***Spiritual Maturity

RV60-02***

We are studying the letter to Laodicea, segment number five, in Revelation 3:14-22. When a person enters the Christian life, he enters it devoid of all divine viewpoint in his soul. This spiritual deficiency, the Bible tells us, is to be filled over a period of years with the learning and the using of Bible doctrine truth. So, the goal of the Christian life, first of all, is to develop spiritual maturity in one's soul, through Bible doctrine. Whatever else you may be called to do, the first and primary calling of your Christian life is to go from spiritual deficiency to spiritual competence, and the Word of God is the means for achieving that goal.

**The Pastor-Teacher**

The divine provision for meeting the need of spiritual maturity is the pastor-teacher ministry in the local church using the HICEE technique. Divine viewpoint is stored in the Christian human spirit as he matures spiritually. This storage of divine viewpoint truth is what God the Holy Spirit uses to develop our Christian lives; to lead us to maturity; and, by which to guide us into the maximum blessing of the will of God for us. A teaching pastor is the believer's spiritual lifeline to spiritual maturity for successful living and for divine good service.

**A Spiritually Mature Christian**

We have seen that a spiritually mature Christian has five basic characteristics, which Ephesians 3:19 calls "the fullness of God." The apostle Paul says, "And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God." And what the apostle Paul is referring to in the term "the fullness of God," are these characteristics of spiritual maturity that he also refers to in 2 Corinthians 12:10. We have seen that these include our grace orientation, which is a grace attitude of no carnal pressures in order to gain goals and ambitions that one has. This includes a relaxed mental attitude, which is freedom from mental attitude sins. One verse we may refer to there is John's 13:34, which says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another." The word "love" there is the Greek word "agape" – a love which is a mental attitude. The relaxed mental attitude is a mental attitude free of bitterness; free of all those antagonisms; and, free of all those evil attitudes that we hold toward other people.

Furthermore, there is the quality of the mastery of the details of life, which means that you as a Christian are not a slave to material things. Then there is the capacity to love – another characteristic of spiritual maturity. This is total camaraderie and total relationship to certain individuals: God; the person you're married to; and, your friends. It is a total personal camaraderie. 1 Corinthians 16:22 refers to this kind of love: "If any man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha: If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ (love for God) let him be under the curse (the condemnation) of God because the Lord is coming."

The word that is used for "love" here is different. It is the other word for love. This is the "philos" love. This is the love that has to do with an emotional rapport. We're talking about love in an emotional sense – a totally different way. That's why we say the capacity to love – to emotionally attach yourself to God; to the person you're married to; and, to your friends. That takes a special kind of personal spiritual maturity that the world knows nothing about. It is the genuine emotional rapport, which only comes from a Christian who has grown up spiritually.

Another passage that refers to that is Titus 3:15. It also refers to this kind of rapport: "All that are with me greet you. Greet them that love us in the faith." Here you have love for your friends – love for other people that Paul is referring to. He says, "Greet all those people, Titus, where you are: all those believers who have an emotional rapport with us, and who have a capacity to love us." You would think that anybody can get emotionally in love, and that anybody can express the emotion of love, but that's not true. People often confuse infatuation and the quality of lust with love – with an emotional attachment. But there is a fantastic emotional relationship that the Word of God says is characteristic of a grown-up Christian. This kind of rapport comes only as the result of a Christian who, through the Word of God, has developed this quality in his soul.

Then a fifth quality is happiness. This is maximum happiness apart from people, circumstances, and things.

**Reversionism**

The characteristics of spiritual maturity are all the product of doctrine in the soul of the believer. In Laodicea, the believers were in a state of carnality which undermined their spiritual maturity. They were therefore in a state of reversionism. As we have seen, the Lord Jesus Christ has told them that their reversionism nauseates Him, and that He will therefore regurgitate them out of His mouth, which is symbolically saying that He will cut them off from the ministry and from association in Christian service. Their failure to maintain spiritual maturity opened them to intense divine discipline. It was their breakdown in their spiritual maturity. It was their falling into reversionism that was the problem.

**Edification**

Now, we want to look a little further at this concept of spiritual maturity. Another word for spiritual maturity is one that we often use: the word "edification." That's what spiritual maturity is. It is the individual believer's personal edification. There are three important words that deal with edification that give us the whole picture on what spiritual maturity is all about, and give us the kind of concept that the Bible has of spiritual maturity.

**Building**

The first word is the word "oikodome." This word means "the act of building a structure." It is the process of construction. That's what's taking place here currently. We are in the process of "oikodome." We are in the process of constructing – the very act of erecting something, or building. This word is used, for example, in Ephesians 4:12: "For the perfecting of the saints." We have already seen that that is for the equipping of the saints for spiritual combat through teaching them doctrinal principles. It also says, "For the work of the ministry." That is for producing divine good. Then it says, "For the edifying of the body of Christ:" for the building up of the church, the body of Christ, by building up the individual believer.

**The Pastor-Teacher**

This is describing what the pastor-teacher ministry is all about. He is building something in the souls of people. He is edifying them in the sense that he is erecting a structure of some kind within their souls. So, attach the word "structure" with this word, because that's what it is talking about.

**The Structure**

This edification (or spiritual maturity then) involves building something in the form of a structure in the soul. That's the first word. But there is another reference to the concept of edification that further expands what spiritual maturity is all about. That one looks like this: "oikodomia." This word means "the result" of your act of constructing. This word refers to the result of your building. Really, this is the word that should make us think of structure. For "oikodome," we should really say "building" or "constructing." This is the act. What results from your act is an "oikodomia." There is a structure that is the result of what you're doing, in the form of building spiritual maturity.

1 Timothy 1:4 uses the word "oikodomia: "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies which minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith; so do." "Godly edifying" involves the act of building maturity in the soul. The word "oikodomia" refers to the result of the construction that you are putting together. It is something that is a structure of spiritual maturity.

Another passage is James 1:4 that uses this word and the idea of a structure that results from the act of building: "But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect, and entire, lacking nothing." There, "the perfect work" is referring to the perfect structure of spiritual maturity.

**The Builder**

Then we have a third word that also deals with edification. This one is "oikodomos." This one is used in Acts 4:1, and it means "the one who is building the structure." This one now refers to the builder. So, with this one, we can associate the word "builder." This is the builder that is in mind: "This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders (the 'oikodomos") which is become the head of the corner." This refers specifically to God the Holy Spirit, who, through the grace system, erects this structure of spiritual maturity in the positive believer.

So, notice what we have: Spiritual maturity has to do with edification. Edification has to do with three things in the Bible: the act of building; the structure that is built; and, the builder. Edification, therefore, comes out as a spiritual maturity structure in the soul. That's where we get that phrase. That's where we coined the idea (the phrase): spiritual maturity structure. It is drawn from these three words describing spiritual maturity in the Bible.

This spiritual maturity structure is what Ephesians 6:14 calls "the breastplate of righteousness." It's part of the Christian's armor. That is a whole fascinating study. If you want to pursue that, you can get the series of the Philippian studies that deal with the Christian's armor. But the breastplate of righteousness that a Christian is to put on is this spiritual maturity structure. That's what it's referring to. Failure in any one of the five facets of the spiritual maturity structure is a break in the armor.

So, here is the spiritual maturity structure. We have seen that it's a five-sided spiritual maturity structure based upon these three Greek words for edification. It has grace orientation. It has a relaxed mental attitude. It has a mastery of the details of life. It has the capacity to love. It has inner happiness. It forms a pentagon in the soul of the believer. This is a pentagon of defense against Satan, and a pentagon of offense within the angelic conflict, and against Satan. This is the thing to which the Christian is called, first of all, in his life – to erect a spiritual maturity structure in his soul. But if there is weakness in any one of these areas, it's a crack in the armor, and the Christian is then open to reversionism. He is a potential spiritual casualty.

When you fall into reversionism, one of the evidences that you're in that state is that the cluster of lusts which are in the old sin nature begin to erupt, and then this cluster of various lusts that are in the old sin nature are then indulged by the believer. Furthermore, reversionism can be identified by emotional domination of the soul rather than by the belt of truth that Ephesians 6:14 speaks of. You remember that the belt of truth is Bible doctrine in the human spirit reservoir that we spoke of in the previous session. That's another part of the Christian soldier's armor. Without the belt of truth, he is doomed. The protection of the breastplate of righteousness is our right living. That's what he's talking about. This is not the righteousness that Christ gives us. This is his right actions (our right conduct) which all of these things represent. Without it, we are doomed. A structure of edification or spiritual maturity in the believer's soul is his defense against the devil, and his basis of attack in the angelic warfare. Spiritual edification of the believers is our prime objective in the Christian life.

1 Corinthians 14:26, therefore says, "How is it then, brethren, when you come together, every one of you has a psalm; has a doctrine; has a tongue; has a revelation; or, has an interpretation. Let all things be done to edifying. Here, 1 Corinthians 14 is guidelines for local church services in the New Testament times when the ecstatic gifts were still functioning. The apostle Paul says, "When you get together, the thing that is important is edifying." If you go through this passage, you'll see how he says again and again, "Nothing is more important than building spiritual maturity into your soul." He says "Some of you people have been fooling around with this ecstatic gibberish, and you think you've got something, and you have zero. The thing that's important is edifying your soul – building this kind of a structure.

The fully developed spiritual maturity structure in the soul actually forms a container. That's what's so tremendous about this thing. It forms a container into which God is then able to pour super-abounding grace. This is the grace about which James 4:6 says, "But he give us more grace." The Greek says, "Super-abounding grace. Wherefore he says, 'God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble.'" To the believer who is functioning in spiritual maturity, the believer who has developed the capacity to receive the grace of God, this grace comes pouring into this container, and that's what the spiritual maturity structure is all about. And the result of this is about which the psalmist says; "My cup runneth over," because God keeps pouring the grace in, and the grace keeps overflowing. That is the fantastic thing to which you've been call.

You people have a rendezvous with blessing. All believers of the church age have a rendezvous with blessing, and a blessing that produces a greatness in you that only God can produce. How sad that most Christians sit under situations week-in and week-out, where they will never make that rendezvous with greatness, and they will never make that rendezvous with the blessings of super grace outpouring upon them. It's a fantastic arrangement. It's a winning arrangement. Those of you who have lived by this for many years know how true this is. A believer who is in this condition, with his cup running over, is the believer who has super-abounding blessings and capacities, and for that reason, he is at the prime of his spiritual life. He has maximum personal stability. He has effectiveness in Christian service. He's just in the greatest of all conditions.

Ephesians 4:14-16 describe this condition in these words: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slight of men and cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working, in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." You are stable people. You are not going to be anybody's patsy in the Christian life. You are not going to be suckered in by all of the things that the religious professionals constantly throw out at the people of God. You are going to know what is real from what is fake; and, that which is genuine from that which is false.

**Storing Treasures in Heaven**

The super grace status is also the means for storing treasures in heaven. So, those of you who are in this condition are the people who have the capacity to be sending up the treasures that the Lord is storing for you in heaven. You're just sending up chest after chest, just loaded over, filled with all kinds of marvelous treasures that He has up there waiting for you.

Super grace status in the soul of the church-age believer is the fulfillment of the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ made in John 10:10, when He said that He came to bring us life more abundantly. This is the abundant life. How many nonsensical sermons have you heard about the abundant life? How many little cutesy-pooh devices have you heard about how you can enter the abundant life? This, friend, is the abundant life. Maybe now you have caught a glimmer of how you arrive at that life through the preciousness of the Word of God.

Perhaps now you will see why the reformers rallied so positively toward the Bible, and why all the statues that you see of these reformers, as you travel through Switzerland and through the countries of the Reformation (the great reform leader after reform leader), there's one thing that you can almost always expect to see in the statue. They've always got their Bible in the hand. They've got it under their arm, or they're even sometimes holding it aloft over their head, because they're conveying one message: It's in the Word of God where it's all at. And that's the only way that you are going to go from animal level to the image of God.

You and I have act like animals on occasion. We know people who are acting like animals now. So, they go to counselors, and they get inspirational talks, and they get appeals, and they're still nothing but animals. Some of us are cultured animals, and some of us are uncouth animals. But it's only the Word of God that transforms you into one who is fittingly called a member of the royalty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The spiritual maturity structure in your soul is the most valuable thing you have. It's the one thing you're going to take out into eternity with you. When you get out there, you're going to find that, to the degree to which you have developed this, and to the degree that super-abounding grace has been pouring in and flowing over, is going to affect directly the quality of your eternity.

I don't care whether you believe it or not. My job is simply to inform you, and you can go with it from there however you like. But one thing I like about the Bible, and what it teaches, and the Christian life: we're going to find out who's right and who's wrong. I'm looking forward to it. A Christian who is in this status of super-grace is the kind who is very sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in his thinking; in his emotions; and, in his will. There is no condition here of the blind leading the blind.

The super-grace of a fully developed spiritual maturity structure is maintained through the regular feeding upon Bible doctrine, and digesting it with positive volition responses. Remember that when you do get to this stage, you have reached the high ground, which is another way that you can think about it – that high ground of super-grace living. You have fought up the hill; you've made your way up; and, now you sit up there at the pinnacle. The only way you're going to stay there is by continuing in the thing that took you to the high ground. That is going to be as Matthew 4:4 says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

James 1:22-25 say, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." That's the trouble that we have in a Bible-oriented, Bible-teaching church situation – the danger of having Christians who are hearers but who are negative. We have people who come through here in various degrees because we respect your privacy. You don't have to report to us how many tracts you passed out; how much time you spent in prayer; and, how many "Hail Marys" you repeated this week. You're just on your own. We don't know. But sooner or later, you do something, and we can tell. Sooner or later, the evidence becomes external of the status of your personal spiritual maturity, to the extent that you have been a hearer of the Word, and you've given lip devotion, but you have not given the conviction of your heart in action: "For if any be a hearer of the Word and not a doer, He is like a man beholding his natural face in a mirror; for he beholds himself, and goes his way, and immediately forgets what manner of man he was. But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, he, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Notice that it didn't say, "Being a doer of the Word." It said, "Being a doer of the *work*." Out of the Word of God comes divine good production. He who is a doer of the work, because he has previously become a hearer of the Word, and transformed that hearing into doing, is the one who is under the divine blessing of God.

I hope by now that you have recognized that you cannot build this spiritual maturity structure in your soul through any kind of experience whatsoever. You cannot build it through ecstatics. There are a lot of people who think that they can build it through a lot of emotional outpouring, and that they are going to go forward, and they are going to get close to the Lord.

I can reminisce of years and years ago, when in this very auditorium in which we are sitting, before I became the pastor of Berean church, we used to have a bench down here at the front covered with an army blanket. It was called the altar. After every service, the pastor at the time performed the appropriate rituals, and gave people a chance to come down to the altar. And people would come down to the altar, and they would kneel at this blanket. Very often, they were called to be saved, and there had been no gospel preached. It was really kind of sad to see people trying to reach out for God, and trying to pray to victory with this stupid army blanket on this bench when they didn't even have the content with which to approach God.

One particular meeting got warmed up very, very wonderfully. People would come for different things. One of the things that was characteristic of Berean church at the time was that the women dominated. It was a female-oriented church, and it tended to be a little ecstatic. It was Pentecostal and jumpy; if not jumpy, at least itchy. This one woman was kind of a leader in the jumpy set. I remember after one Sunday morning service, she said, "Oh, couldn't you just feel the Spirit here this morning?" Well, being the sweet guy that I am, I just smiled and said, "I don't know. I don't think so." But I didn't want to say too much to discourage her, but she was just carried away: "Couldn't you just feel the Spirit?" And she sensed my reserve. And I said, "Well, I did sense some spirits here. I'm not sure what kind they were, but I don't think that they were the kind that you think they were."

That's the kind of pathetic idea that you can get near God in this way. She thought that she had come close to the Lord; that she had a spiritual experience; and, that she had developed spiritually because she had a little emotional orgy here that particular Sunday morning. The reason she had her emotional orgy was because, unfortunately, the pastor at the time had nothing to give the people except a little emotional orgy. He would rush in during Sunday school, and he'd sit out in the car to prepare his sermon, and he would get a few ideas. But he had the one thing that could always carry him through. He was a guitar player, and he could always reach for his guitar and get us going on "Do Lord." You know how these guys with a guitar do. Boy, you know, after a while you'd forget what you came for. You had a good time. You went home. It was wonderful. And that was it. There were a lot of people who felt that they had come close to the Lord.

It's funny, but you've always got these characters running around playing preachers. But are they ever going to be in for it when they get into heaven? That's why the Word of God says, "Don't be so quick to want to be a teacher. Don't be so quick to want to be in that position of authority, because it's going to take a lot of responsibility, and the Lord is going to burn a lot of tails in heaven at the Judgment Seat of Christ of those of you who put yourself forth as teachers of the Word, and then failed by treating people in such a way that their internal welfare and blessing was compromised by what you are shelling out to them. A Christian with a spiritual maturity structure in his soul does not arrive at that point through ecstatics.

**Self-Crucifixion**

He also doesn't get there through self-crucifixion. In the early days around here, we used to have these women who loved to get up in testimony meetings and tell about their self-crucifixion. I always wanted to see their wounds, but they never showed them. But they thought that this was the way they were getting near the Lord.

**Mysticism**

Or some did it by mysticism. This is the one who wants to sit and meditate, or the one who wants to go off to a spiritual retreat. That's the Body Life group. They want to get off there and have a spiritual retreat where they can have these moments of inspiration – contentless experiences.

**Rallies**

Or some people think they're going to get close to the Lord because of their Christian service, or they love a high-powered rally. That gets you close to the Lord – some very forceful speaker so that you have a wonderful rally and a lot of people get together. Haven't you ever been to a Dallas Cowboy game and felt closer to the Lord after you'd been in that huge stadium with all those people around you? I have. Except when they lost, and I didn't feel too close to them or the Lord. But there were a bunch of people around and everything was going, and spiritual experience was going to make us mature. Listen, there are Christians by the thousands who believe that.

**A Twig Service**

Or if they're out in the camping world, they love the old twig service. That's that old service where you take a little stick and you throw it on the fire in order to come closer to the Lord. ... People with a little information of the Bible know better than to believe that.

Any experience that you have which is detached from the controls of the doctrines of Scripture residing in your human spirit is worthless. All that experience can do is confirm divine viewpoint truth. It cannot discover it for you. You never produce God's point of view through your experience. You only confirm it.

**Doing**

Carnal Christians are oriented to doing. Satan just sits back and he laughs at these sincere Christians as they run around doing their thing, thinking that they're going to be getting closer to the Lord in the process.

**The Quality of a Church**

The edification of a Christian unto a spiritual maturity structure is the work, as we've seen, of the pastor-teacher feeding his people the Word of God (Ephesians 4:11-12). The spiritual condition, therefore, of the local congregation is determined by the number of spiritual maturity structure type of believers that there are in their congregation. You don't evaluate a congregation on how many people attend. You don't evaluate it on how much money you take in. You don't evaluate it on what an orator the preacher is, or what prestige he may have. You can only evaluate it on one thing. The quality of a church is how many fully-developed spiritual maturity structures there are in the lives of those individual believers.

In Acts 9:31, we read, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; (consequently) walking in the fear (the respect) of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and they were multiplied." How do you evaluate a church? Not by all of the public relations techniques by which preachers like to evaluate what they're doing. There is only one way: How many spiritual maturity structures are there fully developed in the congregation? How are we going to find that out? It's a statistic that we cannot determine. There's no way that we can say that, and that we can analyze that. It's disastrous to try to identify, and to try to prove that your ministry is worth something. It is through God that the proof has to come, and he can see the reality of what you're doing.

**Selecting a Local Church**

So, when you have to pick a local church, you better not pick it on the basis of how friendly it is; how much potential husband-and-wife material there is for you; how many social opportunities you have; how many economic advantages you personally may accrue from this church; or, the prestige it may give you, because none of these things develop spiritual maturity in a believer. Yet, as gross as it sounds, there are plenty of Christians who have selected churches for that reason. They go to the prestige church, and then they send to Berean Memorial church, or some pastor-teaching church like ours, to get information about the Word of God. The issue is whether you have a genuine teaching pastor who will equip you for the angelic warfare by enabling you to build a spiritual maturity structure in your soul. That is what you should look for when you select a church.

The rate of building your spiritual maturity structure depends on the time that you spent in learning doctrine and converting it to "epignosis" knowledge with your positive volition. The object of the Christian life is to fight the good fight of faith, not to seek emotional kicks or to fulfill your lust for praise. There are two spirits I want you to observe that are involved in developing your spiritual maturity. There are two spirits who are the key to all of this.

**God the Holy Spirit**

First, there is God the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit is the one who makes the grace system of learning spiritual truth function. Notice a few Scriptures that tell us about what He is doing to enable you to take into your soul God's thinking. John 14:26: "But the comforter (who is the Holy Spirit) whom the Father will send in My name; He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance: whatever I have said unto you." God the Holy Spirit is the one who does the teaching. That's why you must be on the basis of temporal fellowship with Him, and why we remind you to heal the breach before you come to a church service.

In John 16:12-14, Jesus says, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Nevertheless, when He, the Spirit of Truth (that is, God the Holy Spirit) has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak from Himself, but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak. And He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore, I said that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." It is God the Holy Spirit who informs you of the thinking of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 2:9, we have a passage of Scripture that is often misapplied to eternity. It is talking about right now – today: "But it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.'" This is not something that He has prepared for the future. It is the preparation of the reality of doctrinal truth ‐ that magnificent information that gives you the mind of God: "But God has revealed them unto us by His spirit (His Holy Spirit), for the Spirit searches all things; yea, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of man which is in him. Even so, no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God."

"We have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is of God;" or, better – the spirit who is from God. This is probably the human spirit (with a small "s"): "That we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches." This is comparing spiritual things with spiritual: "But the natural man (the unsaved man) receives not the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judges all things, but he himself is judged of no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him. But we have the mind of Christ." Isn't that fantastic? We have the mind of Christ. To the degree that you have built a spiritual maturity structure, you have the mind of Christ.

So, God the Holy Spirit is a key factor in building this maturity. You may add to that 1 John 2:27. For God the Holy Spirit to do his work, it is necessary to be filled with the Spirit. That means that all known sins are confessed.

Ephesians 5:18 calls upon us to be filled with the Spirit. 1 John 1:9 tells how to confess sin to make that possible.

**Your Personal Human Spirit**

There is another spirit that's important in this matter of spiritual maturity, and that is your personal human spirit. Your personal human spirit is the target of the grace system of perception, and it is the foundation of the spiritual maturity structure. If your human spirit is not filled with the Word of God, you can never be spiritually mature. 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 again, that we have just read: "We have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. It is God the Holy Spirit, who, through the filling of the Holy Spirit, illuminates the Word of God to us. It is our living human spirit which he illuminates.

Romans 8:16 also speaks of this living human spirit: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our human spirit that we are the children of God." God speaks to our human spirit.

Then there is one verse from that tremendous writer of the Old Testament in Job 32:8: "But there is a spirit in man (a human spirit), and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding." Where does God give you divine viewpoint understanding? In your human spirit. Job knew that, and Job declared that tremendous truth way, way back centuries ago.

Your human spirit is made alive at the point of regeneration. So, it's not an element that you use in learning non-spiritual truth. You learn reading, writing, and arithmetic with your IQ human ability. When you learn secular subjects, it goes from the perceptive side of your mind directly to the directive side. But when you learn spiritual things, it goes from the learning capacity into this human spirit. Then God the Holy Spirit cycles it up to the directive side of your mind to lead you. Only Bible doctrine stored in the human spirit builds spiritual maturity. So, that is the daily goal of the Christian life.

In Colossians 1:9, we read, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." The word "knowledge" is the Greek word "epignosis." This is a noun, and it refers to full and complete knowledge. This is the knowledge which we have said comes into the perceptive mind; you treat it with positive volition; and, it is stored in the human sphere as "epignosis" knowledge. This is the kind of knowledge in your living spirit that is able to cycle back up to the directive of mind, and to guide it. The directive mind, in turn, guides the emotions and the will of your soul. That is the marvel of this system that God has set up.

Paul, therefore, in this verse, prays that the Colossians believers will fill up their natural spiritual deficiency with this kind of an "epignosis" knowledge down in their human spirits. Bible doctrine stored in the human spirit provides the believer with a knowledge of the will of God. Doctrine is the will of God. Please remember that. So many people suggest that they can do certain things and that, in their case, it's alright, even though the Bible says that they should not do those things. They can enter into relationships that they justify for some reason, such that they think that God is leading them when the Bible specifically condemns such relationships. When the Bible speaks against something, then it is not the will of God. It is wrong. You delude yourself into thinking that in your case, you are an exception.

This "epignosis" knowledge, Paul indicates in verse 9, provides the Christian with wisdom. Wisdom is the Greek noun "sophia." This is an understanding of the true nature of spiritual things. This "sophia" resides up in your directive mind. You have a true understanding of spiritual things. You have a frame of reference that is a frame of reference that will guide you to godly actions. He also says that you will end up with spiritual understanding. The word "understanding" is "sunesis." This is the ability to apply "sophia". "Sunesis" is the ability to apply the wisdom that God gives you to have spiritual understanding so you know how to make decisions.

Then in verse 10, Paul says that as a result of the pastor-teacher's ministry, not only is this created for the believers, but Paul prays that, "You might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." The filling of the Spiritual deficiency in the soul of the believer in this way, with "epignosis" knowledge of Bible doctrine, has certain consequences. You will live worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, you will please Him. You will be fruitful; that is, you will produce divine good works. You will not waste your life down the rat hole of human good. Paul prays, furthermore, that they should, "Increase in this 'epignosis' knowledge." In verse 10, that word "knowledge" is again this word "epignosis." What he is praying for is that this has carried them up to a spiritual maturity structure which is fully developed up at the super grace level. And he wants them to continue bringing that kind of full knowledge ("epignosis" knowledge) into their human spirits so that they stay up there on the high ground, and they do not get cast off – so that they remain up there as the king of the hill.

Increasing this knowledge produces the spiritual maturity structure; and, continuing in this knowledge maintains that position. That's a very quick little summary in those two verses of what going to church is all about.

In Colossians 1:9-10, the apostle says, "For this cause, we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with a knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that you might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." That's a fantastic statement, Paul says, "What I want for you is productive Christian living based upon the fact that you have a knowledge of God, but a knowledge of God that has developed into spiritual understanding, because you're receptive to that knowledge. You're positive toward it. You're walking in a way that is worthy of the Lord; you're walking in a way that is pleasing to the Lord; and, you're fruitful. In every good work, you're increasing, and all the time increasing in the knowledge of God." That is Bible doctrine truth.

Now, that brings us to the solemn issue of tearing down your spiritual maturity structure. We know how to develop a spiritual maturity structure. We know what it is that is the object of the Christian life. We know that this was the core of the problem in the Laodicean church. The spiritual maturity structure that was in their souls had been devastated by reversionism. They did something that tore it all down. They did some things that took them from the high ground they had achieved, so they came tumbling back down to where Jesus Christ said, "You're like a pile of regurgitation, and I don't want anything to do with you." They came to the place where instead of grace flowing out, and overflowing out of their container of spiritual maturity, God's grace began to dry up toward them, and they began to dry up. Instead of having a pentagon of spiritual defense out of which they could operate, they found themselves with cracks in the walls, and the enemy charging in. How did that happen?

Well, the apostle Paul proceeds in Ephesians to spell that out in detail. The thing that's interesting about this is that Paul says that this is how the unbeliever works. Do you want to know why they're doing some of the things (and we have been doing some of the things for 50 years) in the government of the United States? It is because there was a characteristic about the human mind of those who were in places of authority that resulted in all of the horrendous disasters that we face today: all the pain; all the suffering; and, all the consequences.

The sad part about that is that the Christian can have exactly that kind of a mind. When it happens, his maturity structure is shattered. He's back down to zero, and he is absolutely, totally, spiritually incompetent. At that point, he goes spiritually berserk. Hardly a week goes by but what I don't see some Christian, in one way or another, beginning to go down the hill – some Christian who has made a decision that immediately tells me that his spiritual maturity structure has been torn apart in his soul. Sometimes, these are Christians who were very solid and very functioning. So, in the next session, we will begin with tearing down the spiritual maturity structure in your soul.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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