he was carrying it on simply from the English, and he knew what "divers" were, and that was it. But that isn't what the Holy Spirit was talking about. You have to go back to the original language to know what on earth God the Holy Spirit is saying, or you're going to go way out.

It's the same way as the old gal who thought that the way the Lord would lead her for her devotions was to close her eyes, and to point to a verse of Scripture. She did that one day; she closed her eyes; she said, "Lord speak to me;" she opened the Bible and pointed to a verse and read, "And Judas went out and killed himself." She said, "That can't be the Lord's message to me. Now, Lord, please guide me for your will today." She closed her eyes and pointed to another verse, and when she opened her eyes, it said, "Go thou and do likewise." So, that's the same kind of rinky-tink way of seeking what God is saying. You have to go back to what God the Holy Spirit meant. The only way you can get that is through the etymology of the meaning of the words.

1. **Exegesis**

Then the last "E" here is exegesis. That means explaining to you how the pieces of the grammar fit together, because the Greek language tells you something from the grammar that you'll never see from the English. How many of you are going to be able to know when you see the word "if" in your English translation, whether it's a first, second, third, or fourth class condition? And boy, does it make a difference which class condition it is. But "if" is "if" in English. There's a big difference in the original language. That's where exegesis comes in. Somebody has to tell you: "This is a first, second, third, or fourth class condition."

**The Grace System of Perception**

So, the Lord has made it possible for us to go to spiritual maturity. This is the technique by which he's made this possible. A believer comes to church. He sits there in a group, and he is to function in that group under a grace system of perception, which is a grace system of learning spiritual things. We call it grace because everybody is equal. Everybody can learn. All it requires is being filled with the Holy Spirit. That means that all known sins are confessed when you walk into a church service, and being open to be instructed. Under the filling of the Holy Spirit, that Christian sits there, and he listens to the truth. Into the perceptive side of his brain, there comes the capacity to learn: he's taking in truth; he's listening; he's hearing; and, he's understanding, under the guidance of God the Holy Spirit, what is being said. Now, he hasn't decided to believe it or not believe it. He's just listening; he's learning; and, now he gets a principle of doctrine. The Bible describes that as "gnosis." That's the Greek word for simply "knowledge." He has learned information.

He may hear something that he doesn't like. He may hear something that violates something that he himself is doing – that he wants to do. Therefore, he says, "No, I'm not going to accept that. That's just the preacher's opinion." And he goes negative. When he goes negative, that's the end of the line. This stuff just keeps floating around on the perceptive side of his thinking. He has learned it, but it just goes nowhere. It's of no value to him, and it will not affect his life. He is negative toward it, and it sits there. But if he goes positive toward it, then down here in his human spirit is a reservoir into which God pours this truth, again under the filling of the Holy Spirit, and it becomes "epignosis," meaning "full knowledge," or "usable knowledge." Now he has information that God the Holy Spirit can use to guide him in his thinking. This is the result of his positive volition faith – his believing.

This knowledge is then cycled up to the directive side of his mind (to the directive capacity) – the decision-making. And out of the storage of truth in his human spirit, God cycles up information. God the Holy Spirit keeps sending up the information that he needs to make the decisions. Some Christians are so sensitive, and they are so developed in the Word of God, that they're not even conscious of the fact that they are thinking, "Now, what does the Bible say about this subject? What guideline does Scripture have for me in this matter?" It just comes up, and his mind just clicks, almost without his having to think about it. God the Holy Spirit is feeding up the information (the directives) that he needs. He has developed, because of this, a frame of reference. Then from that, that mind reaches down, and it tells his emotions what to do. That mind that reaches down, and it tells his will what decisions to make. Then what you have is the marvel of a person who has been transformed into the image of God. You have a person who is functioning exactly as the Lord Jesus Christ would function in His thinking; in His emotions; and, in His will.

This reservoir of "epignosis" in the human spirit is the basis for developing spiritual maturity. That's what we're headed for. We're talking about filling the deficiency in our soul, which is spiritual maturity. This is the provision that God has made for you to do it – a pastor-teacher instructing from the written canon of Scripture under the filling of the Holy Spirit; the believer listening and learning and going positive; and, storing the truth in his human spirit. While a Christian is in temporal fellowship, he is filled with the Spirit, and he is cycling that information up to his directive capacity of his thinking. He makes his directive mind function, and he controls his emotions and his will. The emotions and the will are under the control of the mind. They're not running wild on their own. They are directed by the content of Scripture.

Did you notice the fourth verse of the hymn that we sang this morning? Maybe it arose a red flag for you, because hymns often do that. That fourth verse said, "Amazing grace, 'tis heaven below to feel the blood applied. And Jesus, only Jesus, knows, my Jesus crucified." How many of you have felt the blood applied here. We have a lot of born-again Christians here, and none of you have felt the blood applied? You see the deception in that little verse. It should say, "To *know* that the blood has been applied." It is the knowledge of my belief in what the Word of God tells me about the blood of Christ applied to my sins that gives me comfort; that gives me encouragement; and, that can tell my emotions then to be happy about that. It isn't the other way around – that my emotions are going to give me that information.

So, this reservoir is the basis of developing spiritual maturity. Therefore, in Ephesians 4:12-13, we're told what happens. As the pastor-teacher does his work (these communicator people do their work), it is for the perfecting of the saints. The perfecting of the saints, you remember, means to equip the saints for spiritual combat. The word "perfecting" means to equip. You equip them with doctrine in the reservoir.

When that is done, the Greek says a second thing will happen: "For the work of the ministry." That is the production of divine good service. When this reservoir is filled with divine viewpoint truth, you will be able to produce divine good production. When this reservoir is empty, you'll be out there producing human good. That's what's killing American society today – the human good that has been welled up from within us, from our sin nature. And God says, "It makes me throw up." God says, "I reject it." God says, "Everything that comes out of your human good I consider as filthy menstrual rags." And don't pretend that Isaiah says that they're anything else. Our God knows how to speak in loathsome analogies.

Then another thing happens: This is a chain reaction in verse 12 from equipping the saints with doctrinal instruction; to giving them the capacity to produce divine good; and, to the edifying of the body of Christ. This is erecting a spiritual maturity structure in the soul. This is going toward spiritual maturity. A pastor is a failure in a congregation if those who attend his services cannot secure the divine viewpoint information to build spiritual maturity in their lives. I don't care how successful a preacher is in the eyes of the world, or even in his own congregation. If the people that he speaks to cannot indeed be filling this reservoir with God's divine viewpoint, he is a loser, and all those who listen to him are losers. In heaven, you will find someday how great the loss is. Don't forget that when Paul describes the consequences for some at the Judgment Seat of Christ, he uses that word. *You will suffer loss.* Loss of what? Not of salvation, but of the rewards that could have been yours. How tragic that is. It was just because a pastor-teacher failed at this point. Do you see how important this position is, and how critical it is to the flock? Do you see why Peter said, "Feed the flock? Please don't do anything else. Feed them the Word of God."

This is why Paul, as he knelt on that beach with the Ephesians elders, said, "You're never going to see me again, but I want you to teach them the Word of God. I want you to do like I did. I went everywhere day and night, and with tears sometimes, I taught you the Word of God. Wolves are going to come in to undermine the flock. You defend them, and you teach them the full counsel of the Word of God. Paul says, "I'm going to leave you. I'm going to get aboard that boat. But I'm going with a clear conscience. My hands are clean. There is the blood of no man upon me. I have delivered to you the full counsel of God." What's he talking about? He's talking about the fact that he delivered to them the full complexity of doctrinal truth. He was telling these Ephesian elders (the various pastors in the various house groups that met in Ephesus), "Go back and do the same thing. If you don't, these people are never going to have a chance to move on to fill the deficiency in their soul, and to move toward spiritual maturity."

A mature Christian is able to exercise, then, "epignosis" knowledge toward man and toward God. 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, "Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." He is a Christian who can bring every thought toward God and man into that which is obedient to the mind of God. "Epignosis" in the human spirit is the way that a believer glorifies God.

I'm always amused and saddened when I listen to the charismatics on television, and one place and another, about how they are teaching people to glorify God. They talk about: "We must learn how to glorify God, and how to praise the Lord." Then they proceed to tell people how to do that in a variety of emotional orgies. 1 Corinthians 6:20 tells you how you bring glory to the Lord: "For you are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body." You know what it means to glorify God in your body, don't you? It means moral treatment of your physical body. But that's not the only place: "And in your spirit." You glorify God in your human spirit, which is God's. How do you glorify God in your human spirit? In one way: by dignifying that spirit; by ennobling that spirit; by pouring God's divine viewpoint of the Word of God (of doctrinal principles) into that human spirit; and, by feeding on the eternal and powerful and living Word of God.

Matthew 5:16 also says, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Your divine good works will bring glory to the Father who is in heaven. How do you get divine good works? When this system is functioning. Without it, you can't produce divine good works.

**The Five Basic Qualities of the Mature Christian**

The mature Christian is characterized by five basic qualities. Right now, we have to whiz through these. In 2 Corinthians 12:10, Paul alludes to these five qualities: "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak then I am strong." What he means is: "Then I am spiritually strong and capable."

1. **Grace Orientation**

The first quality that characterizes a mature believer is grace orientation. In 2 Corinthians 12:10, this is "infirmities." And we won't go into the details of the language. But in the Word, "infirmities" is referring to this quality of being oriented to the grace of God. "Live and let live." This is the capacity to see God moving people without human pressures to do His will; to do the things that they should do; and, to see people functioning and serving the Lord because God the Holy Spirit is leading them. People who are so oriented to the grace that they have their eyes on the Lord, and not on people. So, nobody can hurt their feelings. Nobody can do anything to them, because the thing that's important is what God thinks. They remember that anybody who needs some vengeance exercised, the Lord can exercise it. They just lean back; they faith rest it; and they relax.

Grace orientation is taught in 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace and in a knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." What Peter's talking about is growing in the capacity to be oriented to the grace of God.

Grace orientation is spoken of in Hebrews 13:9: "Be not carried about with various and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with foods which have not profited them that have been occupied with them." We're talking about grace. When was the last time somebody came up to you and said, "Oh, if you're a good Christian, this is what you'll do. If you're a good Christian, this is what you won't do." If you're a good Christian, you will look to God the Holy Spirit, and He will lead you. You won't be trying to be pushy and imposing your tastes or your preferences on other believers. You will permit grace to function. You will just not be putting other people under pressures. Maybe they need to be put under pressures for something they're doing in their lives. But you have enough confidence in the omnipotence of the Lord God that He can put the pressure upon them. Paul gloried in grace orientation.

1. **A Relaxed Mental Attitude**

The second thing that will characterize a mature Christian who has developed his personal spiritual maturity is a relaxed mental attitude. This is described under "reproaches" in 2 Corinthians 12:10. A relaxed mental attitude means a mental attitude free of bitterness. Ephesians 4:31 says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil-speaking be put away from you with all malice." A relaxed mental attitude is a mind free from mental attitude sins: "And be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you."

Then Colossians 3:15: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body, and be thankful." A relaxed mental attitude means a Christian who is at peace. He is a Christian who knows how to live in a condition of personal peace.

1. **A Mastery of the Details of Life**

Then there is one that obviously was a major breakdown in the Laodicean church. That is a mastery of the details of life. 2 Corinthians 12:10 speaks of that as "necessities." What does a mastery of the details of life mean? That you sell everything you have and give to the poor? From then on, you don't ever eat any steaks? You just eat carrots and all these very simple, humble things? You go down to the salvage, and you buy old army rations of some kind? No, the mastery of the details of life says you have to eat; you have to have a place to live; you have to have decent clothes; you have to have a car to drive; and, you have to have any number of things to function within our lives. But those things never dominate you. They never become excessive. You don't pour into them what God says, "I'll store so that you'll enjoy it forever in heaven."

This includes the mastery of the finances of your life. Luke 12:15 says, "And He said unto them, 'Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.'" The world says, "It's what you have that counts."

1 Timothy 6:6 gives this warning: "But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content, but they that will be rich fall into temptations and the snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." That's pretty straightforward. What's he talking about? He's talking about learning how to master the details of your life. You are God's banker. He gives you a paycheck, which is God's deposit with you. Sometimes it's more; and, sometimes it's less. Out of that, He calls upon you to return into His work, for eternal treasures, that which is necessary for the functioning of His testimony on this earth.

A lot of Christians are big, big cheats when it comes to the mastery of the details of life. Here is a point that was very great in Laodicea. They thought they were really well off, and you're going to see how the Lord describes them. They thought they were rich, and Jesus says, "You're a bunch of poor, poor slobs." What did He mean? Well, those people were living pretty nicely in Laodicea. The Christians were living well financially. What the Lord was talking about was what they're going to find when they get up to heaven. That's where it's going to come home. That's a very serious matter. So, the mastery of the details of life is where a lot of Christians destroy themselves. They cannot develop this particular quality of spiritual maturity.

1. **A Capacity for Love**

Another factor that characterizes a mature Christian is his capacity for love. In 2 Corinthians 12:10, Paul calls this "persecutions." This is the capacity to exercise mental attitude love. John 13:34: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

Colossians 3:14: "Above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness;" that is, the bond of maturity. Put on love. This is the capacity to love. Nobody is born with a capacity to love: to love God; to love your mate; and, to love your friends. That's what the capacity to love is all about. Jesus says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." How many poor Christians in the average poor, biblically-denied congregation can really love the Lord? They think they do, because they deceive themselves by kicking the emotions (this factor of their being) up into the place of dominance. That's what the charismatics do. From then on, the mind and the will are under the emptiness of the emotions, and they convince themselves that they really love the Lord. Without the Word of God, you are totally incapable of loving the Lord. That's what it takes to be able to do it.

You can't love the person you're married to unless you're a Christian who is functioning on the Word of God. You're just a deluded beast if you think that you are capable of loving the person you're married to, and acting in that capacity, if the Word of God does not dominate your human spirit. Nor can you love your friends. There can be no loyalty; no truth; and, no consistency. You can't be true to anybody. You know how many Christians there are – the ones who are smiling and treating you with such warmth, and yet they have a great deal of personal reservation and antagonism toward you. Do you know anybody like that? You might even be like that. This is the old Christian front game, and the old Christian con game. You say, "Mrs Jones, it's so nice to see you. You look so lovely." But what you're thinking is, "I wonder where she got that thing that she's wearing. It must have been down at the Salvation Army."

1. **Inner Happiness**

Then there's one other factor to make it as a mature Christian. This is the other factor that's characteristic, and that is inner happiness. In 2 Corinthians 2:10, Paul calls this "distresses:" "I have a millennium in my soul, when all hell is breaking out around me." John 15:11 speaks about that inner happiness, apart from people; places; or, circumstances: "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." "These things have I spoken unto you:" What things? All the principles of doctrine, so that you could be happy. It is a sin not to be happy. If there is anybody who's unhappy right now, you're in sin. I see a lot of people start smiling. It's not necessary to smile to show that you're happy. But if you're unhappy, God has commanded you to be happy. And He has said, "I made provision for it." Get that splendid series of studies in Philippians that we have on the subject of happiness. I listened to that recently and I was impressed with it. I think about this business of being happy when God says, "You are to be happy." He has made a provision for that. And inner happiness is a great thing. It's a pathetic Christian who goes around, and he's unhappy.

Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say rejoice." Here is God giving you a command: rejoice; and, always rejoice. That doesn't mean paste a smile on your face, no matter how grim things are.

These are the qualities of a spiritually mature person. It comes because you have taken the Word of God and stored it into your human spirit through the grace system of perception that depends upon your openness to the Word of God – not how smart you are.

As you have stored that "epignosis" knowledge, and your mind is in charge of your soul, and directs your emotions and your will, there is being developed within you, grace orientation: looking to the Lord to open doors; to make things possible; and, to provide for you, with no conniving; no maneuvering; and, no sneaky deals. It is just for permitting the Lord to lead you and to lead other believers.

You have a relaxed mental attitude. You know how to take reproaches, and you leave it with the Lord. You know how to take the people who are offending you, and you leave it with the Lord.

You have a mastery of the details of life. You know how to be prospered, and you know how not to be overcome by your prosperity.

You have the capacity to love. Paul calls it "persecutions." No matter how people treat you, you still, because, again, the Word of God is in your soul, have the ability to be free of antagonisms, and you have a rapport with that person. Your heart goes out to the one who treats you the worst. Your pity them because you realize how they are destroying themselves. You realize how tragic their condition is. You realize what they could be, and how sad it is to see a human being made in the image of God failing to be all that he could be. And most of us have not yet begun even to sense what great things the Lord could do with us, and what great people he could make of us.

Then you have an inner happiness. Paul says, "Distresses," and Paul knew what it was to be distressed. Paul says, "It's OK with me because I have a spiritual capacity and a spiritual maturity such that my distresses do not affect my inner happiness. There is within me a deep-seated joy.

We're talking about having built something in the soul. It was necessary to do this preliminary work, and in the next session, we'll go into the structure. This is the background that you need to know (that you need to be refreshed on) for you to understand what was happening in Laodicea, and for you to really understand why God says, "You're just a pile of regurgitation. You are offensive to Me. I'm not going to tolerate it, and I'm going to get rid of you if things don't change." You have to know where these people came from in order to know why God views them in that light. We shall continue with that in the next session.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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