

# SPIRITUAL OR SELF- FULFILLMENT?



*By David Lapp*



## ***Introduction...***

*This message was given with a burden to look into the widespread phenomenon of sin issues in people's life being dealt with by using thinly veiled psychology instead of the all-sufficient cleansing power of the blood of Christ.*

*As the redeemed of the Lord, we can say with all certainty that we have no need of this world and its supposed answers – or do we?*

*Brother David attempts to explore this vast quagmire and hold it up to the light of the Gospel of Freedom in Christ. May we not shy away from the things that we are shown. Only let us press on to higher ground and the firm confidence that is ours in the Lord.*

*May the Lord receive the glory due His name!*

*~The editors*

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From Colossians 1:1-2:10:

*“<sup>1</sup>Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, <sup>2</sup>To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup>We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, <sup>4</sup>Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, <sup>5</sup>For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; <sup>6</sup>Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: <sup>7</sup>As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; <sup>8</sup>Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. <sup>9</sup>For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; <sup>10</sup>That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup>Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with*

joyfulness; <sup>12</sup>Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: <sup>13</sup>Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: <sup>14</sup>In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: <sup>15</sup>Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: <sup>16</sup>For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: <sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. <sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. <sup>19</sup>For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; <sup>20</sup>And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. <sup>21</sup>And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled <sup>22</sup>In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: <sup>23</sup>If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have

heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; <sup>24</sup>Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: <sup>25</sup>Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; <sup>26</sup>Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: <sup>27</sup>To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: <sup>28</sup>Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: <sup>29</sup>Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. <sup>2:1</sup>For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; <sup>2</sup>That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; <sup>3</sup>In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. <sup>4</sup>And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

<sup>5</sup>For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. <sup>6</sup>As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: <sup>7</sup>Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. <sup>8</sup>Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. <sup>9</sup>For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. <sup>10</sup>And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”

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I am always inspired when I read through Paul’s epistles and get a glimpse of Paul’s faith: his heart toward God and his seemingly unshakable faith in the sovereignty of God and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. We could look at some statements that he made in this short passage of scripture, but think with me of some of the things Paul said concerning his personal experience and how he related to Jesus Christ, to his Creator God, and to the Romans: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Rom 1:16) “I am not

ashamed of the Gospel of Christ,” he said; “I am coming into that heathen culture; I am going to lay my life on the line. That doesn’t bother me at all because I know it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes.” *“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Rom 8:38-39)

He said things like, *“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”* (II Tit 1:12) *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Gal 6:14) He said, *“For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”* (I Cor 2:2)

Think about it. This was the heart of the apostle Paul. This is how he looked at Jesus Christ, at the message Christ brought, and the sacrifice He made. Towards the end of Paul’s life he said, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day:”* And he added, *“and not to me only, but unto all*



*them also that love his appearing.*” (II Tim 4:7-8) I am tremendously inspired by Paul’s epistles. I see his confidence, the steadfast assurance that he had in the sufficiency of the Gospel.

Let’s look at a few more statements that Paul made. First of all, we get a glimpse into his heart at the end of Colossians 1. He says, “[Jesus] whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labor, striving.” (Col 1:27-28) If you look *striving* up in the Greek it’s the word αγωνιζομαι (agonizomai), from which we get our English word “agony”. Paul is saying, “I agonize, I labor striving, according to this working which worketh in me mightily.” He said, “I have a great conflict in my heart.” Again, *worketh* is the same word. “I labor with agony in my soul,” “*That [your] hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;*” (Col 2:2)

In verse 6, Paul is praising God for the people at Colosse. Also, in verse 4 he mentions that he “*heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints.*” I think in Paul’s

mind those two were virtually synonymous. Don't you think so? Faith in Christ, love for all the saints? If you read the Bible, you know that those two indeed are pretty much synonymous.

*“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; <sup>5</sup>Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it.”* It brings forth fruit. This Gospel that Paul preached was, “The day you hear it, it will start changing your life. It will bring forth fruit that is evident to the people around you.” *“<sup>9</sup>For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; <sup>10</sup>That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup>Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.”* How's that for victory and/or progressive sanctification, my brother?

Paul prayed for these people that had come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He prayed that they would know the will of God, that

something would burn in their hearts and compel them to walk worthy of the Lord. He prayed that they could please God, that they would be fruitful in every good work, and that they would increase in the knowledge of God.

I am not preaching the Gospel tonight in and of itself; rather, I would like to simply impress on our hearts and minds how glorious it is! How glorious, how awesome the author of this Gospel is! <sup>10</sup>*That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;* <sup>11</sup>*Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;*” What more do we want? Why are we looking anywhere else if all this is available in the person of Jesus Christ and the Gospel that he brought to us?

Something stood out to me shortly after I was converted. Like many young men, I had my spiritual heroes. Do you have a spiritual hero tonight, someone that you look up to? You know, if you could just become like him... You watch his life, you observe, you try to imitate and emulate. This desire is not completely wrong. Paul said, *“Be ye followers of me, even as I*

*also am of Christ.*" (I Cor 11:1) Would to God we had more examples that were worthy of that kind of emulation and honor. We have some and I wouldn't want to do anything that would cause you not to honor and respect them, but be very careful. Paul expressed his heart, his desires, his agonizings and travailings, as a woman giving birth to a child *"till Christ be formed in them."* (Gal 4:19) Did you notice what the end result of all this is? *"<sup>9</sup>[We] do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; <sup>10</sup>That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup>Strengthened with all might."* Now there's our spiritual hero.

There are those who preach powerful messages. They travel the world and are able to draw crowds of thousands. Is that who we want to emulate and become like? Are they worthy of being our spiritual heroes? No! Notice the contrast: *"Unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."* Think about it; all of that wisdom and understanding to lead us to a point where we can respond rightly to the adversity that is so common in life. All of that just to keep my heart

in the right place when somebody comes against me, all of that just to bring me to a point where I can patiently suffer and be joyful in the middle of it? Absolutely!

James Allen Francis said: *“Here is a man who was born in an obscure village as the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty and then for three years was an itinerant preacher.*

*He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself.*

*He had nothing to do with this world except the naked power of his divine manhood. While still a young man the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. Another betrayed him. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon the cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth while he was dying, and that was his*

coat. When he was dead, he was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone and today he is the center of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon the earth as powerfully as has this one solitary life.”

My brothers, if you need a spiritual hero, there He is, look no further! <sup>43</sup>“He has delivered us from the powers of darkness,” no ifs ands or buts about it! “He hath delivered us from the powers of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.” God has done that!

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Long before Sigmund Freud, before the likes of Carl Rogers, Carl Young, Abraham Maslow and all of their cronies came on the scene to help people cope with the disappointments of life, Paul penned these words, “Unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” Long before we knew anything about the four temperaments or five love languages or spaghetti and meatballs or

Venus and who knows what else... you can fill in the blank. The garbage heap just keeps getting bigger and bigger when it comes to man's ideas on how to deal with the human problem. We have Joel Osteen with his *You Can Live Your Best Life Now* as well as Rick Warren and *The Purpose Driven Life* and the list just keeps on growing. Paul knew none of that when he penned these words under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost: “<sup>13</sup>*He hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.*”

By Jesus Christ were all things created. John tells us that “*all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.*” (I Joh 1:3) “*All things were created by him and for him.*” (Col 1:16) That includes you and me. “<sup>16</sup>*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*”

Do you see the parallel with the other scripture we mentioned before? “*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,*

*shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Rom 8:38-39) He created them; don’t you think He can control them? ”

I will never forget the thrill that went through my soul the day I heard that the phrase “*by him all things consist*” could be translated “by him all things are held together.” Think about it—from the largest star in the cosmos, many times bigger than the earth’s orbit around the sun, down to the smallest particle of matter, the nucleus of the atom, all things are held in place by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Physicists tell us that that there is no explanation for what holds the atom together. The Christian knows the answer, hallelujah! Jesus Christ the Creator of everything holds it together. He keeps the stars in their orbit and the electrons that spin around the nucleus of the atom from spiraling out of control. Someone once remarked that “if that was not the case, we would all be a puddle on the floor.” I would like to add that, if that were not the case, if the Lord Jesus was not holding everything together, you and I, this podium, the carpet, this glass of water, my Bible, everything that you see, all matter as we know it, would explode in one blinding flash



and would cease to exist. All creation, minute by minute, second by second, moment by moment is being held together by the power of the Creator Himself. *“<sup>17</sup>He is before all things and by him all things consist.”*

In light of all this, don't you just love that He is also the head of the body, which is the church, *“the fullness of him that filleth all in all?”* (Eph1:23) *“<sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. <sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”* I don't know about you, but I intend to spend the rest of my life trying to understand what that means. How is this possible? It is a mystery indeed. *“Christ in you, the hope of glory!”* (Col 1:27) How is it possible that Jesus Christ is *“the fullness of him filleth all in all?”* Can anyone explain how the church is His body? How do we get our minds around the fact that we are the fullness of Him that fills everything? I intend to spend the rest of my life pursuing that and I would like you to join me on this worthy quest.

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We begin to get the picture that Paul is saying

there is nothing else, that there is no need to look anywhere else. This Gospel, this Person, is absolutely sufficient for everything and anything you and I are going to face in this life. <sup>20</sup>*And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven*” —everything. Things in heaven and things in earth will be reconciled to Jesus Christ.

Then he gets very personal: you, my friends, you who have bowed on your knees and put your faith in Jesus, <sup>21</sup>*And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled* <sup>22</sup>*In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:”* Is there anything lacking in that?

<sup>23</sup>*If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;”* Pay attention to what Paul says next: <sup>24</sup>*Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you,”* He is saying because of all this *“I now rejoice in my sufferings for you.”* Can we do the same? Can we get to that place where when we suffer at the

hands of evil men, carnal brethren or whoever it might be, that we rejoice?

*“<sup>24</sup>And fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.”* If I understand Paul correctly, he was so gripped by the power of the Gospel, so amazed at the person of Jesus Christ and His salvation, that he said, “If I find myself suffering for this cause, I rejoice. In fact, I am way behind. I should have suffered more by this time. I am way behind in the sufferings of Christ in my body for his body's sake which is the church.” And I believe if we could get our hearts around that, glorious things would happen in the church; if we could consider it a privilege to suffer for the sake of our brothers and sisters. *“For his body's sake which is the church whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you to fulfill the word of God”* —to fully preach the word of God. Think about it. Paul is saying, “God has put this calling on my life. I have the blessed privilege of taking this message to the people. And if I suffer a little bit in the process, so what?”

I don't want to bring condemnation, but I don't understand the idea of taking a vacation

from preaching and from the ministry of the Gospel. I don't understand the concept of a sabbatical from preaching the Word of God. Are there times and situations where this is needed because of personal issues or lack of qualification? Absolutely! But as I look around me, I tremble at what I see. One after the other: this man has resigned, that one has stepped down or he is on sabbatical. Why? The going got tough and they got worn down. But I am telling you, brothers, there is something here that we need to take a hard look at.

*“<sup>25</sup>Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; <sup>26</sup>Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: <sup>27</sup>To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, ”* I am telling you that this is the mystery that was hidden from the ages, this is what *“the prophets searched and inquired diligently after.”* (1 Pet 1:10) Even as they penned their words of prophecy, they wanted to know. It was hidden from their minds and their hearts but still they searched and inquired diligently. The angels pressed in to try

and understand and they could not until Jesus came. At the fullness of time, when Jesus was born in a manger, lived His sinless life, was hung upon a cross, died and rose from the dead, and from His vantage point in heaven on the right hand of the Father spread out His Holy Spirit upon the people, those prophecies were fulfilled. Then men and women started to understand this mystery: this “Christ in you,” in everyone who has in spirit bowed their knees to Jesus Christ *“whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”* Do you want to be a whole person? Do you want to be a mature Christian? You want a fulfilled life, a life that means something, a life of purpose and direction? There it is!

I wonder sometimes if we shouldn't just clean off our bookshelves. Have you ever wondered that? Commentaries, everything; just clean off your bookshelves, store them away in boxes if you don't want to throw them out, for at least a year. I know a group of people that did that. In Grand Rapids, Michigan, a high-school biology teacher, born-again and sin-forgiven, experienced everything that we read about here

and started speaking to his students, discreetly in class and not so discreetly after. A number of them were converted and started meeting together. They started reading the Bible. They knew practically nothing about the Gospel or sound doctrine but they purposed together that they would lay all other books aside and simply read the Bible for one year. There are few other people that I enjoy being with as much as that small group of believers. They embraced community, they moved closer together. They all live within a few blocks of each other. They interact with each other on a daily basis because they read in the Bible that you are supposed to “*exhort one another daily, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.*” (Heb 3:13) They looked around and said, “Jesus is coming soon according to what we read in this Book. We better be there for each other.” So they sacrificed and helped each other out. They’re in each other’s lives. They read the Bible and they believe what they read. It is refreshing and inspiring to watch them grow.

Paul says “*For this cause I labor, striving according to his working which worketh in me mightily.*” And I would have you know that this

is no small thing. Paul says, “I would like for you to know that this creates tremendous conflict. I live in agony of soul, I travail, I press in, I pray, I give my life, I suffer. This idea, this reality of the person of Jesus Christ and His message means so much to me that all that has happened—being flogged three times, shipwrecked twice, beaten with rods, scourged, rejected, chased out of one city, going to the next, and more—all of these are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed when Jesus returns.” Think about it: *“<sup>2:2</sup>That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;”* Not in a religion, not in a creed, not in books or in learning, not in man’s wisdom at all, but in the person of Jesus Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said, *“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”* (1 Cor 1:30-31) This is what we preach, yes we do. And we labor and

we go on. We minister to our neighbor. We are all involved in this. We go on and the going gets tough and we press in but we go on because we know in Him, in Jesus Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Paul says, <sup>2:2</sup>*That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; <sup>3</sup>In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. <sup>4</sup>And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. <sup>5</sup>For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. <sup>6</sup>As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: <sup>7</sup>Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. <sup>8</sup>Beware,” he says it again, “lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. <sup>9</sup>For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. <sup>10</sup>And ye are complete in him,”*

Do you believe this? “Ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power!” Peter



said <sup>2</sup>*Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,* <sup>3</sup>*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness,.*” How? *“Through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: <sup>4</sup>Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”*

(II Pet 1:2-4) These men knew they were writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and they knew that they had the message. They knew that this message was complete, that there was nothing lacking. You believe this message, you bow your knees to the lordship of Jesus Christ, you believe in His finished work on the cross, you believe on him for on-going sanctification. That’s right, you need look no further. *“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”*

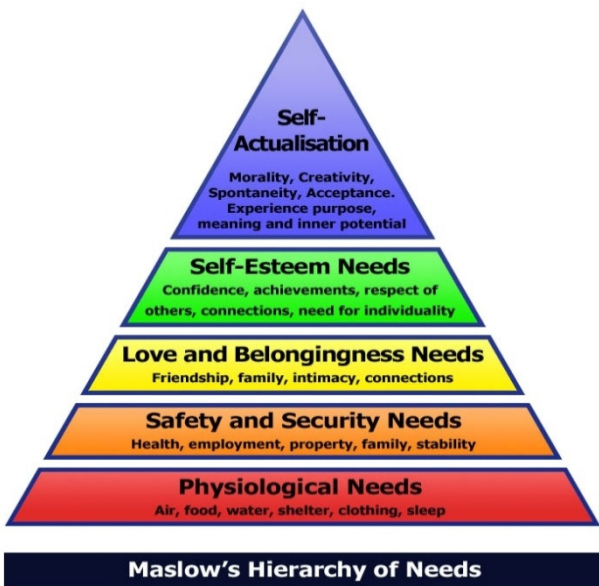
Paul wrote to Timothy, <sup>16</sup>*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in*

righteousness:” Why? <sup>17</sup>“So that the man of God may be perfect.” So that the man of God may be perfect solely through the inspiration of the Word of God becoming effective in our hearts “thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (II Tim 3:16-17) <sup>13</sup>“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” After that he adds the same warning he gave the Colossians: <sup>14</sup>“Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry,” (I Cor 10:13-14) “Be very careful,” I hear both Peter and Paul saying. “Be very careful that this pure, absolutely sufficient message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ does not get tainted by the wisdom of men.”

Paul also says, “Know also that in the last days perilous times shall come.” Now who can tell me what is the first characteristic of end-time humanity? “Men shall be lovers of their own selves.”

(II Tim 3:1)

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Here is a diagram put together by a man named Abraham Maslow. He lived from 1908-1970. He was a student of Sigmund Freud. Freud and Maslow were both godless men, Maslow an avowed atheist. Freud was an apostate Jew who searched into these issues and tried to come up with answers for the human problem. Freud indulged in cocaine; they were both involved in the occult and had no thought whatsoever to

compliment the word of God. They had every intention of providing an alternative to the Word of God. I picked this illustration by Maslow out of a garbage heap full of examples and illustrations we could use of how these thoughts come together. Maslow came to the conviction that we as humans are basically good, that we are spoiled by our environment, and furthermore that this happens very early in life. The details get absolutely ridiculous. Many of you know as well as I do where these ideas lead to.

Maslow adapted this theory from Freud and expanded on it and came up with the idea that since man is basically good and is ruined or corrupted by his environment, there are basic needs in our experience that if taken care of will cause the man to become whole and complete. He will be fulfilled and do well in life.

And so Maslow put this diagram together and said obviously physiological needs (like food and water) come first. And if we have those then we can move on to the next one, safety and security: parents that look out for us, friends around us, that kind of thing. When we have that, we move up to the next level: love and belongingness needs. We earn some prestige and

we have a healthy view of ourselves. He says a good healthy view of self-esteem culminates in a complete individual that is able to function well in life (self-actualization).

Now, let me ask you, is everything that Maslow said wrong? Can you take everything that he expresses on his diagram and say there is no truth in it? No, you cannot, and therein lies the danger. There is something in this that connects with our natural mind. There something in this that our carnal hearts just embrace without a problem.

This philosophy of life is spreading like wild-fire. It has made inroads among the people of God. Christian counselors draw from these men, although maybe not overtly. They would not take Sigmund Freud's writing directly; they know he was an atheist. They would not take Abraham Maslow's "The Hierarchy of Needs" and put it up on the wall. But if you are a thinking man, if you are a listening man you will be as convinced as I am that these ideas and concepts, these philosophies, have found their way, by subtle and sometimes overt means, into what we call "Christian Counseling." And I say this ought not to be! If Paul knew what he was

saying in Colossians chapters 1 and 2, and was indeed writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, this ought not to be! This is just wrong for the church of Jesus Christ, that chaste virgin who is espoused to the Lord Jesus. She ought not to be in bed with these men, not for a minute! She ought not even to consider it! Why would we need to, if we have this Gospel, if we believe this Gospel, if it is indeed so effective in your heart and mind? If the Gospel brings fruit from day one, and takes you all the way to a perfect man, why would we? And I ask again, why would we turn to the dregs, the garbage, the pig slop of secular humanism?

Look at the foundation of this diagram and compare it to the reality that we are created in the image of God. *“In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”* (Gen 1:27) I believe that one of the strongest arguments against atheistic humanism is the marvel of human sexuality. You see, they would tell us that somehow a life came from nonlife in some pond scum billions of years ago. And this one-celled creature just started dividing and multiplied in that way. Have you ever wondered, or asked an evolutionist, when all of that changed and every

species actually evolved into male and female and started procreating that way? Think about it, created in the image of God!

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We live in a culture, an environment, both secular and religious, where it is easy to be a victim. We consider ourselves victims many times. And here again, is there no basis for this? Is it something that somebody dreamt up?

Let me ask you to raise your hand if you have ever been sinned against. Come on, don't be bashful. I am amazed; there are people in this room that are telling me they have never been sinned against. I need to know where you live and who raised you and what church you are in and who your neighbors are. I find that hard to comprehend. Let me ask you this, then, how many of you have ever sinned against someone else? Raise your hands. Welcome to planet earth! And I do not mean that in a frivolous way. Sin is serious. We live in a sin cursed world where things have gone dreadfully wrong and they not getting fixed. Until Jesus returns it is going to be that way.

Is there a way out, is there a solution? Absolutely! We have just looked at it. But it is

easier to be considered a victim, isn't it? Who can identify with me? I would much rather view myself as a victim than as a sinner. Who is with me in that? There is just something in the core of my being that feels much better being a victim than a sinner. If we are a victim it is somebody else's fault and that is where all of this is leading to. It is now Mom or Dad's fault, it is the preacher's fault, or my brother or sister's fault. The lengths we will go to make excuses for our actions are absolutely appalling. And listen, I am not talking about people like Freud or Maslow. I am talking about those who name the name of Jesus Christ. The excuses that we will make for ourselves, the way we have been conditioned to look at ourselves as victims of circumstances. If that other person would just do things differently, I could then be different also. I tell you that is humanism to the core! There is absolutely nothing Christian about it! And if you are waiting on someone else to get your life straightened out, I invite you to take a look at the person of Jesus Christ. Take a look at His Gospel one more time and see that this time it will penetrate in a way that you can rise above those things.



You see, either we have a Gospel that will save to the uttermost, that will deliver from all of those things, or we have no Gospel at all. I have had people say, “Well, brother David, you do not understand, you have no idea what my childhood was like.” And I want to tell you, maybe I do not understand. I can tell you this: I have heard some absolutely horrifying stories and testimonies of young girls continuously raped and abused by those who should have been protecting them and watching over them and guarding their purity, sinning against them in such a way that maybe I cannot understand. But I will tell you this: if the Gospel cannot work for you, it cannot work for me either. Either these absolute statements are just that—absolute statements—or we should fold our Bibles and throw them out as worthless.

Think it through, and I think you will agree with me. What do I know of pain and suffering? I grew up in an Amish home. I always had food before me. By the way, as we are gathered here, my mother is dying. What a mother! She lived her life for her children, cared for us, blessed us. What do I know about suffering? Probably not much, but I know Jesus and I know the Gospel.

And I know what it will do for those of you who do know suffering.

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My mind goes to a woman during the days of the World War II Nazi Holocaust. Her parents had been sent off to the gas chambers. Her sister had been raped and killed and her brothers were gone. Her relatives were disappearing one by one. This woman found herself in a place where she despaired of life. She thought there was no use going on, and one dark night she headed for the river, her mind crazy with grief and pain. She just thought she couldn't go on anymore. She came to the river and her testimony is that as she looked out across the still waters, she saw a vision of Jesus Christ on the cross. She said, "I looked into His eyes, I looked into His face and I saw the face of a fellow sufferer." She stood there for a long time. "We looked at each other. Everything was quiet. Then the vision went away." She turned around and went home with hope in her heart. Why? Unconverted, a Jew, she had caught a glimpse of Jesus. She came to the realization that Jesus knew about suffering. In the agony of her heart, God in His sovereignty had reached out and touched

her heart and let her know that she was not alone, that there was someone else who came into this world of suffering and sin, darkness and confusion, and lived a sinless life, blameless before God.

But the day came when He found Himself in Pilate's judgment hall, forsaken by everyone around Him. The whip came down, laid His flesh open bare to the bone. His body just came apart; there was a crown of thorns on His head and they beat on it and the blood flowed down over His face as those thorns gouged into His scalp. After He was sentenced to death, He took up His cross and made that lonely way up to Mount Calvary and on the way buckled and collapsed under the weight of the cross. They carried it there for Him, nailed Him to it, hung Him up to die. And the first words out of His mouth were, "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*"

I want to tell you that if you know a little about suffering, if you have been hurt, if you have been abused, if you have been mistreated, if you have been betrayed by the very ones who should have been there for you to protect you and they weren't, I hope that you too will look

into the face of Jesus and remember that he also suffered. I hope that you will follow Him all the way to the cross and somehow God in His infinite love can touch your heart and you too can forgive and be healed. I pray that for you.

I wonder: if, as a twentieth century Christian, I had met that woman on the way down to the river, what would I have said to her? What would you have told her? Where would your mind go in such an extreme situation? I hope it would go to scriptures like Colossians 1 and Ephesians 1 and 2. I hope that you are so spiritually oriented that immediately, in the most extreme situations, your mind goes to the Word of God.

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Let me give you another example. I know nothing of suffering, but I read a story a while ago about an African woman. She had her village raided and pillaged and burned by enemies of her tribe. Her husband and all but two of her children were killed. The women, including herself, had been raped and cast off to die. As she made her way out across the desert, her village was just a black mark in the sand. She traveled through the desert till she could not go any

further. She had a child by her side and a nursing child in her arms. She went till she could not go any more and then sat underneath a tree and tried to nurse her child. If you had met her there, what would you tell her? Would we have nine steps of grieving, twelve steps of recovery, this program or that counselor to recommend her to? Or could we in the simplicity of Christ tell her that it will not always be this way, that there is a Day coming?

Yes, these situations are not right. They are very wrong; there is nothing whatsoever right about them. **But** the Creator of the universe has said that He **is** coming again and he **is** going to make all things new. He **is** going to make all things right again.

I hope that when we find ourselves in those situations that this is where our mind goes. We cannot fix things, and there is no use trying to borrow from the wisdom of the world to try. This world has gone wrong. Children are suffering by the droves. They're being abused and they're starving. There is suffering going on in this world right this minute that we know nothing about as we sit here in our comfortable chairs with our full bellies. But someday Jesus is

coming and everything will be set right. There will be a new heaven and a new earth and everything will be restored. This is our hope, not some philosophy that will make us feel better about our environment!

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How many of you have noticed that there seems to be more talk of pain and healing of pain than there is of forgiveness of sins among God's people today? How many of you have noticed along with me that it becomes increasingly difficult to deal with sin in the church? How many of you have noticed along with me that almost invariably when you try to deal with the works of the flesh among the people of God that there is a lot of talk, a lot of distraction, a lot of smokescreen? What leads up to this? How does this happen? Something is dreadfully wrong.

And you will find the terms "pain," "hurt," "lost confidence," and "lost trust." All of a sudden the issues become so cloudy that you can't even put your finger on it anymore. Do you know what I'm talking about? Pain, hurt, offence—it does not matter who it is that is trying to take a stand against sin, someone will find something wrong with him. And all of a

sudden the way you said that becomes a bigger issue than the sin you wanted to deal with. You hurt that person, he lost confidence. Now it is time to move to a different community to heal the pain.

I'm telling you, when Jesus comes, multitudes of people are going to find themselves slipping over the edge of a Christ-less eternity because of these ideas. I'm convinced of that. Healing of pain? Absolutely. Just as we can be delivered from sin, we can also be healed from our pain. Think about that Jewish woman's experience again. By the stripes of Jesus Christ we are healed.

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Now let's talk about self-esteem. I was in a counseling meeting a while ago out of curiosity: a plain Anabaptist setting, book table loaded with all the books on the subject—Protestant, Evangelical writers, nothing Anabaptist about it. A situation was being discussed. The “needy” individual wasn't present. This was an educational session where we would learn how to “help” people that are suffering. The first individual to speak up said this in his heavy Mennonite accent: “I think the problem is he

does not have enough self-esteem.”

Some of these men have for years, for generations, stood for certain principles. But when it comes to this one, their knees buckle, they fall back, they go with the flow. It is happening over and over again.

What do you think? Self-esteem? How many times have you heard that we need a certain amount of self-esteem? You know, not like some psychologists teach, but just enough to feel good about ourselves, to feel confident. How many of you have heard that?

Now—how many of you believe it? I’m glad for those of you that raised your hands—listen, we’re in this together. This is not a bad reflection on you. It is a worse reflection on your teachers, on those who are instructing you. I would have been surprised if some your hands had not have been raised. Think with me for a minute. Where do you find that in the Bible?

All that the Bible tells me about self is that it’s corrupt, that it’s deceitful, that it will lead me astray, that it’s opposed to everything that is godly and right and holy and pure. And that we need to deny ourselves if we are to be disciples



of Jesus Christ. We could go on, but that's what the Bible says.

How about this—how many of you have heard that you are valuable to God? This is how subtly these ideas are finding their ways into our minds. How many of you have heard that you are so valuable to God that if you were the only sinner on earth, He would still give His Son as a ransom for you? Now—do you believe that? Think with me: the Bible does not say that. It says that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. Would He have died for one sinner? Maybe, but the Bible does not say that. Neither does the Bible say anything about us being that valuable to God. Think about it: if you are so valuable to God and he needs you so much that he is going to pay with the life of His Son Jesus Christ to redeem you, what's so amazing about grace? That's just a good business deal, that's all it is. And as we come away feeling so good about ourselves, we get bigger and bigger and Jesus gets smaller and smaller.

We could go on and on with examples but all I want to do is to “*stir up your sound mind by way of remembrance.*” (II Pet 3:1) I want to remind you that we have absolutely no reason to look any

further that the person of Jesus Christ and His Gospel. It is absolutely sufficient; it is all encompassing; it will meet every need and answer every question that needs to be answered. It will provide a way for you through the darkest hour of the night. When everything else seems wrong, you can look to Jesus Christ to make sense out of what's going on.

These concepts and “felt needs” simply bring us to the place where we have demands and expectations. “Felt needs” is a buzzword meaning deficiencies that must be met in order for me to be made whole. And who is going to meet them? The people around me, my father, my mother, my preacher, the pastor, my brother, my sister; they are going to meet these needs that I feel. We have already gone so far wrong when we think this way that nothing will fix, nothing will correct that thinking but a radical return to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

You see, these men would tell us, and many Christian counselors would help us to believe, that trials hinder us. Because you have an “issue” or “traumatic experience” in your life, that's why you aren't prospering as a Christian. The Bible says trials perfect us, *“that all things work together*

*for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* (Rom 8:28) All things. This is biblical Christianity vs. modern psychology. I appeal to you, whether you're a preacher, pastor, teacher, or a father in the home, or an older brother, or sister, make absolutely sure you get this one right. You can't afford not to.

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I want to ask this question, too, as we think of pain and this issue of self-esteem. When is the last time you heard somebody talk of a rebellious child? For me, it has been a long time, and something tells me it is not because there aren't rebellious children around. Do you know what we hear these days? We hear about failing parents. Do parents fail? Yes, they do, but again you have that shift off the problem, off the issue, that needs to be addressed head on with the Gospel. And now the blame, the focus is shifted onto Dad or Mom. If you would only do this, your son would be okay. It's just wrong! We need to get this right!

As we preach, and as we lead, along with the Apostle Paul may we not rest until we are so persuaded of this message that we are willing to

pay the price that he paid. That we too would be “*set for the defense of the gospel, striving,*” agonizing; unintimidated by those that say that we need a professional. You do need a ‘professional’ – you need Jesus Christ. May we be unintimidated by those that say, “Well, when I have cancer, I need a medical professional. When I have other physical problems, I need a professional in that area of expertise. When I have emotional needs, I need a professional counselor.”

Something is dreadfully wrong if the children of God—those who have proven themselves, are living victorious lives, and have allowed the Gospel to be effective in their hearts—are being told they are not competent to counsel others. Pastors by the scores are falling for this and they’re recommending professional counselors. Could we align ourselves with the Apostle Paul and when these things come up, simply ask the question, “Where does the Bible say that?” These ideas just keep coming. It would be impossible to touch on all of them but could we purpose in our hearts tonight that we are just going to be bold enough to say, “Where in the Bible do you find that?” It is a matter of faithfulness. We will give an account someday

for how we relate to these things.

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I would like to tell the story of a man by the name of John Walker. He walked into the Russian embassy in Washington D.C. during the days of the Cold War back in the 70's. He asked to speak to a high-ranking Russian official. He was given audience and he told this official that for a price, he would sell them information that would blow the US intelligence system wide open. They made a deal. For 18 years John Walker, an officer in the US Navy, took information that was absolutely critical to US intelligence. I am told that the US intelligence system at that time was the most complicated in the world. It was so complicated that it was almost impossible to crack. Furthermore, the codes were changed once a week or once a month. John Walker passed on that information and kept the Communists up-to-date during the Vietnam War. American men and women were dying by the thousands while he was making money from this information. The US finally caught up with him. At the trial of John Walker and others that he had pulled into his confidence, the judge looked at him and remarked, "This

man is a zero to the bone.” He added, “I look in vain for one redeeming quality in your character. I am going to recommend that you never walk as a free man again.” And you say those are harsh words. But who among us does not agree this man betrayed his country and his fellow soldiers. He betrayed his general and everything that he stood for.

And I am simply asking you the question: “What do you do with a man like that?” Here is the question for us: “What do we do with men who will compromise the Gospel for personal advantage? What do we do with a man like that? What do we do with a man who will betray the Lord Jesus Christ by drawing out of the dregs of humanistic psychology and bring it into the church and set himself up as a wise man who now has all the answers that the common Christian does not have?

What will we do with a man like that? He has not only betrayed his country and his fellowman, he has betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ!

Leaders, pastors, and teachers, as you consider these things and find yourself wanting, repent. Repent! Do it speedily: drop to your knees in your chair, at home, wherever. The location is irrelevant, but repent and purpose in

your heart to join hands with the Apostle Paul in the defense of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

May God bless you as you ponder these things.

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