***The Mastery of the Details of Life  
  
RV63-01***

We continue in our study of the letter to the church of the Laodiceans. This is section number ten. We're looking at Revelation 3:17. We have seen that the believers in Laodicea had obviously equated their financial prosperity with spiritual prosperity. They claimed to be rich, and to have become so by their own application to the work ethic. Self-credit was characteristic of these wealthy people. They concluded that they were so well-off that they actually needed nothing. This included spiritual things. They thought that they were exemplary believers. The Lord Jesus Christ, however, applies His divine viewpoint evaluation to the Laodicean Christians, and He says that they do not have the capacity to discern their true condition and their need.

So He proceeds to describe it for them. He says that they are, in fact, wretched, which means that they are hardened to the truth of doctrine. He says that they are miserable, which means that they are a pitiful sight in their smug arrogance. He says that they are poor, which means that they're the beggarly crawling type in terms of eternal riches and heaven. He says that they are blind because they are oblivious to their status of reversionism and the carnality that led them there. And He says that they are naked because they lack the clothing of experiential sanctification – a righteous lifestyle.

**The Mastery of the Details of Life**

The problem with the Laodicean church in all of this was a breakdown in that facet of spiritual maturity that has to do with dealing with the material details of life. So, we're going to look this evening at that subject: the mastery of the details of life. When we say "mastery," we mean, first of all, "control" or "victory;" that is, command of, or to be on top of, a certain situation. Basically, a correct mental attitude (a correct outlook) toward anything is a mastery over that thing. When we use the word "details," we mean things that are of lesser importance. They are the lower priority items of life. They are the things that, while necessary, are also things that can come and go in various degrees. They are not the ultimate goals of our lives.

**Human Viewpoint**

Each one of us, of course, has a scale of values in his mind which motivate us to various degrees of action. Your bases of priorities is not the same as someone else's. The details of life that are important to you are not those that are necessarily important to someone else. Human viewpoint has no place for spiritual details of life having any importance. The details that are important are money; possessions; friends; popularity; pleasure; education; success; health; sex; loved ones; status symbols; prestige; and, so on. These are all details of life. Obviously, many of those, if not all of them to some degree, are necessities as well. But just because you need something for your life does not make it anything more than just one little detail of your life.

**Divine Viewpoint**

Divine viewpoint has a different scale of priorities. This is where the breakdown came among the Laodicean Christians, and this is where the breakdown can come in your own life. Bible doctrine is always given top priority in God's plan. Everything else in a person's life is secondary (they're details) to doctrine in the soul. So, immediately, you can classify yourself tonight. To the extent that we know one another, we can classify each other. It is not that we should do anything with that classification, but you can't help but be aware of that. There are some people to whom the most important thing in life is God's Word. On a day-by-day basis, nothing takes priority over the intake of doctrine into the soul. Nothing comes ahead in their lives as the goal that they're pursuing.

Most Christians are contemptuous of this, and they think that the Word of God is just a detail. They don't think that it's the priority. They think that it's just one of the things that you do in life. And it may be an important thing, but it's just one of the things you do in life. It does not become the supreme consuming important thing. That is human viewpoint. The psalmist quotes God for us, and God says that He has placed His word (the doctrines of Scripture) above His very name, with all that His name connotes.

So immediately, you can put yourself on the scale of your relationship to the details of life. One of the evidences that you're not on top of the details of life is how often we see your face in this auditorium. Some people have said to me that they think I'm getting too tough recently. I'm being too hard on the floaters in our congregation that surface like those whales, that every now and then have to sound, and then we see them once-in-a-while in church, and then they disappear. Then, a month later or so, we see them again – the once-a-Sunday gang, and so on. Well, I think we need to get a little tougher because the time is short.

We're on the homestretch, folks. The Lord is at hand. They said that in the New Testament church, but it wasn't really as true then as it is now, we have discovered. He is at hand. I want to make very sure that, when some of you poor characters are dragging around heaven with your poverty hanging all over you in the loss of reward and the restriction of blessing that is upon you, at least when I look at you, I won't cringe with twinges of conscience because you didn't get shaken up by your eyeteeth a little bit, and told to wake up, and to stop teaching yourself and your children bad habits.

The details of life break the backs of most Christians more than anything else. It's the material details of life that really brings it all down on our heads. Once more the classic verse is Matthew 6:33. Maybe this will help you put your life into a perspective and get it together. This is a good time to do it. We're starting a new year. You might want to start a new pattern in your family. You husbands and fathers might want to become a different kind of example than you've been up to now: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "All these things" are the things that are found beginning at verse 25 and following: food; drink; clothes; etc., all of which are the details of life. And the "righteousness" that he speaks of here is that experiential sanctification; that day-by-day godliness; and, that living according to God's plan so that you're in the context of God's blessing. Then all these material things will be added unto you.

The number one thing is to live according to the patterns of divine viewpoint godliness. You can't do that if you don't know the Word of God. There is no way that you can do that if you do not have a constant immersing of your mind in what the Word of God has to say to you. When you do, there is a cleansing; there is an orientation; there is an exhilaration; and, there is a meaning for a life that evolves because you have God's plan for you, and it's right there at hand, right within your own soul: the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and, doctrine through the grace system of learning spiritual things, so that you're erecting a spiritual maturity structure in your soul.

**Mary and Martha**

The contrast that lies within any church congregation is so well portrayed for us in the case of the two sisters, Mary and Martha, and their attitudes which are related for us in Luke 10:38. One sister was a slave of the details of life. The other sister was on top of the details of life: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that He (Jesus) entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house, and she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Word." These were two sisters, both of whom were open to be taught the Word of God. Both of them had an opportunity to receive doctrine; and, this from the Master Teacher Himself.

"But Martha was cumbered about with much serving." "Cumbered" means "loaded down" and "burdened." She was just itchy to be a little hostess: "And came to Him and said, 'Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me.'" They both sat at Jesus' feet and started learning doctrine. Then little Martha, the little hostess, quietly got up and began puttering around with her pots and pans, and getting things ready, and getting the meal out there, and getting things out. Then she got irritated because her sister had the brains and the spiritual insight to see a unique opportunity to feed her soul upon the Word of God from the Son of God Himself. She sat there and fed her soul while her sister was preoccupied with feeding her stomach.

"Jesus answered and said unto her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things.'" What Jesus meant was the details of life. "But one detail is needful, and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her." He was saying that, "Long after everybody forgets that you killed yourself to be a little hostess, and long after everybody forgets what you have done in preparing this meal, your sister Mary will be enjoying the consequences of doctrine in herself. She will be enriched and you will be left the poorer."

**Job**

That's kind of a frightful picture, but that's what was happening in Laodicea. They could not get their head screwed on straight relative to the details of life. Martha was motivated by the old sin nature, and she thought that these details were more important than the things that her sister Mary was pursuing in the Word of God. Mary had caught the divine viewpoint principle so marvelously enunciated by Job in the midst of his own trials and suffering. In Job 23:12, Job said, "Neither have I gone back from the commandments of His lips (from the doctrine of His lips). I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." Now, that is a life verse. I can think of a lot of people that would be well-benefited by making that their life verse: "I have esteemed the words of His mouth (Bible doctrine) more than my necessary food." What Job says is, "I know the difference between the details of life that come and go, and the thing that I'm going to take out into eternity with me. The reason that Job could say this was because he understood the priority of doctrine in his life.

So, when we say the word "mastery" in the term "the mastery of the details of life," we're talking about "control." When we say "details," we mean all the things that are of lesser importance in a person's life. That includes material things, and that includes family, as well as money. Then, when we say "of life," we're talking about the daily human existence on earth. The biblical economic system of capitalism is the only economic system that the Bible recognizes and commends. People are, by nature, out there taking care of themselves. They are, by nature, going to their businesses. They are going to produce, by their own efforts, what they need, and they are concerned about living. That's what he's talking about: what you need to survive for your family to survive.

**Solomon**

One of the things that the Bible reveals to us that Solomon learned, by his own bitter experience, is recorded for us in one of the books that Solomon wrote: Ecclesiastes. In Ecclesiastes 5:14, Solomon declared that any detail can be removed from a person in an instant. Any detail of life that you have can go just like that: "But those riches perish by evil travail, and he begets a son, and there is nothing in his hand." Those riches perish by evil travail. Solomon realized that even with the great wealth that he accumulated, he couldn't be sure what his kids were going to do with it. You know what his elder son was like. The guy was a jerk. He no sooner came into authority over the kingdom than he split it forever, and they never got back together again. And Solomon says, "I look at this kid and I wonder, 'Oh, boy, what's he going to do with all that I've accumulated?'" And that gave him little satisfaction to think that he was going to pass this on to his son. It can perish just like that.

In Ecclesiastic 5:15, he observes another thing: you can't take it with you: "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor which he may carry away in his hand." You cannot take it with you. You came into the world without the details of life, and you'll leave all the details of life behind when God says, "Your time is up."

In Luke 12:16, this same principle is enunciated: "And He spoke a parable to them saying, 'The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. He thought within himself saying, 'What shall I do because I have no place to bestow my crops.' He said, 'This I will do. I'll pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow my crops and my goods. I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years. Take your ease. Eat, drink and be merry.'' But God said unto him, 'You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you, then whose shall these things (the details of life) be which you have provided?''"

What a blow! Then this man sits for I don't know how long, while the hours of the night tick by, knowing that he won't see the dawn. I imagine he may have sat there and looked out the window at that new barn he just built to house all the details of life in which he was trusting, realizing that within a few days he was going to be buried in that dirt out of which those details came. You cannot take it with you. What you invest spiritually is all that goes out into eternity. That's all that goes out in other people.

Every now and then, we have the experience of somebody calling us to tell us that someone has passed away. That happened this week. A mother tearfully called and said that her son had been killed in an accident. This was a boy. She was telling me because he had attended Berean academy for about seven years, and they were trying to find someone to conduct a funeral. I wasn't free to do it in person. I asked her, "Do you have a church pastor that you're acquainted with?" She said, "No, we don't go anywhere to church." I thought, "Here's this boy. I sure hope that somebody at Berean Christian academy made the gospel clear to him, and that he entered eternal life." He was just a kid, and now he's out there in eternity. He obviously didn't have anything to receive from his parents spiritually, but he had a chance, because he was sent to us. Even for those parents, if they are unsaved, the only thing that will last after they're gone is what they put in the life of that boy before he went out into eternity, because they had the sense to send him to a Christian school. They overcame the greed of the money that they didn't want to put out, so they could send their children to the offense of the public school system.

You go ahead and send your kids to the public school if you want to. You go ahead and parade yourself around as being wonderful people who have discernment. It's your liberty, and it's your choice. But don't try to con those of us who are professionals in the field and who know what's going on out there, that you're doing something in investing in your children that you're going to be proud of for all eternity, because that's the one thing you're going to be ashamed of for all eternity. You had a chance to know better. You had a chance to do better. Thank God for what that boy did get, and for the hope that we may extend as he now faces his eternity.

If you're not going to have it removed from you, and if you're going to take it with you out across the other side, it has to be something which is permanent in your soul, and which is not subject to removal when you get spiritually disoriented, or is not subject to removal because you die. We go back to Job again. What a frightful experience this man had. In Job 1, we're told how this man was literally smashed to pieces in terms of the details of his life. In Job 1:13, we read that this man, in one day, lost all of his cattle; all of his camels; all of his servants; his sheep; and, even the details of his family – all of his children:

"There was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house. There came a messenger unto Job and said, 'The oxen were plowing and the asses feeding beside them. And the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away. They have slain the servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell you.' While he was yet speaking, there also came another and said, 'The fire of God has fallen from heaven, and has burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, that I only am escaped to tell you.' While he was yet speaking, there came also another and said, 'The Chaldeans made out three bands and fell upon the camels, and carried them away, and yea, have slain the servants with the edge of the sword. And I only am escaped alone to tell you.' While he was yet speaking, (another hammer blow) there came also another and said, 'Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell you.' And Job arose and tore his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshiped."

Isn't that something? All the details of this rich man's life were wiped out, including his children. He gets up and expresses sorrow in the oriental fashion, and then bows down in worship before the God who is sovereign. Job understood the difference between the sovereignty of man that still plagues our society today; that sovereignty of man expressed in the arrogance of socialism and communism; and, that sovereignty of man expressed in the arrogance that human beings are capable of solving their own problems, and the sovereignty of God that respects God as the one who gives us the information by divine viewpoint to solve our human problems.

So, Job is a classic case of a man who has lost it all: "And Job arose and tore his mantle; shaved his head; and fell down upon the ground and worshipped." And in verse 21, we have that dramatic statement. Would you and I have the capacity to make a statement like this under those conditions? He said, "'Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.' In all this, Job did not sin, nor charged God with folly." He did not attack God. He did not sin in any mental reaction: "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Don't be too quick, as I've often heard Christians glibly use this quotation quoting Job: Something happens to them. Somebody comes along, and dents the fender of their new limousine that they happen to be driving, and they say, "Oh, the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." You haven't suffered anything. How dare you use sacred words like this, uttered from the lips of a man in intense sorrow, and in intense personal loss of the details of life, and who expressed a depth of spiritual capacity that few of us will ever attain. Don't use these words glibly until you have lost some details of life in sufficient comparability to what Job experienced, such that you can say those things, and see if you feel like saying it then. Job had divine viewpoint, so he saw all these losses for what they really were – just the details of his life – nothing more.

Nothing was more important than the Word of God, which he had in his soul. Nothing was more important than remaining positive toward it. That's what the Scripture means: "He didn't sin in any of this." He didn't fall into accusing and attacking God. He didn't whine and say, "Why me?" I have heard many people say, "Why is this happening to me?" I can think of a lot of reasons, and I'm not even God. Job did not whine. He did not pretend that somehow things had gotten out of control: "Blessed be the name of the Lord." He knew that these things were not important. He had the divine viewpoint perspective. He had the Word of God. That's the only way you're going to get a mastery of the details of life such as this man had. Details can be lost, but details can be replaced. You leave them with God, and you pursue the divine viewpoint in your mind. That's the capacity that you're constantly building, so that God in time will replace the details.

Well, Job's troubles deepened, as you remember. His health broke down. He found himself covered with boils. He found his friends turning against him. His friends said, "Listen, Job, you might as well come out and admit what you've done. We know you've done something. God wouldn't treat you like this if you didn't do something. Come out and admit it."

Of course, his wife was no great comfort to him. Job 2:9 records one of her statements to him: "Then said his wife unto him, 'Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God and die.'" Now you can see what kind of viewpoint she was operating on. She said, "You're still pretending to be a goody-goody, Job? You're still pretending to have this kind of integrity? You're still going to be a real staunch upright man? What are you, some kind of an elephant hide? Why don't you just curse God and let him kill you, if He's going to treat you like that? Don't take it." That's what she was saying: "Don't take it."

But Job, with his mental attitude under severe strain, and receiving this rebuke from a disoriented woman while under the pressures that he was under, yet can reply to her in verse 10: "He said unto her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' In all this, Job did not sin with his lips." He answered in wisdom. He had the perspective. He said, "God is sovereign. If this is what God chooses to do, then that's what God chooses to do."

It's like Abraham when he had to face killing his son Isaac. You could almost sometimes wonder whether Isaac, that teenage boy, didn't look up into the eyes of his father, Abraham, when he realized that there was no animal for the sacrifice. They had everything else. He was going to be the sacrifice and finally, this teenage boy caught on that that's what was happening. You can almost imagine that he looked up in his father's face and said, "Do we have to do everything He tells us?" So, you can hear Abraham saying, "Yes, everything He says. And this is what He has told us to do." What a father! What a divine viewpoint capacity! And what a son that had the good sense to be positive to the teachings of his father.

If Job had been a slave to the details of life, he would have broken under the strain of his losses. But Job had a lasting spiritual maturity structure in his soul from the doctrine that he had learned. Job was content with the details of life, whether he had them or whether he did not. He had set his affection on things above, as Colossians 3:1-2 call upon us to do – on things above where our real home and life are to be found. When we become occupied with the details of life, we shove the Lord out of our mind, and lower priorities then take charge. That's what was happening in Laodicea.

Luke 8:14 describes that kind of Christian who receives the Word of God and falls among thorns: "They are they who, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to perfection." They're burdened down with the thorns of the details of life.

Having said all of that, I must now say that the possession of the details of life is not a sin. It is not a sin to possess things. It is not a sin to be a wealthy and a rich person. The sin lies in the mental attitude that you hold toward those riches – toward those details. It was not sinful for the people in Laodicea, because of the happy circumstances that surrounded them, to have found themselves in favorable financial circumstances. The sin came in terms of what they did with those finances, and with the details of life that came to them. Their priorities are the things that went wrong.

The Bible gives us examples of that problem of priorities gone wrong, and demonstrating that details have not been mastered. Coming back to 1 Timothy 6:10, we read again, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." It is the lust for wealth that is the sin – not having it. It is the desire to have a lot of money for happiness or for some goal in life – that's the sin. That's the trap that Satan will put you into.

1 Timothy 6:9 says, "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." This is a very dangerous thing for you to set out and make it your goal that you're going to be a rich man. That is a very dangerous motivation, because that is the first potential step toward the breakdown of your mastery of the details of life that will lead you into many sorrows. Money then becomes so easily the Christians god. It's the idol that draws him away from the Word of God.

Again, the principal is stated for us in Matthew 13:22: "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the Word, and the care of this age and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and he becomes unfruitful." Again, he is drawn away by the idol god of money – of material possessions. The lack of the mastery over money brings divine discipline. This is a very serious thing. God will discipline the breakdown of the mastery of the details of life.

1 Timothy 6:9 says that it "Drowns men in destruction and perdition." The latter part of verse 10 says, "Pierce themselves through with many sorrows." That desire for things can destroy everything that's ever going to be of value to you. This is why we say that growing into spiritual maturity and into godly service, which the Lord has prepared for you, is the top priority. You don't let anything else in life substitute for that.

This is the problem of making geographic moves on the basis of financial advantage. I have seen people go both ways. I have seen people who have worked for a company. They have been in the context of the Berean ministries. Their children have been in that context. They have progressed; they have prospered; and, God is blessing them because of their own spiritual development. They have capacity. Suddenly, a company comes along and says, "We're going to promote you, and we're going to send you over here." And like a little puppy, I've seen these people stick their tails between their legs, and go sulking off across the country where some powerful corporation sent them, instead of saying, "I cannot go there because I cannot equate my spiritual benefits where you want to send me to what I have here. Therefore, I must respectfully decline the promotion and transfer, even if it means I have to lose my job."

We have a man sitting here right now who was offered such a transfer. They told him all the wonderful things that he was going to get because they were to transfer him. So he agreed, and even got there to the transfer point. I'm not sure where it was – Arkansas; Oklahoma; or, someplace. They sent him off there, and he sat up there, and he got to thinking, "This isn't what I want to do. I'm not going to give up all the spiritual prosperity and benefits that I have in order to get a little more money. Before his family could get away from home, he turned around and came back, and told his company, "I'm not going to do it." They said, "You have to do it. We've already given your job to somebody else." He said, "Well, you'll have to do the best you can. I hope you can make another job, and I'm not going. They made another job for him because they knew they had a good man. God has prospered and blessed him and his because of it.

I've seen these other pitiful creatures who have gone out, and they've become wealthy, and they have seen their children grow in directions that have been a grief to their hearts, and they have lost out. We have people sitting here right now who have done it the other way. They're here just because they heard the Word of God through a tape, and they came from all parts of the country at distances. They cut themselves loose to go to where their spiritual life could be prospered, and their service to the Lord could be expanded. Do you think they're not going to enjoy their eternity? You can just count on it.

One of them recently told me that ever since they made that kind of a move, they have enjoyed nothing but prosperity and blessings, and everything has been better than it has ever been before. It's frightening to cut yourself off from everything that you're tied to at a distance. That's the mastery of the details of life. You and I might as well not kid ourselves. Not many Christians have that. Not many Christians have that solid factor of spiritual maturity within them to be able to master material things, over sacrificing spiritual advantages. Don't make a geographic move ever on the basis of economics. You will usually live to regret it.

The book of Proverbs shows us how to get wisdom through applying doctrine. Proverbs 28:6 gives us the edified attitude toward money as a detail of life: "Better is the poor that walks in his uprightness than he that is perverse in his way, though he be rich." "Perverse" means "all mixed-up with human viewpoint." The true riches of doctrine (wisdom) are the things that he pursues. It's better to be poor and to have doctrine flooding your soul than to be rich with your mixed-up human viewpoint arrogance.

Proverbs 8:19 adds another thought, speaking of wisdom (that is, doctrine applied). That's what wisdom is: "My fruit is better than gold (wisdom says); yea, than fine gold in my revenue; than choice silver." Fruit and revenue – that's the profit from the wisdom of doctrine. Money and the other details of life do not make us genuinely rich. The book of Proverbs tries to make that clear.

Proverbs 13:7 says, "There is he that makes himself rich; yet he has nothing. There is he that makes himself poor; yet he has great riches." That's a great verse. How many people have you seen who have wealth who are zeros, and they have nothing? They have money, and that's all they have. But when it comes to the qualities of life that count in terms of now and eternity, they have nothing. On the other hand, there's the man that makes himself poor. He is a man who applies himself to God's work, who could make a lot more money someplace else, maybe. And yet, he has great riches, and he'll take it with him when he crosses over to the other side.

Luke 12:15 enunciates this same principle: "He (Jesus) said unto them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses.'" The principle that, "You are what you have" is human viewpoint. True riches for you and me, as believers, are those spiritual assets that we have: the grace system for learning spiritual truth; God the Holy Spirit indwelling us; the capacity to erect a spiritual maturity structure in our souls; the eternal life that now resides in us; and, the prayer capacity to move heaven in our behalf.

**How Much is Enough?**

One of the things that is worth noting that Solomon discovered also, while he was fooling around with all kinds of ways to be happy, is that if you do love the details of life, particularly in terms of money, you never can get enough. Ecclesiastes 5:10 says, "He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loves abundance, with increase. This is also vanity." You will not be satisfied when you get more. That's a signal that you should be aware of. How much is enough? How much do you need?

I have often looked at people who have been very wealthy people, and I'm amazed at how poverty-stricken their lives are. I cannot help think that if I had their money, would I ever know how to live? I mean, there is San Moritz; there are the ski slopes in the Alps; and, there is the beautiful Mediterranean where the rich and depraved enjoy life. Boy, would I know how to live!" These people just grovel away, making money, trying to get to a point that's enough. Solomon says, "You'll never make it." Once you're a slave of the details of life, you'll never get to where you say, "I've got enough to enjoy and to cut loose with the Lord.

Solomon had doctrine, and he had wealth. Then he went on a big details-of-life binge, and he said that he found emptiness and vanity. He said that he found "vexation of spirit," which means "feeding on air." Solomon's life was a bore. In his old age, he looked back and regretted the slavery to which he had chained himself in terms of the details of life. So in Ecclesiastes 12:1, he comes back to divine viewpoint, and he says, "Remember now your Creator, and the days of your youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw near when you shall say, 'I have no pleasure in them.'" So, if you are on the young side now, take heed of what Solomon says. Solomon says, "Don't waste your life like I did. When you're young, get hold of this concept now. Never be a slave of the details of life. Hold your possessions lightly. Learn to say, 'God, you have given me this, and I view all that I have as a means for my service to You.' And that's all it means to me. It is the vehicle to enable me to serve You. I'm going to obey You. I'm going to seek to get a sanctified life. I'm going to seek godliness in my experience, and I'm going to seek to store treasures in heaven through my Holy Spirit-led service. The details of life are to contribute to that, and that's all they are. I will not become a frantic miser."

**Joshua**

As Israel stood on the verge of entering the Promised Land, after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, Joshua stood before them as the new leader. He knew that God was going to come through. He knew that God was going to prosper them. He knew that they were going to enjoy a lot of details of life. At that moment, he felt it important to get up before that people and say, "Before we cross over now, and go into the land, I want to remind you of a very important principle." It's the same thing we've been talking about here. It's the same thing that Laodicea forgot, to its destruction. It is a tremendous bit of advice in Joshua 1:8. He says, "This book of the Law (that is, the books that Moses wrote, with the doctrine which it contained) shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate therein day and night." You shall chew it over day and night.

**Mediate on God's Word**

You can test yourself there. How often, as you go through the day, are you mulling over in your mind principles of doctrine, particularly those that are pertinent to some issue of life that you're dealing with? Meditate and learn the Word of God, and be positive toward it so that it is stored in your human spirit. This is more than memorizing Scripture. Do you understand that? Memorizing Scripture is good and should be done. But Bible memory without the concept of what those Scriptures mean so that you can chew them over and mull them over your heart, and you can meditate upon them – that memorization is not of great value. "This book of the law shall not be passed out of your mouth, but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein." You're going to mull it over so that you're sure you know how to act. When you wake up in the middle of the night, what are you doing? What are you thinking about? You know all the things that you think about. Joshua says, "In the middle of the night, think over a principle of doctrine, and make it firmly yours so that you can apply it as circumstances demand it.

Here's the reason: "For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success." You could have paid a nice fee to have gone off to some weekend seminar where somebody can give you a lot of inspirational talk on how to prosper and be a success. But save your money, and just listen to Joshua 1:8, and you've got it made. ... Don't ever forget Joshua 1:8. This is the way to success. This is the way for prospering – success in terms of divine viewpoint.

When the world talks about success, they often mean promotion. A lot of the thing that was going on in Laodicea was people coming into positions of prestige and promotion. And along with the mastery of the details of life (associated with material things) is promotion. That's viewed as being successful.

I want to bring to you Psalm 75:6-7. This is a very important principle relative to promotion in terms of the details of your life: "For promotion comes neither from the East nor from the West nor from the South. But God is the judge. He puts down one, and He sets up another." Isn't that interesting? God puts one down, and He puts up another. If God doesn't promote you, you haven't been promoted. So, be careful that you don't go around and do your own promoting and say, "Oh, isn't the Lord good? How he has prospered me. When the Lord is ready to promote you, and you have the capacity to carry the promotion, and you have prepared yourself (you have developed that capacity through the Word of God), He'll promote you. When I say "promote," I mean in all the details of life that that connotes. He will promote you in money; he will promote you in prestige; He will promote you in your profession (in your trade); He will promote you in sex; He will promote you in social relationships; He will promote you in every way imaginable that would be a prosperous blessing to you. If the Lord doesn't do the promoting, then you don't have it. Don't be a dog, snarling over a bone, and think that because you are able to whip somebody else out, you've been promoted.

The correct mental attitude toward the promotion that God gives, and the prosperous details that come with it, is stated in Proverbs 15:33: "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility." Before success is humility. Do you know what "humility" means? It is grace orientation. That's what humility is. If you're going to be a person that the Lord can bless, you're a person that is oriented to the grace of God. You know that He is the one who promotes. He is the celebrity. You know that He is the one to be exalted, and not yourself. Success by human viewpoint is always accompanied by the mental attitude sin of pride.

Well, there are many other areas of the details of life that we could go through, and we don't have time to pursue them. But I hope that just this one, on material things, will help focus your attention on the very serious problem that got out of hand in Laodicea, and that you must be constantly on guard against. It is the breakdown in this one facet of spiritual maturity, more than anything else, that brings shipwreck to the lives of Christians, and that causes them to deviate from what God's best for them is. Please don't be so foolish as to get yourself out of the directive will of God for your life, and spend your time (the years of your life) groveling around in His permissive will. He'll let you do it. Instead of his directive will, which says, "Sam, this is where I want you," or "Susie, this is where the best is for you," you say, "No, I'm going to go this way." The Lord says, "Alright, we'll give you second best." And His permissive will enables you to go along with far less than He has for you.

If you control the details of life, it will not be necessary for that kind of tragedy to come upon you. If you can enjoy doctrine first, in the scale of values, you will control the details of life. If your happiness has to depend on things or people or pleasure, all of which are details, you're going to worry about losing them. If doctrine is secondary in your life, I'll tell you that you will get bored, and you're going to be constantly like Solomon, trying to find something to satisfy your soul. Doctrine is the only means for permanent satisfaction in the soul.

We will close with Ecclesiastes 12:13 (one more word from Solomon): "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Fear God in terms of honoring Him as sovereign, and therefore obeying what He has to say, knowing the consequences when we do not. Then we will enjoy prosperity and good success.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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