***Biblical Examples of the Mastery of the Details of Life  
  
RV63-02***

As most of you know, God had commanded Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to subdue the planet earth for their enjoyment and for their well-being. Genesis 1:28 specifically records that instruction. Satan used this material blessing of the earth, however, to trap Adam and Eve into rebellion against God's sovereign authority. They tried instead to establish human sovereignty and human authority in place of God's. God had said, "Subdue the world. Use this material world. Develop it; learn about it; and, enjoy it." They decided to pervert it to a totally different use. In Genesis 3:5, we have that decision recorded, where Satan's deceitful lie to Eve was, "'God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil.' And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food." It was a material blessing and a material prosperity. It was pleasant to the eyes. Again, it was a satisfaction to the human structure, and a tree to be desire to make one wise. Again, that is a human desire and a human prosperity: "She took of the fruit, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat."

From that moment, they lost all capacity to enjoy God's blessing. From that moment, they were disqualified from all the enriched blessing that the living God was ready to pour out upon them, because now they could not handle it. They had substituted a little detail of life: a material element; a social element; and, a mental element for the marvelous relationship which they had enjoyed with God. This relationship had been based upon what God had said. It was based upon God's word (God's doctrine). The relationship then degenerated, and Adam and Eve went negative to the Word of God.

The Christians at Laodicea, whom we have been studying in this letter, are people who have themselves fallen into the same trap that Adam and Eve fell into. The Christians in Laodicea enjoyed great material prosperity, but they were not able to keep a divine viewpoint perspective upon it. Satan stimulated the arrogance which is in the old sin nature so that these Laodiceans developed a false sense of independence, and worse yet, a false sense of quality. They thought they were something when they were really nothing. It is obvious that the Laodicean Christians had lost track of basic Bible doctrine principles. Either they were not taught, or they were negative to what they heard.

**Reversionism**

The church members were therefore in spiritual reversionism. They were totally disgusting to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Laodiceans were more interested in the details of life than in building and maintaining a strong spiritual maturity structure in their souls. These Christians saw themselves as having it all together. But Jesus says that they were wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

**The Mastery of the Details of Life**

They lacked the spiritual maturity facet that we call the mastery of the details of life. They were enslaved to the larger pattern of the details of life, not only in money, but in all the other things that people pursued.

**Spiritual Maturity**

So, as we've studied this letter to the Laodiceans, we've been reminding ourselves that the objective of the Christian life is to build spiritual maturity in your soul. I cannot emphasize that enough. The Christian community is totally wrong, by and large. The Christian community holds up other things to individual believers as the primary objective of the Christian life: to get people saved; to send our missionaries; and, all kinds of meeting of social needs of one kind or another. They have many substitutes, and they're wrong. The primary objective of the Christian life is the core element that Satan has discouraged, and that's building a structure of spiritual maturity in your soul, because without that spiritual maturity, you're not going to do any kind of missionary work worth doing. You're not going to be building anything in the Lord's work that's worth building. Your perspective is going to be completely wrong, and you're going to lack total capacity for doing the job to begin with.

So, it is very important that we realize that the degeneration that took place in Laodicea was at the point that they became sloppy about learning and functioning on the Word of God. They started wrestling someplace along the line when the preacher said something that touched a point at which they were guilty. This happens all the time. When preachers are faithful to the Word of God, they're going to hit you where it hurts, because we're guilty of these violations. But then we don't say, "Thank God for having alerted me to a place where I was getting careless;" the resentment arises; and, the sin nature brings down that individual believer. You're trying to justify what you ought to condemn in yourself.

So, the objective is a Christian life (we're trying to learn again, and to stress again) is spiritual maturity structure in the soul, because with this structure, you will have consistent divine viewpoint, and you will become a lighthouse in Satan's world. The foundation is doctrine in your human spirit, and positive volition to it.

**The Glory of God**

This is the reflected glory of God. When you have this spiritual maturity structure built, you are reflecting the glory of God. Then the Lord Jesus Christ can love you. Please understand that there is nothing in you and me for God to love. God will never love us, per se. The only thing that God loves is what He can love in Himself. The only things that God loves are the perfections that characterize Him. When those are transferred to us, then there is something for Him to love in us.

We have this crazy idea that people are running around, being good folks, and being nice people, and that God is just drooling all over them because He loves them so – and He does not. He loves His justice; He loves His righteousness; and, He loves His Holiness. When He sees that in us, He has a target for His love. Until he sees that, He has only a target for His wrath. So, the glory of God is reflected by a spiritual maturity structure in our souls. This is what God loves – that structure that reflects His glory, so that His love can be poured out upon you.

In 1 Corinthians 6:20, we read, "For you are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your human spirit, which are God's. The way you glorify God in your body is to be compatible to His righteousness. The way you will become compatible to His righteousness in your body is when your human spirit is filled with His divine viewpoint doctrines, and you have built spiritual maturity structure out of that in your soul.

This was a great tragedy for people who had a lot of money as they did in Laodicea, and then for the devil to have tripped them up on that very thing, because they did not maintain the capacity to use that money in a way that would build the work of the Lord, and store treasures in heaven for them.

So, when we talk about mastery over the details of life, we mean control over the things of lesser importance in life, so that you're not dominated by them. It's a matter of always giving the Word of God top priority in life. And if you're going to give the Word of God top priority in life, that means to be there when it's being dispensed for you to receive it. God's prime agency for dispensing His viewpoint is the local church ministry with the complete canon of Scripture, and the gift of the pastor-teacher instructor. That's the combination. That is the one that makes maximum progress for Christians – and none other does.

So, you go ahead and play around with your cutesy-pooh substitutes if you choose to. You can go off to a camp for a weekend inspiration, and all the other things that can be thrown in to substitute for the hardcore concentrated thinking God's thoughts after Him. That's what the local church is all about. That's what it is beautifully designed by God to do. When it is being executed in that way, the people of God have monumental opportunities to prosper; to go forward; to develop spiritually; and, for the Lord to be pouring our blessings on super grace level to them.

If you're going to give doctrine top priority in your life, it means being here to hear it. I'll tell you young people, those of you who have got parents, most of you kids have never really grasped what an enormous blessing has been placed upon you by a sovereign God if your parents are in church every time the door is open. You are blessed above all of your peers. You are so fortunate. Someday, when you come into your maturity, you will look back, and you will breathe a sigh of relief that you were not one of those poor characters who was born into a family of erratic church attenders. So, appreciate that, just like you will appreciate, the older you get and the wiser you get, that you weren't born in Russia or some other communist country – that's the grace of God put you in the in the Lord's client nation.

In ancient days, it was a great honor and privilege to be born into God's client nation, Israel, when she was functioning as that. Today, the greatest honor and privilege is to be born an American, because the United States is God's functioning client nation today. That's why the terrible things (the prostituting of that client role by antagonistic attitudes toward the principles of Scripture) are what is such a tragedy, and what is bringing the nation down. People like Falwell are putting up colleges with 50,000 people, and others are trying to sound the alarm to the nation.

**Jonah**

I am beginning increasingly to think that we are being called to play the Jonah role. I have no doubt that Berean Church, it seems to me, by what's beginning to happen, is being called to move into high gear to execute the Jonah role; that is, to alert (to sound the alarm), and if the nation listens, and if enough people in this country turn back to doctrine and become oriented to the Word of God, this nation will have a period of extended grace and of influence. When Jonah spoke to Ninevah, they listened. They turned around. That's what really turned the nation around. It was not all that crazy stuff about new economic programs, and new politicians, and new goals, and new devices. The only thing that turns a country around, when it is headed in the wrong direction, is the principles of the Word of God. The only way that's going to be done is when people are taught the Word of God.

And that's why we have to cast our eyes upon that high school level. We have to start putting our eyes on that college level where those minds are who are going to be the decision-makers, and where the power structure will really lie in this country. The mastery of the details of life means having something permanent in the soul which is not subject to removal because you happen to die, or because you happen to lose it. So, your prestige, and your money and your fame, and your social life, and all those other things that people will pay such great prices for – they're worthless. You leave it when you die. You can lose it when you don't die.

However, I want to stress that sin, in reference to the details of life, is our mental attitude toward them. The details themselves are not sin. It is not sinful to be wealthy. It is not sinful to be famous. It is not sinful to have a very happy social life. It is not sinful to have a satisfying sexual life. It is not sinful to have a satisfying family life, and everything else – all these details of life. It is our attitude of making them superior to our devotion to the Word of God and to His thinking.

**Job**

One of the things we did not point out about Job last time, after he went through all of his tragedies, and while his wife was trying to get him to sin in turning against God, was that Job stood firm. The details were there. He enjoyed them when he had them, and when he lost them, he said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." He demonstrated that his love for the Lord was because of who and what God was, and what the Word of God had done in his life. Satan had been put completely to flight and had been humiliated. Don't forget that this was one of the great humiliations of all-time for Satan, before all the created angelic creatures of God. It was biting the dust like he hasn't bitten it in a long time, because he went on record before all created angelic intelligences of making one of these declarative statements of what was true about Job.

This is just like the liberal human viewpoint mentalities like to do. They get up, and they make these declarative statements: "This is the way it is, and this is what is true," as if they really knew, and as if they really had this kind of omniscience. Satan made his statement on Job, and God proved him so wrong. Satan limped for a long time with that kick in the pants. But for Job, for every donkey he lost, he got it back – and, one more. For every camel he lost, he got it back – and, one more. For all the money he lost, he got every Krugerrand back – and, one more with it. It was doubled. All the silver and all the gold – everything was doubled. He lost seven children, and he got seven children back – double the amount of what he had, because the seven that died were in heaven waiting for him. He didn't have to get 14 to double what he had before. ... He got double all along the line. Now, that is prosperity. This guy, out of his agony, came up with such a stand: "The Lord has given; the Lord has taken it away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Out of it came a man who knew how to master the details of life. God says, "This man I can trust." He poured it on him – super grace blessings. This was one of the great super grace giants of all time – Job.

So, this was a sad thing that was taking place in Laodicea, and I hope that you have a broad enough picture to realize that it was not a small thing, and that it's a thing that you and I, in this country, because of our very freedom and the prosperity that freedom brings, are very subject to the same sort of thing. No one wants to be a slave, but Satan gained control over the world, and he enslaved humanity when he conquered the woman's mind, with her lack of capacity to control the details of her ambitions. Eve failed to apply the doctrine she knew, and mental attitude pride entered. She lusted for a detail that wasn't worth having, and she lost it all.

**Frustration**

This enslavement to the details of life starts when we go negative to the Word of God. We reject what the pastor-teacher has taught, or we're not learning at all because we're carnal. It results in a deficiency within our souls. That deficiency of God's viewpoint in your soul leads to frustration. Don't forget – that's the word. When you do not have the stability of the Word of God, and you do not have a spiritual maturity structure in your soul, you will have frustration. That frustration means that nothing is going to satisfy you. So, you turn to sublimation. You turn to finding substitutes on a frantic search for fulfillment of happiness. What you turn to are these details of life. That's why you have these gross demonstrations on the part of Christians who are degrading themselves with the details of life. They are hell-bent (mad-bent) to pursue them. You say, "Why did they do that?" Because they were frustrated, and because they were trying to find some happiness. They were looking for satisfaction. That satisfaction lies in these details. So, they turn to something as a substitute.

We've already seen how this builds callouses on the soul. We see how lust patterns take over the areas of our soul, and we lose our satisfaction in God. This is not a new thing. This has been true of humanity through all the ages. Therefore, in Psalm 81:12, we read, "So, I gave them up unto their own heart's desire, and they walked in their own counsel." Before that, in verse 11, God, speaking of Israel, says, "My people would not hearken to My voice, and Israel would have none of Me." He says, "They would not listen to my doctrinal instruction. They would not have anything to do with Me." They pursued the details of life. And when you do that, and you try to sublimate, and you try to substitute, then God says, "OK." And you have that terrible verse in Psalm 81:12: "So, I gave them up unto their own heart's desire, and they walked in their own counsel." But God isn't happy about that. Verse 13 says, "Oh, that my people had hearkened unto to Me, and Israel had walked in My ways. I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto Him (unto Israel); and their time should have endured forever. He should have fed them (that is, Israel) also with the finest of the fleet; with honey out of the rock I should have satisfied you."

I want to remind you that God is talking there about the client nation of that time. He is talking about His divine righteousness attitude toward those who were responsible for propagating divine viewpoint truth and the Word of God at that time, as we are today. So, the same basic concepts apply to us. Spiritually, this is true toward the United States. God says, "Oh, that you had listened to me; that you had functioned on My Word; and, that you had not taken My Word and tried to squeeze it into the human viewpoint of Satan's world system." And don't forget that Satan has a world system. A "cosmos diabolicus" is the Latin expression for it that Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer liked to use. It is Satan's diabolical system. It's an organized system. It isn't just a bad thing here; a bad thing there; and, here's a bad thing. Satan has taken education; he has taken social needs; he has taken government; he has taken religion; and, he has taken everything. He has organized it into a structure, and it's an evil structure.

And Christians are trying to fit God's thinking into that structure, instead of looking at that structure and saying, "That's wrong there; that's wrong there; and, God condemns that, and if you want to make it right, you have to do it this way. Then it will be compatible with divine integrity." The Lord says, "I wish they had done it, but I'm going to give them up." And that's what's going to happen to the United States. God is going to give us up to walk in our own counsel. And that's what's been happening. We, for many years, have walked in our own stupidity. And now the nation is in panic. God's said, "Had you listened to me, I would have subdued your enemies." Look how American military forces have had us turn and flee in the face of our enemies. We would have subdued our enemies. The hands of our adversaries would have been destroyed. We would have subdued the haters of God; the homosexuals; the abortionists; the women in rebellious authority against their husbands' leadership; rebellious children; the dope culture; the rock-n-roll sin culture; and, everything else.

Have you been listening to rock-n-roll words or music recently? I have. Boy, is it ever stepping up? The violence is deepening. And cable television is the flank movement to bring pornography into your home so that the temptation has maximum opportunity to be indulged. Just wait and see where we're going. The Word of God says that these are the haters of the Lord because they are violators of His moral standards. They would have been forced to submit. God says, "You would have been put in such a position of authority in Israel that morality would have been enforced, as morality always must be. Morality would have been enforced because it would have been respected, and people would know that it works, and that it blesses.

In verse 16, God says, "I would have prospered you. You would have had the details of life like you wouldn't believe. This is the tragic loss of turning to callouses on the soul. So, we come with mental attitude sins that give us misery on the inside, and send us on these wild excursions of trying to find happiness in some of these details of life. We find nothing but tragedy dominating us on the outside. It is a sad picture when Christians are enslaved to such details. This is what was once true of all of us in one way or another before we became Christians. How tragic it is when we see a Christian walking in that same pattern. The apostle Paul reminded Titus how it used to be with those of us who are believers. Titus 3:3 says, "For we ourselves also were once foolish; disobedient; deceived; serving various lusts and pleasures; living in malice and envy; hateful; and hating one another." Did you ever find any Christian who is disobedient; who is self-deceitful; who is serving various lust patterns of his sin nature; seeking various sinful pleasures; who is living in malice; and, who is living in envy?

**Envy**

And please remember that that's the word. That's the code word right there: envy. That is the code word of American society today. It has been. We're hopefully trying to change it. The code word of American government, and of the American public, has been envy – envy attached to greed. It is envy of those who have produced and have: greed to take from them what they have produced and have. That is the power of government. Socialism always does this, because socialism has gradually, in some degree, been imposed upon us, and it comes in to execute that envy and greed demand. Make no mistake about it. The motivating force of what our government has done for many years is to execute the envy and the greed of the sin nature.

**Hateful**

We are hateful. Christians are hateful, and hating one another. Did you ever know any Christians who hate one another? I could name a few to you. Paul says, "That's dog vomit. You should have gotten over that. That's the way you used to be. For a Christian to go back to that dog vomit?"

In 2 Peter 2:19, Peter also takes up this problem when he says, "To those who pervert the freedom which we have from God (not from the state – but from God), and which we have, in its unique form, as believers who have been freed from the enslavement to the sin nature; while they promised them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, the same is he brought in bondage. For if, after they escape the pollutions of the world" – this 'cosmos diabolicus' world system, and all of its filthy pollutions, a Christian has finally come to where he no longer has to be enslaved to it. He escapes the pollution of the world: "Through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." That connotes not only the doctrine of salvation, but the full gamut of Bible doctrine truth: "And are again entangled in it, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."

That was Laodicea. They had again become entangled in the things from which once they had been freed. With them, it centered in the facet of not being able to handle the details of life.

Verse 21: "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandments delivered unto them." Do you think that God will look upon you Christians indifferently, who have been stupid enough to attend church at Berean Memorial church, and listened to the exposition of Scripture, and hear the principles or the Word of God, and thrash in agony and indignation and cast them aside? No. You will have problems with your life now, and I guarantee you that you will know what it is to suffer loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God says that it would've been better for you, if you're going to be a negative Christian, just to find yourself some stupid little group of religious people that think good thoughts and inspirational ideas, and hang around with them. But don't expose yourself to what God thinks, because when you know it, God is going to say, "Now you're responsible for it. It's not the preacher who taught you; not the Sunday school teacher who taught you; and, not the leader in some phase of the educational programs of the church who taught you, but you are going to be responsible for it.

Verse 22: "But it has happened to them (these reversionistic Christians) according to the true proverb: The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." You thought I made that up. What a beautiful picture of the reversionistic Christian. The next time your dog throws up, take a close look at it. If you want to keep it around awhile, just put a sign over it as an object lesson for your children: "Reversionism." And they'll get a pretty good idea of what God thinks.

**Lusts**

Well, the details of life have a variety of expression. People want these details. They lust for them – of these various kinds. In Laodicea, it was material. But there are other details, just to put this picture into perspective. There is the detail of the lust for praise. Jude 16 talks about that. Consider whether that may be a problem that you are pursuing – the lust for praise.

There is the detail of the lust for sex outside of the confines of the marriage arrangement. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 tell us about that.

There is the lust for having things – the lust of covetousness. James 4:1-3 describe that for us.

There is, of course, the lust for money. That was the problem in Laodicea. 1 Timothy 6:9 and 2 Peter 2:16 describe that.

There is the lust for power – for authority over others. James 4:5 speaks about that.

There is the lust for status in the eyes of other people. Mark 12:38-39 tell us about that.

All of these are expressions of the details of life. They're not the important thing. They may have a place, and they do, but they're not the important thing. They are not the thing that is made superior to what God has to say.

This enslavement to this kind of a lust pattern is a gradual thing. For any Christian who has any knowledge of the Word of God, he doesn't leap whole-hog into one of these lust patterns. He plays around with the edge of it. He approaches it through the fringes of pornography; evil movies; evil television programs; evil communications; and, things that he ought not to have anything to do with. But he says, "Well, I know better, and I condemn that, and it's not going to hurt me." You can play around with the edges of it. The lust pattern that is played with is one that generally will hook you, and it hooks you with the spear of pride because you think you're capable of controlling it. This lust pattern that you toy with will slowly demand more and more of your attention, and of yourself, until it has you hooked. Suddenly, you realize how enslaved you are to one of these patterns of these lust details of life of the old sin nature, and you wonder how it happened, and how you ever got to that place.

**Samson**

The Bible, of course, is full of examples. In Judges chapters 14 through 16, you read about a man named Samson. Samson was a classic Old Testament example of extreme enslavement to the details of life. His values and standards were short-circuited by the lust patterns of his old sin nature which he indulged. He played loose with a little spider called Delilah, who eventually tracked him into a physical loss, and into a physical enslavement for the rest of his life. To the end of his days, he was never again physically free, after he played with the lust patterns that he was executing with Delilah. Do you have a Delilah someplace in your present realm of activities that you think you can handle? The spiritually strong Christian is the one who is in danger of spiritual enslavement in his own lust patterns. It's the hazard of pride. It will eat you up.

**Ananias and Sapphira**

Of course, in the New Testament, what better example than Ananias and Sapphira as people who knew the Word, but who could not keep from being chewed up by the details of money? Acts 5:1-10 records this tragic conditions for us. The background of what is happening here is in Acts 4:37, where they saw a man named Barnabas do a very commendable thing in the early church. When the believers needed financing to survive together, verse 37 describes what Barnabas and others had done. Barnabas is specifically mentioned here: "Having land, he sold it, and he brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet." Naturally, this was received with considerable praise to the Lord, and considerable appreciation on the part of these believers who were struggling in a society that was increasingly antagonistic to them. Ananias and Sapphira happened to be there that day, and they saw this. They watched what Barnabas did, and they saw he brought the money. And they saw the esteem which Barnabas wasn't looking for, but which was placed upon him, just in the nature of the case.

So, they went home. While they were having their Sunday afternoon dinner, they're talking over what they would like to do, and how nice that was. And on the front and on the surface, they're all for the Lord. They want to do something for the Lord. They want to make an investment for the Lord. They might have even decided: "Maybe we can even get some of our friends to make an investment in this project that we're promoting. And the reason that we want to do this is to get money so that we can expand the Lord's work." I can just see Ananias and Sapphira saying, "Let's see if we can get some of these folks to go into a project. Maybe we can get a project. We can expand the Berean campus. Maybe we can get a college someday." And here they are – mulling this over. But there was a lust for the detail of money corroding their spiritual lives.

Acts 5:1: "But a certain man named Ananias, and Sapphira his wife, sold a certain possession." What they decide to do then was that they kept back part of the price: "His wife also knowing of it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet." There was collusion – the husband and wife were being deceitful together. They set it up. They knew what they were doing. They said, "What difference does it make? We'll bring the money. We'll achieve the same thing that Barnabas did. We don't have to give it all." That is such a clear sign of the lack of mastery of the details of life.

You know the story of the old woman that was making the little hotcakes at her fire when the beggar came by and asked for some food. So she made one for him, and was about to give it to him. She looked at it and thought, "That's a little too big." So she said, "I'll make another one." She made a smaller one. Then she looked at it and said, "That's still too big." She kept making them, and getting them smaller and smaller, until she said, "I'm sorry, I don't have any batter left to make anything for you." She couldn't get herself to give it. ... Because she was so greedy, she just couldn't find what was small enough to give.

That's what these people were doing. Oh, in 30 years, I've seen this so often. I've seen big-time operators and big-time talkers who couldn't find a thing small enough such that it was acceptable for them to part with, as if God was ever going to be indebted to them, like these two poor people. In fact, instead of the fact that whatever they gave, God was going to bless and return with grace now, and at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of this land?" Peter had a wonderful ability because he was an apostle. That's the pity that we don't have apostles today, or perhaps it's the grace that we don't have apostles in the pulpit today. We just have pastor-teachers who lack the discerning ability (the supernatural ability) to see whether what a person is saying is true or false. Wouldn't that be a can of worms to open today: if the pastor-teacher always knew whether you were lying or telling the truth; and, whether your motives were pure or deceptive? Peter knew it right away. Immediately, God the Holy Spirit said, "They're trying to cheat. They're putting on a front. They kept a good chunk of this at home." The point is that they brought it and said, "Hey, we've sold our house, and we're going to give the money to the Lord's work," and the implication was that they were bringing the whole thing.

**Capitalism**

Peter said, "While it remained, was it not your own?" This is biblical capitalism. How I love it! Peter said, "It was yours to do with as you please." That is capitalism. Capitalism is to use what you have earned as you choose to use it, without the power of government exercising the envy and greed of those who want to share it with you. Peter said, "After it was sold, was it not in your own power? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart (in your mind)? You have not lied unto men, but unto God."

That's what's so amazing. We opened our open house meeting with the children singing the "Essence" song that describes the ten basic qualities that characterize God. One of the things that they sang about was His omniscience. You wonder if Ananias and Sapphira did not know the doctrine of omniscience, or if they really knew it and then demonstrated this kind of hardcore negative attitude toward it such that they thought they could get away with this – that God doesn't know, or He doesn't care, or He won't tell. Most people think that God is on their side. He's going to keep their secrets and not tell.

"And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and died, and great fear came upon all them that heard these things." Now that was a church service to attend. Boy, if the charismatics had this power, can you see how they would get things jumping? "And the young men arose, wrapped him up, and carried him out, and buried him. It was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in." She's nervous. He doesn't come home. She's at home waiting for him to report the big impression they made. He's made a bigger impression than she knew. She was about to do the same.

"Peter answered her, 'Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.' She said, 'Yea, for so much.' Then Peter said unto her, 'How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold the feet of them who have buried your husbands are at the door, and shall carry you out.' Then she fell down immediately at his feet and died. The young men came in and found her dead and said, 'What? Another one?' And carried her forth and buried her by her husband." These guys are getting tired. I mean, the service is over, and they're ready to go home to lunch. They've had to dig one hole, and now they've got to go and dig another one. I mean, what kind of a church service is that?

But what a demonstration that was of the lack of a mastery of the details of life. And why? In part, because they lacked a respect for what they knew was the character of God, and who knew what was going on. God had already made it clear that in this new era of the church operation, while the apostles lived, they knew what was going on. They had a direct communication into heaven itself with God telling them. And they thought they could still pull off this kind of a scam. They wanted the praise. They wanted to be like Barnabas. They were jealous for a place in the sun. They had sold their property; they had the money; and, it was theirs to do with as they pleased. It was not wrong to have the money. It was not wrong to have prospered. It was their mental attitude toward it that was the sin. This led to a deceit. The Holy Spirit took both of them that day to heaven. And He prevented Satan from being able to permit this hypocrisy to be used to destroy the local church ministry.

When people in the local church have a lack of a mastery of the details of life; pretenses are made; and, deceits are carried on, it has a corrosive effect on the congregation, because sooner or later it affects something in the life of the congregation. Promises are made that aren't kept. People are induced to do things under the idea that they're going to get financial backing and support, and they find themselves out on a limb, and it has a corrosive effect. So, God cut this off immediately in the New Testament church so that this hypocrisy could not be used by Satan later.

This is one of the biblical examples of the sin unto death where there's no return. But they had really tried to make a deal with God – money for prominence and praise. That's why you have to be careful in making over the good things that people do with their money. It's a thing for which we are always grateful and that deserves commendation. But it's of no value that we commend it. The value is that God commends it. If a person has the capacity to give without strings attached, he probably has a capacity for you to commend him. But it's a dangerous game. You shouldn't expose it. You shouldn't expose people to that. You shouldn't put that pressure on them. You should just not put that pressure on: commending people who maybe can't handle it, and then to undo the good thing that they're doing.

God says "You're not going to make any deals with Me." The Bible, as a matter of fact, delineates for us the only deal that God is going to make with you. If you want to know about that, it's in Hebrews 13:5. God says, "I'll make this deal with you, and that's all. Don't ask me for anything more." This is the only thing that I'll tell you that you can count on: "Let your manner of life be without covetousness." "Covetousness" is a descriptive word for the qualities of envy and greed: "And be content with such things as you have. For He has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" "Be content with what you have because I'll never leave you and I'll never forsake you."

That's the promise of supplying of provisional grace – of logistical grace. God says, "I will always supply you what you need to fight in the angelic warfare. But when you get to super grace, I'm going to do more for you. I'm not only going to give you what you need to fight the battle. I'm going to give you luxuries. I'm going to give you prosperity in various realms. I'm going to give you more than you need. I'm going to enable you to enjoy things of life that you would not have thought you could enjoy. But that's a beginning, when you're developing spiritual maturity, I will promise you this much: I'll give you whatever you need to live your life as unto the Lord." You may not be very prosperous, and you may not be very rich, but God will find that you have blessing in that. You will be pleased and you will be happy with what you have.

I have an old 1961 Chevrolet. Because my number one and two sons have driven it over various periods of time, it has accumulated new parts on the outside. These new parts are painted differently than the original parts. I haven't gotten around to doing anything about it. I pulled into a gas station recently. The fella that was there supervising the place says, "Gee, I really like your paint job." I felt so pleased, and so happy that this little detail of life that I had, this old 1961 splotched leopard-like Chevy, brought me recognition and some fame. It's not much, but you can be happy with it. The Lord has ways of exalting you even under those conditions.

God says, "I'll give you what you need. My provisional grace will be there. You'll never lack it." If you have a mastery of the details of life, then you have everything. We close with Philippians 4:19. This is the great promise that we must never forget: "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Believe it. You better believe it.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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