**The Live Wire Church, No. 2

SP01-02**

We're looking at the first six verses of Revelation 3, the letter to the church in the city of Sardis in Asia Minor. As we have seen, this church in Sardis evidently had a very active church program. Everybody was impressed by what was going on. Everybody was impressed by the announcements, the future events, and coming attractions. There was only one problem. The church lacked the quality of spirituality; that is, it was out of touch with God the Holy Spirit. Its doctrinal statement was quite correct, but it lacked the guidance and the leading and the controlling influence of God the Holy Spirit. That was a very serious problem. This organization, impressive to people, was a loser in the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Evaluating a Church**

It is always important to know how to balance the position of sound Bible doctrine with the filling of the Holy Spirit in terms of living and of serving God. You must not judge a church or a congregation, a local organization, simply on what it says it believes. There are plenty of places that you could thoroughly agree with what they believe in, but you would soon discover that the lifestyle of its members is far out of keeping with the things they say they believe. What you believe is what you do. When you take a look at a church, it's not just the doctrinal statement. It's the implications in practice of that doctrine--the lifestyle of the members themselves.

People are very often deceived today by what a local church is supposed to be. Interestingly enough, the Bible, in the earliest stages of the New Testament, reiterates the fact that when Christians gathered together, they gathered for the primary cause of the Apostles' doctrine. You know what that means. They gathered to be taught the word of God. A church is a school room. Any time a church does not look and smell and taste and appear to be a schoolroom, you should be very suspicious of it. You should draw back. The less of a schoolroom that it is, the more it will have outward accouterments to try to make up for the lack of its real function. It will have stained glass windows. The pastor will wear robes and they will have a tremendous organ playing very inspiring music. They will have choirs and they wear robes. They will have castles built against the wall for attractiveness and various kinds of designs to make the place look impressive. They might even have a whole concert band up there to try to awe you when you walk in. There are all kinds of devices and gimmicks to make up for the fact that the Word of God in that place is not alive and powerful.

**Learning**

You should get a discerning eye. A church is a place for learning. If you don't learn, and if you walk out as ignorant as you came in, you know that you have been robbed in eternal terms, in terms of reward, and you've been robbed in terms of getting your life together for God's blessing now. Never forget that it is the primary purpose of our Father in heaven to just pour out super grace blessings on you. He is standing up there just ready to pull the lever and dump it all down on you. But we're out there jamming the mechanism. We're out there fouling the works so that God the Father patiently waits until he can release what he has prepared for us in terms of our personal blessing.

So, we've seen in the opening lines of this letter that Jesus Christ is sending a message to this church through the pastor-teacher of that church. He is approaching this church in terms of the fact that He, as the Son of God, functions through God the Holy Spirit. And that's a reference to the seven Spirits of God. The reason that he approaches this church in this way is because this was their problem. They had missed the proper relationship to God the Holy Spirit. The Lord indicates that He knows about their works. Their works are famed in that part of the world. They have a name for being a very live wire organization. But Jesus says, "When I look at you, I'm here to tell you that you're spiritually dead."

**Be Watchful**

So he goes on in verse two with a call to this church to get itself stabilized. The first admonition is to preserve what is left. "Be watchful." The first word, "be," looks like this in Greek: "ginomai." That actually means "to become." So what the Lord is saying is more than just "be something." He's saying, "Become something" that at the moment they were not. This word is in the present tense, and present tense in Greek indicates a continuous action like a line. So, what he's saying is "keep on becoming this." This is middle in form but it's active in its meaning. The Sardis church Christians are actually personally supposed to be doing this, and this is the first of a series of imperatives. The word "imperatives" means "commands"--a series of divine commands that are going to be given to this church to get itself straightened out.

Again I remind you: Just as you are aware of where God the Holy Spirit rings a bell of reality of problems that are in this church, you should sense such problems in your life or in your associations. These things have been written for our learning, and the advice to them is advice to us to meet the same problem.

"Be watchful." The word "watchful" looks like this in Greek: "gregoreo." The word "gregoreo" means to watch in the sense of being awake; that is, to be vigilant. We have an illustration of its use in Matthew 24:42-44. Here's an illustration of the word "gregoreo." Matthew 24:42: "Watch, therefore (and there is the word--watch, therefore), for you know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the householder had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore be also ready, for in such an hour as we think not, the Son of man cometh." This word is often used in connection with warnings to be prepared for the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. You can see, by the passage in Matthew, that the idea here is to be awake. Just don't sit there asleep, but be awake. You can actually translate that properly in that way: Wake up. That's what the opening two words are saying here: "wake up," or "be watching."

This is present tense again--"constantly be on your guard" is what he's saying. It's active. The Sardis congregation is to get active relative to its personal spiritual problem. It's in the participle, which is a spiritual principle stated. Now this was a particularly fitting expression to this church which lacked the filling of the Holy Spirit, and so it was spiritually dull and careless. When we say that a church lacks the filling of the Holy Spirit, of course, we mean that the individual Christians lack the filling of the Holy Spirit. A church is nothing more than all those Christians put together. The problem was that they had a spiritual condition that they had generated into, which was conducive to spiritual defeat. A Christian cannot survive in the angelic warfare apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit because the battle is the Lord's. If you try to enter that battle on your own, you will be defeated.

So, this is a warning that was needed by this church and historically was fitting, interestingly enough, to the city of Sardis, because twice in their history they had been conquered by foreign military powers simply because their defenders had lacked vigilance. They were very sensitive on this subject--that twice they had been defeated, and both times the same way, on the same modus operandi--the same plan of attack had been used and they had been defeated on both occasions. They were aware of it. This was known through the ancient world and Sardis was sensitive on the point that they had gone under through lack of vigilance. It happened once in the year 549 B.C. in the time of the famous King Croesus when a Median soldier under Cyrus climbed up the unguarded slope--the slope that they thought nobody could climb. He climbed; others followed; they entered the city; and, they conquered it. In 218 B.C., a Cretan mercenary looks at that same slope, analyzes the foot and toe hold, and says, "I can make it to the top." He goes out, the rest of them follow, and sure enough there's nobody on the top watching that side because they know that that side, nobody can climb. It's impassable. Yet, up come the soldiers through this unguarded approach, because the people who were defending it were not watchful at that point, and again, in 218 B.C., Sardis falls to a foreign power in the same way.

**Doctrinal Creed**

Now the Sardis church thought that its sound doctrinal creed was its protection. It thought that if it had a sound doctrinal statement, they didn't have to guard against anything more. As long as they had the creed there, they were safe. And what the Lord is telling this church is, "You're wrong. Your doctrine is sound, but you need to wake up to the fact that you're shot through with carnality. You need to wake up to the fact that you lack temporal fellowship." You have indeed entered this circle of eternal fellowship. When you believed in Christ as Savior, you entered that eternal fellowship, and you can never leave that outer circle. But, you also entered the point of temporal fellowship (the inner circle). This is the point called spirituality in the Christian life. When you're in eternal fellowship (inside the outer circle) but not in temporal fellowship (inside the inner circle), this is the point of carnality. Now these people were indeed saved but they were roaming around out here in the area of carnality. They were out of touch with God the Holy Spirit who controls this spirituality area of life. When you sin, you step out of the inner circle of Christian fellowship. You step out of temporal fellowship. You're still saved, you're still an eternal fellowship, but you no longer have any guidance and you no longer have any enablement by God the Holy Spirit. You return to this by using 1 John 1:9, the confession of known sins. That restores to the status of spirituality. That's a simple little doctrine, and yet it's the key to everything in the Christian life in the Age of Grace.

The people in Sardis obviously had fouled up this simple truth. They had forgotten and they had become sloppy. They knew they were doing wrong things, and they didn't go to the Lord and say, "Lord that's wrong and I want to confess it." They were praying that the Lord would forgive their sins, but the Bible doesn't tell you to pray to forgive your sins. It tells you to confess your sins to God the Father. And that's how they're forgiven in time so that fellowship is restored. They were making up their own arrangements for dealing with God, and it was a very serious error. Can you see why most Christians in most churches and most congregations are shot through with carnality and nothing? It's tough enough in a church where you understand this point, to be able to stay in the inner circle, and not do like the Sardis people did: know the doctrine, and then undermine it and violate it by your conduct, by your choices, and by your actions.

Wake up. To what? To the fact that they are depending upon their doctrine to guard them, and that's not enough. The Holy Spirit here was grieved, He was quenched, and He was replaced by the sin nature in the daily lives of the Sardian Christians. Christians, every day of their lives, face the hazard of losing the filling of the Holy Spirit through over confidence because they know doctrine. The Word of God is very specific in trying to caution us to not count on the doctrine alone to carry you through. It is your positive volition response to the doctrine, and obedience to it, that makes the difference. 1 Corinthians 10:12 says, "Wherefore, let him that thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall." The people in Sardis thought that they stood. They were firm. They had a doctrinal statement that could not be impeached in any way, and yet they fell. 1 Peter 5:8-9 says, "Be sober. Be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith (in the faith--in the content of doctrine is what it means), knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." Resist him by your positive response to the Word of God.

**Doctrine Must be Practiced**

Your doctrine will give you confidence and it should, but unless you are practicing that doctrine, it will undermine you and defeat you. Undermining your doctrine begins in little ways. There's a man down in Miami, Florida who has a big establishment called the serpentarium. He provides venom from various kinds of poisonous snakes out of which antibiotics are made for people who are bitten by these snakes. One of the ways that he gets the venom from cobras is by taking the cobra and putting his fangs into a flask which is covered by a sterile rubber membrane, and then he milks the cobra. So the cobra, in his anger, shoots the venom into the sterile flask. Cobras won't do that when you tell them to do that. The only way you can get a cobra to do that is to grab him by the back of the neck and shove his fangs into that membrane, and then it does upset him and he does squirt. There is only one problem. You've got to get your hands on the cobra first. You've got to get right behind the neck so he can't turn, and you've got him in the right position. It is awesome to see this man take this cobra out, dump it on the table or on the ground, and the cobra gets right up and fans out, and he's just waiting. Then he puts one hand in front, and the cobra zeros in on that, and this man has fast reflexes. The cobra makes a move and he moves, and suddenly his other hand comes and slaps the cobra, and before the cobra knows, he's got him right behind the head. He takes those fangs and slams them into that membrane, and the cobras is milked.

Now the trouble is that sometimes he misses. Sometimes the cobra is faster, and the cobra nicks him. It's happened over two dozen, maybe three dozen, times. But he has prepared for that by immunizing himself against the cobra's nick. I was there one time when he got nicked. He just wiped the blood off and went on. Anybody else would have been on a respirator before nightfall. Playing around with a deadly snake, unless you're immune to it, is bad business.

That is exactly what you do when you undermine doctrine. When you violate doctrine, you are dealing with a deadly snake. The Bible's illustration is that you're dealing with a lion who is pussy-footing around just ready to snag you and devour you. It is very serious to ever be out of this inner circle of protection. As long as you're in there, you have the cobra by the back of his neck. So long as you're in there, you've got the lion on the run. When you step out of that inner circle, which is where most Christians live, you're always subject to the lion, Satan. You're always subject to the evil cobras of human viewpoint and sin and of human good and all the evils that come in upon us. Here in Sardis they had their doctrine but they were negative toward it. They were indifferent toward it. The doctrinal statement was as far as it went. They did not practice what they preached.

**Acclimation to Evil**

The Bible tells us to be very careful of that. That is a dangerous game. Satan has an evil lifestyle for unbelievers which Christians who are out of fellowship also pursue. That's what it amounts to. If you are a Christian out of fellowship you will pursue the same evil lifestyle that Satan prepares for his own. You won't go into it big. You'll go into it on the edges--easy--like in cold water. You can go to some place at the seashore, like California at Huntington Beach, where they have those tremendous wonderful waves that you can ride in. You walk in, and that water is 68 degrees, and maybe less than that. It usually takes me about three or four hours to gradually work my way in before I catch the first wave. But I finally acclimate. I put a toe in there, and then up to the ankles, and then I splatter a little on my wrist and on my arms, and then I walk out and get warm, then I walk back in. Gradually, that water is just wonderful. I get out there and catch the waves and I see other people looking blue and funny, but it doesn't bother me anymore. You'll get used to it. You can get used to the world's evil system, and it will corrupt you and it will destroy you. How many tremendous Christians have gone down the tubes?

Remember Demas? Demas was an associate of the Apostle Paul, a man right there fighting in the angelic conflict with the Apostle Paul. Later in the Bible, Paul has to say, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." What happened to Demas? He got excited about the lifestyle of the unbelievers--its glamour, its elegance, its luxury, and its attractiveness--and he indulged himself in it, and pretty soon he didn't have time for any more pioneering Christian missionary work. He wanted to live the good life, and he abandoned his treasures in heaven for a few paltry material things this side of death. Don't make that mistake. Satan has a lifestyle, and if you're a fool as a Christian, you will imitate it and you'll join it. In Sardis, they had their doctrine sound, but they were living for the devil. That's the issue here. So we have these two words, "Wake up." Take a look at yourself. You don't know what you're doing. You don't know what the cost is going to be. You had better wake up."

**The Cost of Doing Evil**

Please don't ever forget there is a cost. You don't ever get away with being negative toward the Word of God. You don't ever get away with violating Biblical moral principles. You don't ever get away with being indifferent toward the absolute standards of the Word of God. There is always a price to be paid. The worst of that price is not paid here. That's what you want to remember. No matter what happens here, the worst is never paid here. The worst is paid out in eternity with a loss to yourself in terms of rewards and of the magnitude of enjoying heaven. That's where you pay, and pay dearly.

**Remain Alert to the Truth**

So the warning here is to wake up to their spiritual condition. This word "gregareo" is in the present tense. So, it is calling upon them to remain alert continually. It's active. This is to be done by the Christians themselves in this congregation. It's participle--a principle is stated. They are to wake up, "and..." The word "and" looks like this in the Greek: "kai." It indicates they are to do something else. Another divine direction. That thing is to strengthen something. The word looks like this: "sterizo". The wood "sterizo" means to fix; to make fast; or, to secure something. The idea is to secure something so as to keep from losing it. You have this word used in Luke. Peter is told that when he gets himself squared away with the Lord, he is to strengthen his brethren; that is, that he is to secure the brethren; to establish them; or, to anchor them to that which is the truth.

Now Paul wants to bring spiritual stability to the people of Rome. In Romans 1, we have this expressed by Paul, and he uses this same word "sterizo." In Romans 1:11 Paul says, "For I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift to the end that you may be established." There's the word "sterizo." That is, Paul says I want to give you some spiritual instruction so you'll be stabilized spiritually. This is what the Sardis Christians are called upon to do, to stabilize their spiritual condition where they are, and to go on. That's a very important point because when Christians do fall into evil, then they get very discouraged and other people get discouraged. Sometimes there's the attitude to just completely discount a person like that and forget about him. That's wrong. The pattern for that is right here in this verse. Take a look and see where you are. You still believe something. You still have some convictions. You still have some spiritual frame of reference. Evaluate what you have, and you start from there and you strengthen the things that you do have.

This word is in the aorist tense because at some point, you are to wake up and say, "Now I'm going to restore myself to spiritual stability." And you begin with establishing temporal fellowship. This word is active voice, which means that you personally must restore yourself. It's imperative again, another divine commandment. You can't do it for someone else. Someone has to do it for you. Things that you are to stabilize; that you are to fix; that you are to preserve; he refers to as the "loipos." This is an adjective meaning the rest, or the remaining. We would translate "the remaining things" as the things that remain. Whatever divine viewpoint they still have left, they should seek to strengthen those things that remain.

"Which are ready:" The word "ready" looks like this in Greek. It's "mello." The word "mello" means to be about to. Something is about to happen to them. This is in the imperfect tense. The imperfect tense means that in the past something happens, and happens, and happens, and happens. It's like a repeated situation, something repeatedly happening in the past. Repeatedly, they had come to where some spiritual quality was on the downgrade. They were losing it. They kept on, and they lost it. So, in the past, repeatedly, they were losing spiritual qualities.

He refers to these things which are ready and have been ready several times. This is active. This is the status, or quality. It's indicative--a statement of fact. They are ready to what? To die. The word "die" in Greek looks like this: "apothnesko." This means to cease functioning. Spiritual strengths, which they once possessed, had gradually deteriorated as the congregation slid increasingly into reversionism. It is aorist--at the point of losing these qualities. They were about to die. Repeatedly, they came to the point where they were just ready to go over the cliff. This was active--personal loss to these Christians. Here you have this word in the infinitive, which is expressing here "result." Infinitive tells us what the result was of their sloppy Christian living, of their sloppy dealing with their personal lives and their personal sin.

What we have here is a call to action to identify what divine viewpoint principles remain within that church congregation, and to return with those to the power of the Holy Spirit, and to occupation with Christ through His Word. In other words, they were to take all of those good creedal statements that they had, and put them into action in the angelic warfare. Wake up! Stabilize whatever spiritual qualities remain. You are in a bad condition, but start with the things that you have because those things are about ready to go as well.

Then he gives a statement concerning this wonderful church program that everybody was so awed with. "For:" The word "for" looks like this in Greek: "gar." It's introducing an explanation. "I have not:" As you know, the Greek has a way of using a word that has a very strong "not," that happens to be "ou." A weak "not" is "me." "Me" sort of leaves the door open. "Me" is, "No, but maybe." "Will you marry me my dear?" "Me." "I really want you to marry me, lover. Will you?" "Me." "Well I wish you'd change your mind. Will you change your mind?" "Me." As long as she keeps saying "me," keep asking. But, if you say, "Would you marry me, dear?" and she says "Ou," just shove off buddy. That's it. She means it. There's no return. That means "no, and I mean no, and I'm not going to change my mind." So, if you propose to any of these eligible ladies, they may resort to their Greek here. If they say, "ou" or "me," I want you fellas to understand what they're telling you, so that you understand what their reaction is. If they say "me," then she's just being coy and she wants you to coax. But, if she is saying "ou," you make her sick and you should leave, or something like that.

**Church Programs**

In this case, God the Holy Spirit is not leaving any question about it. The Lord Jesus says to these people, "I have not found." The word for "found" here is "heurisko." He has absolutely not found something to be true about their works. This word for "found" here means to discover. From that, you know the English word "eureka,"--"I have found it." It means to discover or to learn. Here, it was a spiritual condition which Jesus Christ has evaluated and has observed about them. This is perfect tense. This means that in the past, the Lord observed that this was true about them. And, what was true then continued right on to the present. It had never changed. Perfect means "I've noticed this about you in the past, and it has kept right on--nothing has been changed. It is active. This is actually true of them. It is indicative--it is a statement of a fact. What they have about them, this statement of fact, is about their works. "Thy works," the works of the Sardis church as a whole, in the Greek is their "ergon." It's a noun, and it means their deeds. The Sardis Christians had plenty of program going.

This is what makes most churches function. If you jerked the program out, there wouldn't be anything left. The whole church is a program, including the services. They are a part of the program. In churches that are oriented to the Word of God, you could discontinue the activities, but you'd still have a service at the heart and the core which was the quality of personal Christian spiritual development because doctrine was preached and taught. However, the program was all they had. They had plenty of works going. It was an active church. In the Greek it does not say "the" works. When the "the" is not there, it's not specific. It just means works in general. Everything that they were doing, their activities, the word "program" is a good word for it--their service in general. These local church activities have to be judged by the frame of reference of what God the Holy Spirit thinks of them. Every local church is pressured into programs and activities of various kinds that have to be evaluated in terms of the Holy Spirit's leading. If you get into an activity that God the Holy Spirit has led you into, you will come out the other end and you will look back and you see that that was a good activity. That had merit. That accomplished something profitable.

Be careful if you find that you have been involved in an event or an activity, and you shoot through it, then you look back on it and say, "Now, why on earth did we do that? What did we accomplish--what value--what achievement? What did we do aside from absorbing some of our energies and some of our treasures in doing it? It has not contributed to a spiritual end. Those were the types of things that Sardis was doing. That is what the Lord condemns. The activity has to be evaluated from whether God judges it to be of value. For that reason the Lord said I look at what you people are doing and I have absolutely not found that what you're doing is perfect. It uses this Greek word we've had before, "pleroo." "Pleroo" means "to complete." It means "to fill out."

Christian service works of the Sardis believers fell short of matching up to divine standards and thus for divine acceptance. They had works but God said, "I don't want you to do those things." They were in activities that the Lord was not leading them into. They were in activities that were done while they were out of temporal fellowship. They thought they were great and they had a wonderful time, but God said, "What you've done is nothing." They were in activities and works that were the product of the sin nature. Therefore, what they were doing was sins and human good. They were the works that were the result of ignoring their doctrinal creedal statements in their lifestyle. The Holy Spirit was neglected in these efforts to serve God and to store treasures in heaven. Their works were not brought to spiritual or actual fulfillment. Part of the problem was "pleroo," which means "to fill up." It means "to complete." That's a very important meaning.

**The Parable of the Two Sons**

We have here a little clue that some of the things that were happening here in the church at Sardis was what was demonstrated in that parable of the Lord which I've been reading to you lately in Matthew 21, and I'd like to read it to you again. Beginning in Matthew 21:28, the parable of the two sons, Jesus says, "But what do you think? A certain man had two sons and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in my vineyard.'" The father goes to one of his sons and says, "I need your help, son. I need you out in the field today. The crop is ripe. It must be pulled in today. We need to harvest it, and I need your help. "And the son answered and said, "I will not." "I've got lots of important things to do and I can't come up and go picking grapes just because the vines are ripe now. If you had told me this before, so I could have arranged my program, maybe I could have. I've got things to do, you know. I've got a social life and other things." He just sounded off and he wasn't going to help his daddy. However, afterward he changed his mind and he went. He went up there and he did it. Then the man came to the second son and he said the same thing. He said, "A harvest needs to be brought in and I need your help out in the field today." "And he answered and said, "Yes sir, I'm out there. I'm going." However, then he shoves off into his little sports car and he goes tooling off down the lane in the opposite direction, and he doesn't go. Now the Lord says, "Which of the two did the will of his father?"

It's amazing how many Christians think they're serving the Lord while they're doing the opposite of what their Father is telling them to do. They think they're serving the Lord when the Father says, "This is what I want you to do with your capacities and your time. Here's what I want you to complete." They say, "Oh yeah, I'll do it." This is why I'm always cautious about asking for volunteers on local church projects. How many times have we had the heroes who volunteer and then evaporate? Evaporating volunteers is a terrible thing. You never get much done. And there's the son saying, "Yeah, I'll do it," but there the job sets and sets and sets until it grows moldy and green and still hasn't been done. Other times, people say, "No, I'm too busy, but they really do show up and do it." They weren't finishing the job in Sardis. Their works were not done in the power of the Spirit of God. The things that they did set in motion, what few things were still functioning, they weren't carrying through to completion because they did not learn the principle of Christian service.

**The Main Principle of Christian Service**

The number one principle of Christian service means that you can't do something else. Christian service means not doing something else. You should write that over your mirror in your bathroom so the first thing you see when you look there, while you're still trying to stabilize yourself for the day, is Christian service means not doing something else. All over the rooms of your house you should have signs that say, "Christian service means not doing something else," until you begin to learn that principle. Then you will say, "Hey I know why I'm not finishing what I've committed myself to do for the Lord and which the Lord has asked me to do. It's because I'm dribbling away my capacities here and there and I'm excusing myself that I have these other demands on me, and that's why I'm not getting with it down there at the Lord's work.

**The Reformation**

This church, of course, historically represents the Reformation period and the period that followed the Reformation. This is part of the things that the reformers were guilty of. They did not follow through on grace doctrines. They did not follow through. The Reformation did not capitalize on what they had learned about the doctrine the Holy Spirit. They brought it to its maximum expression. Never had it been defined so accurately as it was by the reformers, and then it died there. They did not understand the key feature of the filling of the Holy Spirit. So, the work of the Reformation fell far short of restoring Christianity to the New Testament conditions. The Reformation did not take us back to the apostolic Christianity. That came later, after the Reformation. The reformers got the thing rolling and then they ran out of gas.

The Sardis church works were not fulfilling God's plan for them. This word "pleroo" is perfect, which means that sometime in the past they began not fulfilling it, and it just kept right on. That was their habit of life. It is passive--divine standards were not being met for service. It is participle--it was a statement of principle. And this, by whose judgment? These works were not found perfect "before." The Greek word for "before" is "enopios." It means face-to-face, in the sight of. Additionally, the Lord Jesus actually says something that's not here in your King James translation. It's not just before "God"--the Greek says "my God." It's a personal pronoun, "ago"--Jesus Christ, in His humanity, referring to His father in heaven. We deal with our Father in heaven. He served his father in heaven in terms of his humanity just as we deal with Him in terms of our humanity. The personal pronoun stresses that here was a personal relationship, a responsibility, to what you were doing with your life and its investment in the Lord's cause. The Lord Jesus says, "In the face, in the eyes, before My God, that's where you've blown it." The Greek word for God is "theos." He says, "You are wasting your life in the eyes of God--in the eyes of what you're going to have for all eternity to live with, so that all the great and wonderful things that you think you're accomplishing in your personal life now are going to be exactly zero.

Previously, we have laid out the doctrinal summary on God the Holy Spirit. People who do not understand it don't have a chance. They just don't have a chance in the Christian life, and they don't have a chance of anything in terms of eternity. Numbers of Christians today are so shallow in their relationship to God that they're actually functioning on flesh capacities. They actually have no insights towards the Word of God. All they're operating on is a kind of a football cheerleader type of thing, just the ra-ra, this is our team. I get telephone calls from people. Sometimes they're (cassette) tapers. Very often they are people in other areas such that they have some contact with us. I had one last week and it was really pathetic. This woman was so ignorant of Scripture that it was hard to talk to her. You couldn't even get to first base, and she was a Christian. However, she could keep telling me what big denomination she was a part of, and she could keep telling me all of the great speakers she'd heard. But she didn't know anything about the Word of God relating to her life. What a burden that preacher and that church are going to carry when they get out into eternity and these people have been denied and robbed of these fantastic blessings that could have been theirs, because nobody alerted them to the fact that their works stink in the sight of God while they thought they were doing something very glorious.

That's the whole issue that we're faced with. The curse upon Christians today is ignorance of how to be filled with the Holy Spirit and how to produce divine good works. They can't judge and evaluate what they're doing in terms of God's doctrines and in terms of God's frame of reference. Consequently, the things they do are of no value before the face of God. This resorting to a mere "this is our team" and "this is our side" and "this is what we believe" and not knowing doctrine in your own right, that's the tragedy--not knowing doctrine in your own right and using doctrine in your own right. That's what it all comes down to.

**The Church is a Classroom**

Do you see why a local church has to be a classroom? How on earth are you going to show that you love Jesus Christ except that you keep His commandments? And how are you going to keep his commandments unless you know them? The Word of God says, "If you love me, you will keep My commandments." You show your love for Christ by keeping His commandments. The only way you're going to do it is by being taught that. The only way you're going to do this is by having your mind approached as a rational human being.

Gary North recently sent out an article in which he was decrying the fact that Christians have brought vast discredit to our Lord and to the cause of Christianity because Christians are anti-intellectual. They deride churches that are teaching institutions as being just for intelligent people. That's just for intellectuals. They seek to degrade churches by making fun of the fact that they are teaching. Gary North pointed out that this is what has driven people who are thinking people in the world away from us as Christians, because they look upon us as a bunch of emotional blobs to whom nobody but some yo-yo could relate.

Every now and then somebody tries to put down Berean Church. Do you know how they do it? They say, "The services there are just a classroom. It's just like going to school." That's right. I want to say something else. We're keeping records on you too. We're going to give you a report card, you are going to get a grade, and the results are going to be very serious. Don't ask me what your grade is. Don't ask me how you stack up. I don't keep the records. They're up there in the front office. But, you're going to get your report card someday at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and they're just going to hold it right out there, and you'll have to get your mother to sign it. And some of you are going to have a lot of regrets if you follow the path of the Sardis church. This is real stuff we're dealing with. It's no insult to a church to say that all people do there is learn the Bible. That's what it's all about. And I hope you do just exactly that.

Dr. John E. Danish

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