**The Christian Life – Intro-02**

Contact with God is made first of all at the point of believing the gospel. Our God has removed the wall which once separated every human being from Himself. This wall was made up of several distinct blocks. It included the fact that everybody is a captive in the slave market of sin; that everybody is under the penalty of spiritual death; that everyone is born physically with an old sin nature; and thus separated from God; that we are in a state of sin that violates the holiness of God so that His justice and His righteousness condemn us; and, we find ourselves in the sight of God in the position that the Bible calls “in Adam” which is the position of eternal death and separation from God.

The Lord Jesus Christ in His death however on the cross paid the penalty for all the sins of mankind, and with that one act centuries ago removed this wall, this separation, between God and man. So salvation today is available as a free gift to anyone who wants it. Christianity however is not a religion. We must emphasize that it is a relationship with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 John 5:11-12 tell us, “And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

Religion as it exists in our society today is actually a creation of Satan. For that reason God rejects it entirely. Religion is man trying by his own efforts to enter the favor and the family and the blessing of God. Man by his own efforts, by his own works, can never do this. He can never satisfy the justice and the righteousness of God against him.

**Grace**

However, once a person has stepped across the line into the family of God by accepting the salvation which Jesus Christ has provided upon the cross, that person is now eligible for a very wonderful life which God has prepared for him and which is open to him. This is a way of life that we call “grace,” but it is a lifestyle which we must learn from the Bible, the Word of God. God has provided a way for every Christian to learn the grace way of living.

**The Local Church**

This provision is the local church with the teaching ministry which will instruct this believer who has now entered the family of God in the techniques and in the blessings that are involved in grace living. Every Christian in this age of the church is his own priest. Before God he is personally responsible for his own spiritual development. There is no one else who will ever have to account for what happens to you spiritually. Only you will stand before God and account for that. As parents we are responsible for our children until they come to an age of maturity. We are responsible for their spiritual development. But once they come to maturity, they’re on their own.

Many churches however do not understand their function as a training station, but instead are engaged in a variety of programs which preoccupy a Christian but do not lead him into spiritual maturity. For this reason, most Christians never really go beyond the babyhood stage in their spiritual years even though they may have attended church for 10, 15, 20, or 30 years. They never develop a sense of God’s guidance in their lives. They lack that inner happiness because they don’t understand and have never entered into the particular plan that God has for them as an individual.

These immature Christians are suckers, consequently, for all kinds of emotional manipulation and for false doctrine that comes to them. They waste their lives in religious activities, and while they’re producing human good, they fail to produce divine good. Ephesians 4:14 describes these immature Christians in the words, “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slight of men and cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive.”

**Rewards**

The result is that these Christians are robbed of rewards in heaven which God has promised for genuine Christian service. Every man’s work shall be made manifest. That is, every Christian’s service. “For the day shall declare, for it shall be revealed by fire (the judgment of God), and the fire shall test every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built upon it (that is upon the foundation of his salvation in Jesus Christ), he shall receive a reward” (1 Corinthians 3:13-14).

Now this is not salvation. Salvation is not a reward. Salvation is something that God gives us as a gift, but there are rewards that every believer can have in heaven. What they are, the Bible has not spelled out for us, but they are something tremendous you may be sure. And yet most Christians are robbed of these rewards which God gives for the production of divine good because the Christian in the church in which he sits is never led into a knowledge of the grace lifestyle.

**The Old Sin Nature**

All of us were born with a problem, and here’s where the trouble starts. That problem is a sin nature. The only person who was ever born into the race without a sin nature was the Lord Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews, chapter 4, the 15th verse tells us that. This sin nature is inherited from our parents and it’s passed on through the father. Because Jesus Christ did not have a human father, He did not have a sin nature. It is this sin nature that causes everyone to be born spiritually dead while he is physically alive. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you hath He made alive (spiritually) who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Dead spiritually while physically alive.

The sin nature is a problem that creates a separation in us from God. For this reason our destiny is hell. For this reason we cannot stand in the presence of God. We have an old sin nature. At the point of believing the gospel, God makes us spiritually alive and He changes our destiny from hell to heaven. Our soul, in other words, is saved.

Now the sin nature, a Christian soon discovers, is not removed at the point of salvation. Your sin nature does not go out of operation. Instead, we call it the old sin nature because we continue with it and it’s the nature that we inherited from that first sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Romans 5:12 says, “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for all have sinned.”

This old sin nature we take into the Christian life in a fully operational status. Now here’s what this means: It means that a Christian, while he is now in the family of God, while his destiny is heaven, while eternal life is secure to him, it means that a Christian can commit every ugly rotten thing that he was ever capable of before he became a Christian. Now this comes as a real shock, especially to a new Christian, to discover that the old sin nature is still there. And everything that comes from this sin nature is rejected by God.

It produces two main things. On the one hand it produces sins. Mark 7:21-23 lists some of these for us, and God rejects these—sins of the mind and sins outwardly performed. The old sin nature, however, also produces this human good. Isaiah 64:6 calls this human good “filthy rags” in God’s sight. He rejects that.

So whatever comes from the old sin nature God will have nothing to do with it. But God has made a provision for us to control this sin nature, to frustrate its production of sins and of human good. Because we have been united to Jesus Christ permanently at salvation, we can never be lost again. However, a Christian can be controlled by the old sin nature just as if he were an unbeliever. When we are controlled by the old sin nature, we’re called “carnal.” That means that we’re out of touch, or out of fellowship, with God.

**Bible Doctrine**

A Christian on the other hand who is under the control of God the Holy Spirit is called “spiritual.” That is the Christian who can neutralize his old sin nature. And God has made a very grand provision for this control. That provision is contained in the Bible, the Word of God. We call it “bible doctrine.” The word “doctrine” simply means “teaching.” It means “principals of life.” Now God has made a provision whereby you and I may receive Bible doctrine, control the old sin nature, and enter into the blessing and plan of God relative to the grace life.

**Learning**

Everybody learns in three ways. One of the ways is called empiricism. That means learning through your five senses. But the Bible tells us that we cannot learn spiritual things through our senses. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, “But as it is written, ‘eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.”

Another way of learning is through our minds—reasoning. But rationalism, again, will not give us spiritual information. 1 Corinthians 2:11 says, “For what man knoweth the things of a man except the spirit of man (that is the reasoning capacity of man) which is in him. Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God.” Man cannot through his reasoning capacities come to an understanding of God.

**Faith**

There’s only one way and that’s called “faith.” That means believing—believing in authority. This is the only method by which a person can secure spiritual information. The book of Hebrews, in the great chapter describing the heroes of faith: Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is the substance hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders received witness. Through faith we understand that the ages were formed by the Word of God so that things which were seen were not made of things which do appear.” Then the chapter goes on and tells what people did who believed God.

Now faith in itself is of no value, but if it is in a proper object, then it is of value. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ brings eternal life. Faith in the teaching of the Word of God will bring you control over the old sin nature and into the grace life.

Now God has a system therefore for gaining His point of view. Divine viewpoint is possible for every believer. That means that you can have God’s thinking; you can have God’s feelings; and, you can have God’s decisions in your soul toward every circumstance, toward every situation, and toward every person that you deal with. Now this is a very wonderful thing. This system of securing divine viewpoint is through learning Bible doctrine, and it is a grace operation which means it’s not dependent upon your human IQ. It is independent of your personal human ability. Otherwise it wouldn’t be fair. As it is, everyone is capable of learning spiritual things. You cannot improve your human IQ but you can improve your spiritual IQ simply by learning doctrine.

**Spiritual Maturity**

God has a way for building, therefore, spiritual maturity in our souls. Our souls are made up of a mind, of emotions, and of a will. The goal of the Christian life is that God should possess each of these—that He should control and He should direct it. Now what is the way this is achieved? How does God control my mind? By learning doctrine. How does God control my emotions? By learning doctrine so that my emotions can be guided. How does God control my will, in the decisions I make? Through learning doctrine so that consequently I’m phased in with His will. But where is a believer going to get this doctrine?

**Pastors**

Well God has set up and authorized one organization, and one organization alone, in the church age. The organization that God has authorized to perform the function of delivering doctrinal instruction is the local church. And in every local church God has given an authoritative teaching gift. This is called the pastor-teacher gift.

In Ephesians 4:12 this gift is described in its functioning and in its operation. Verse 11 tells us that God gave to local churches the gift of pastor-teacher. Then verse 12 goes on and says that the purpose of the pastor-teacher gift is the perfecting of the saints. The word “perfecting” means to equip them. Then it says the reason that the pastor-teacher is there to equip Christians is for the work of the ministry. That refers to the individual Christian’s personal ministry, to prepare them for spiritual service—the production of divine good through his life. Then the last part of verse 12 says, “for the edifying of the body of Christ.” That means for the building up, for the development of spiritual maturity in every believer.

Now here’s the chain reaction: If the pastor-teacher performs his job of instructing the congregation in Bible doctrine, then these Christians, as they respond to it, will be able to be equipped for the work of the ministry. They’ll be able to perform service which produces divine good, and the body of Christ (believers) will be added and will mature.

But if a pastor-teacher fails in his role, then the whole structure breaks down and nobody ever becomes really spiritually mature. That’s why it’s important to be in the right kind of church—the church that is producing this kind of information. The pastor-teacher who is doing his job in explaining the Bible will do it by teaching a book of the Bible verse-by-verse, or an extended passage verse-by-verse, explaining what God has said on the basis of the original languages. This explanation will be related to everything that was the background, historically, of that book at the time that it was written. It will take into account all the grammatical significance.

A pastor-teacher, on the other hand, who merely gives inspirational talks, can move the emotions of people and he can get them temporarily to be doing things, but he has not developed long-range spiritual maturity in them. He has failed in performing the job that 1 Peter 5:2 places upon him as a faithful pastor-teacher. 1 Peter 5:2 says, “Feed the flock of God which is among you; taking the oversight of it, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre (that is, for money), but of a ready mind.”

It is the business of the pastor-teacher to feed the congregation, and he either feeds them chaff and straw or he feeds them the substantial diet of the Word of God. A pastor-teacher who does not recognize that his goal is to train the minds of the people in doctrinal understanding is a person who is opening that believer to emotional manipulation by Satan. An emotionally controlled Christian is easily led by Satan into all kinds of sins and into all kinds of delusions and into all kinds of false practices. The result is going to be the breakdown of the life of that believer. He can never go on in the things of the Lord.

Now titillating the emotions of Christians may get them storming out in a gung-ho fashion to do something for God, or you may move them by coming up with gimmicks like a (stick-burning) service where everybody gathers around a fire and throws in a stick and vows to do something better for the Lord. None of these things develop spiritual maturity but they are a downright hindrance to the working of the power of the spirit of God in the believer. And you should never be trapped by emotional appeals or gimmickry that the professional ministry often will use. It takes a pastor, as a matter of fact, that has some genuine spiritual insight and courage today to resist the tide of propaganda and success stories that are flowing from smooth professional ministers; for that pastor to stick with teaching Bible doctrine to the minds of his congregation. It takes someone with courage and someone who knows something as to what God values and what God condemns.

People often equate numerical success with spiritual achievement and with God’s blessing. But in spiritual things it is historically demonstrated that the majority is always wrong. So numbers do not prove. The Lord Jesus Christ could have been considered a failure for how few people after three years of ministry stood by Him as His disciples. It is what truth has been preached and accepted that is the issue—not numbers.

Our God is perfect, and therefore all of His plans are perfect. His perfect plan includes a provision for every need that you and I as Christians have. That need includes having a right church with a right pastor—the place to develop the grace way of life. A Christian who is in his wrong church will make little progress in spiritual growth and in production of divine god. So it is imperative that every believer is able to distinguish between churches that will enable him to move on to spiritual maturity and to God’s maximum blessing for him, and churches that are going to merely lead him into religious activities. Most Christians, I’m sorry to say, are simply acting out some religious role. They are not productive of divine good.

Once a believer understands how vital the local church is to his own spiritual development and to the instruction of the knowledge of the Word of God, he will soon discover a very startling fact. And that is that churches which deliver that kind of information are few and far between.

So spiritual maturity in the soul is what we’re after. God has given us an operation. He has given us the accurate revelation of the Word of God. He gives a pastor-teacher to instruct the congregation in doctrine from the Scriptures, explaining its meaning on the basis that is understandable to the people. The believer learns this doctrine then he’ll either respond to it by faith—he’ll accept it and he’ll believe it, or he rejects it. If he accepts what he has learned, God teaches in this way his human spirit. And this Word is now stored within his being and God uses it to guide him in his daily walk.

This is the only way he can have guidance. He’s not going to hear voices. He’s not going to see visions. He’s not going to see writing in the sky. The only guidance he can get for his soul is doctrine that he has learned and responded to. With this he grows into spiritual maturity, and then he has capacity to meet Satan’s attacks and to control the old sin nature.

This spiritual maturity in his soul is described actually in the form of a structure of a building and the Bible tells us that Christians are commanded to build such a structure. Jude 20 says, “But ye beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.”

**Facets of Spiritual Maturity**

As we look through the Word of God, this structure will have several facets to it, in the form of a pentagon. One side will be grace orientation, to understand what grace is, against legalism. It will have a mastery of the details of life where a Christian is not a slave to the things of life. It will have a relaxed mental attitude where he’ll have a mental attitude of love, and he will be able to deal with people on a forgiving basis rather than in expressions of bitterness. He will have the capacity to love—to love God, to love the opposite sex, and to love his friends. He will have a certain inner happiness that is not dependent upon circumstances or people.

This is a pretty complete picture of maturity, and this is what doctrine will build in a Christian’s soul. Now a Christian who has this is a strong person. Yet a Christian cannot build this if he sits in a church with a pastor who is not cranking out the understanding of doctrine, where he is not, in short, an expository preacher.

The pastor-teacher is not called to say beautiful things, but he is called to communicate doctrine. He is not to use his time in socializing with people, but he is to use his time in study of the Word of God so that when people gather, the flock can be really fed. This is very vital. It is his duty to preach the Word so that a believer can see himself, can see his condition, and get moving in the right direction. James 1:23-25 tells us about the Word as a mirror.

So a pastor has to be able to teach. He has to have the gift of teaching. If a church has a pastor that is not engaged in doing that in the church services in an authoritative way, no Christian can get right with the Lord. Therefore, here at Berean Memorial Church, we have geared this ministry to meeting this role. We understand what we’re to be doing and we seek to do it in various ways. We do it of course in the preaching services. These services are expository teaching, book-by-book, verse-by-verse. People do not gather to rap about their mutual spiritual ignorance. But they gather to listen, to concentrate, and to learn from the instruction which is delivered under the authority of the pastor-teacher gift. You are your own priest, and what you do with that instruction is up to you, between you and the Lord. But you have the right to receive this instruction.

Now the gospel, therefore, is not the main topic in every one of our services, though we may explain the gospel, and do, in order that those who may come in who are unbelievers will understand what God expects of them. But the service is geared to Christians. Unbelievers do not attend church services. They spend Sunday morning washing their cars, going to the washateria and out picnicking and any number of other things. There are few unsaved people in church and yet most church services are geared to the unbelievers, and the Christians are left to starve spiritually.

Our services seek to prepare Christians to be witnesses of Jesus Christ in the areas of society in which they move in order to reach the lost and to help believers gain doctrinal insights. Once a believer learns to cope with his own problems, he can meet the pressures of life successfully.

**Priesthood**

The priesthood of every believer in this place is recognized, so we respect the privacy of people. We don’t put our noses into things that are your private personal business. There are no pressures put upon the congregation. There are no offering plates passed. We have an offering box because we want you to give in perfect freedom and privacy. We don’t ask people to make public moves to connote an association with God.

**School**

We also have a school program in order to bring spiritual maturity. We sponsor the Berean Christian Academy for kindergarten through the ninth grade. Every educational system has to have some spiritual viewpoint. Everybody teaches from a set of values, from a set of life values. It’s not possible to teach without conveying some frame of reference of your values as a teacher. Every school trains up a child for a specific way of life. The viewpoint of the public non-Christian school is secular humanism. That’s Satan’s viewpoint.

Consequently, the children who are in a public school are often denied certain information that they should have. They are sheltered from an introduction to the God who is there. They are sheltered from the fact that God has made the universe and man. They are not taught that man is basically evil. They’re sheltered from the solution to this problem—the gospel of salvation. They’re sheltered from Bible doctrine which gives the student divine viewpoint for his life. They are sheltered from learning two major features about good citizenship—to pray for government leaders and to respect civil authority as stemming from God. They are sheltered from learning the absolute learning the absolute moral standards of God and the reality of divine guidance for their social relationships and all the choices that they have to make in their lives.

**Parents**

For this reason, parents will send their children to Berean Christian Academy, because they don’t want them sheltered from the real world. They want them prepared to live in that world. The Bible very clearly declares that parents are responsible for their child’s education. Proverbs 22:6 tells us we’re to train up a child in the way he should go. Ephesians 6:4 tells fathers to rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. So parents are responsible. As Deuteronomy 6:6-7 told the Old Testament parents, they’re responsible for training their children in divine viewpoint. This begins with salvation and then it moves to all areas of life.

Now obviously a parent can’t do this very effectively because the child spends most of his time away from that mother and father. So someone else has to perform this part of the Great Commission which tells us to teach disciples, and that has to be a Christian school.

We also have a youth work. Berean Memorial Church sponsors Christian Service Brigade and Pioneer Girls. These are vehicles for the instruction of youth in doctrinal principals of living. Fully one-fourth or more of every meeting is spent in doctrinal instruction—six clubs in weekly meetings covering grades three through senior high. Experienced adult leaders through a variety of activities and through their personal contact seek to lead every member in these clubs to a personal life with Jesus Christ and a maturity physically, spiritually, mentally, and socially.

**Media**

Finally, one other area of the ministry here is the cassette service. Bible doctrine instruction is made available without charge on cassette tapes to anyone who wants to learn it. The tapes cover basic Bible doctrine, books of the Bible, and special topics such as marriage, prophecy, and war. These tapes are given without charge because God deals with us on grace, so we give the tapes on grace. We make no charge for them. They may be kept or they may be returned to us for further use.

Now for many believers, the failure of the local church to communicate Bible doctrine makes tapes such as these the only source of pastor-teacher instruction for that believer to have any hope of building spiritual maturity in his soul so that he can control that serpent that lies within his being in the form of the old sin nature, so that he can move into the production of divine good and the rewards that God is eager to give him.

So God has been supplying the funds for the Berean cassette tape ministry in this twentieth century through Christians that He moves freely to contribute. We’re often urged to charge, and this we will never do. This is God’s work, and if He wants it to continue, if it’s meeting a need, then he’ll supply the finances. We think that’s the grace way.

People who want a catalog of complete titles can secure this by phoning 214-253-7300. Or you can just write to the church and we’ll send you a catalog. May God move you to begin learning doctrine daily. May this be the beginning of days for you in your spiritual life. Remember: Matthew 4:4 tells us that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971