**The Facet of the Capacity to Love, No. 2 – BD14-02**

It is our purpose this morning to deliver some information, to bring enlightenment. It is our purpose and our hope to convince you of some things that perhaps you do not know believe or that you do not take as seriously as you should. It is our hope in this service to make it clear to you that God says He has a way of dealing with you and that way of dealing has to do with His Word, the sacred Scriptures. And without that Word, we are hopelessly at a loss. We are trying to impress upon you that the Bible says that we cannot function day by day except with the constant taking in of the Word of God.

Now I don’t have to convince you this morning that you cannot live physically without a constant daily intake of food on a regular basis. It will be something else to convince you perhaps as a Christian that neither can you go without taking in the spiritual food of the word of God. It seems like such a cliché. And yet it is a basic fact of the spiritual life.

Each of you this morning, if you learn nothing else, I trust that you will learn this much at least, that you are your own priest. Nobody is going to go checking up on you and saying, “How much time have you spent in prayer? How regular have you been in church attendance?” If you are not regular in church attendance, nobody is going to go after you and be harassing you over the matter. You are your own priest and you may be sure that God will deal with you in the most effective way possible. Nobody will be abusing you over how much money you give or don’t give, or how many people you witness to or don’t witness to. You are your own priest, and by that token, your priesthood is a private matter. And by that token, you are responsible for understanding how you can function. Without the Word of God, you cannot function.

Now it is your business therefore to see to it that you get the Word. You get the Word by attending church services. You get the word by your own study of the Word of God. You get the word by listening to tapes that are worth listening to concerning the exposition of the Word of God. And whatever way is open to you the access to a knowledge of the Word. It is up to you that you get it and get it on a daily basis.

There is always a misunderstanding among the people of God that when a pastor gets up and champions the cause of coming to church Sunday morning and Sunday night on a regular basis, there’s always the suspicion that he’s just trying to promote a good attendance, because that makes the offerings better and the bills get paid, but it’s something a lot more than that. This is your lifeline. And we’re here this morning to try to convince you a little more in one respect that this is the only way you can live the Christian life. You cannot live without the daily intake of the Word of God.

The Bible clearly indicates that a major feature of spiritual maturity, which is the subject that we’ve been pursuing for several weeks, is the capacity to love God, to love your particular marriage partner, and to love your friends. In 1 John 4:12, the apostle writes, “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and His love is perfected in us.” The word “perfected” here means matured. God is interested in seeing you mature in the capacity to love. This is not a natural capacity. You do not naturally begin with the capacity to love God, to love your marriage partner, or to love your friends. This is something that God says you have to grow into toward a state of maturity. That’s what the word “perfected” means here.

This morning we’re going to look at this facet of the capacity to love, the second in this series. The Bible meaning of love, we have already learned, is different from the world’s concept of an emotional expression. We found from the Word of God that the meaning of the word “love” in the Greek New Testament is that it’s an attitude of mind free of ill will toward a person. It’s having a relaxed mental attitude instead of a mind filled with mental attitude sins. However, I would not give you the impression that it has simply this negative quality, that it is a mind that does not have ill will toward somebody. Divine live, the “agape” love in Scripture, also has a positive quality. It is a mental attitude love which pursues in a sacrificial way the welfare of the object of your affection.

1 John 3:16 says, “By this perceive we the love of God, because He lay down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” The love of which the Bible speaks is a sacrificial love which pursues the welfare and blessing of its object. This type of love is secured only as a gift of the Holy Spirit. It’s part of the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22), and we are guided in the expression of this love by sound doctrine. 1 John 3:18 says, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

Right here in the New Testament church we already had people going around who were smiling at each other and saying nice things to one another and putting on fronts to one another that wasn’t really reflecting what was in their hearts toward one another. It was that sweetness and light sugary quality that you find so often in Bible churches that just permeates the place, and if you’ve got any spiritual sensitivity, you’re depressed right off the bat the minute you walk into the place and begin to see all these Christians floating around with this cute sweetness and light quality that they’re exuding toward one another.

Now John says that’s loving in word and in tongue. There are some people that think that it’s using certain words and certain little clichés and that’s going to prove that you’re a loving person. But the Word of God says if you are going to express God’s love, it will be in what you do. It will be in what you do, not what you say. You people who are running around looking for some preacher or some Christian leader to come around saying certain nice commendatory things to in order to demonstrate how kind-hearted he is, are looking for something that has no value when it comes to the quality of love. God says you will find love by what you see a person do. And you will find love when you see him doing in truth.

Now you see we’re back to Bible doctrine. You cannot perform any truth until you know the Word of God so you know how God thinks. What is doctrine? Have you learned that? What is doctrine? It’s God’s modus operandi. It’s how God functions. When you know doctrine, you know how God works. His promises are His commitments to you that you may stand by. His prophetic declarations are taking you into His confidence as to where He’s going to go. When you have these three you have truth.

Such love is not dependent upon the merit or the response of its object. Therefore God has this quality of goodwill toward us in spite of what we are. When God calls upon you and me to love one another, He’s not saying love each other to the degree that you deserve it. We are not deserving of each other’s love on many occasions, but God says it makes no difference. You bear nothing but goodwill. You have nothing but the ambition of seeing this person promoted and moved ahead and to find his life satisfying and fruitful to himself and to others.

Now we also looked at Ephesians 4:17-18 which showed us the development of callouses upon the soul. Just to review this briefly, when you listen to sound doctrine, you will receive it or you will be negative toward it. You will hold mental reservations and thus reject it, or you’ll be neutral toward it and thus reject it, or you will positively say, “Yes, I believe that,” and you will agree with what God has said. If you go negative toward sound doctrine, the Word of God tells us that there is created a vanity, that is an emptiness, in your soul. This emptiness in your soul creates a spiritual vacuum and it draws into your soul all kinds of falsehoods and misconceptions so that the result is that there comes a darkness upon the mentality of your soul. And your darkened mind then affects your emotions and your will so your soul is totally alienated from the life of God which is the life led by God the Holy Spirit.

The resulting condition is spiritual ignorance. This spiritual ignorance has the effect of creating a hardness upon the elements of your soul. Here is your mind, here are your emotions, and here is your will. You have drawn into these areas of your soul false doctrine, human viewpoint, misconceptions of one kind and another, and guilt complexes. The result is gradually there has developed a hardening. A callous has built up, and it has built up, and it has built up. What you have taken in is the mind of Satan. When the callous is built up, you’ve got a real problem. What you have failed to do is to be inhaling the Word of God as a result of learning the Word of God so that you can exhale it toward God.

How do you exhale truth toward God? Every time you pray you’re exhaling truth toward God. That’s why if you know doctrine, you will know how to pray. You will not be praying amiss. The Bible says God is so eager to give you what you ask for in prayer. One of our college girls wrote me this week and told me something she is praying about. She said, “God has really spoiled me on the subject of prayer. All I have to do is ask and He gives it. I’m to the point now where I just don’t dare ask for something unless I’m really sure what I’m doing. He is so responsive.”

Well He wouldn’t be so responsive to her if she were functioning outside of sound doctrine. If she were praying amiss, God would say, “No.” So you exhale to God when you pray. This whole business of faith rest that we’ve been talking about, and having a relaxed mental attitude, is one of these facets here of spiritual maturity, of the pentagon of your soul, the structure of defense. That whole idea of faith rest is dependent upon doctrine, upon being able to believe what God has promised, to understand His prophetic truth. Without that you can’t rest by faith. You’re going to be running all over the place trying to find human solutions to your problems.

You not only exhale toward God in prayer, in faith rest, but you also exhale toward man. You exhale love toward God. That’s our point today. And you exhale love toward the opposite sex and toward your friends as a result of what you have in your soul. Now if you’re calloused, you have clogged up everything that could come to you. You’re not able to express through your being what is the Word of truth.

Life magazine has a rather fascinating article about the brain this week. You might want to read it. And the fantastic influence upon the totality of the whole human structure because of what you put up in those microcircuits of those brain cells, and how it programs (them). And there you are functioning as a human being on the basis of what? On the basis of what you have put up here. And that’s what the Word of God is trying to tell us. You cannot live daily as a Christian except with the intake of spiritual food with the Word of God because it’s programming your mind.

Now do you want to set your kids on the right course in life? Then start programming their mentality. Get them into a Christian school. Get them into a Christian organization where they’re getting sound doctrine. Get them into a Sunday School where the Word is being taught. Get them into Training Union activities where they’re expressing these things of a Christian life. Get them into a church service where they’re hearing doctrine taught. And you won’t have to go around telling your children how they should be morally pure and straight and so on. They will have programmed within them the concepts of the Word of God and they’ll have those understandings. You won’t have to be trying to talk them out of making foolish moves that are going to destroy and tear up their lives, because they will have been programmed to that as a result of doctrine. So our souls have to daily inhale sound doctrine so that we can exhale it. I think it is needless for me to point out that you cannot exhale what you have not first inhaled.

Now we’re going to look a little further at the effects of these callouses on the soul. Will you turn back to the book of Numbers? We pick up the story once more of the Jewish people in their travels out of Egypt to the Promised Land during that first year of their journey. Numbers 14, beginning to read at verse 16. The consequences of callouses on the soul for the Exodus Jews. Just to bring you up to date, you will remember that these people had been traveling for one year in the wilderness. They had had several experiences in which God was demonstrating His promises to them to build up their confidence in Him—the experience at the Red Sea, the provision of water, and the provision of the manna. And all of these were examples of God in operation, and along with it was Moses teaching, teaching, and teaching doctrine to them.

It was obvious that most of the nation, most of these who were ex-slaves went negative. Certainly ten of the twelve spies that were sent out were as negative as they could be. When they came back, they said, “Don’t try to go in the land. You’ll never take it.” Two of them, Joshua and Caleb, were positive, and they said, “Yes we can take it. We go in. God has given it to us and there’s no problem. The enemy is formidable but they will fall.” So here’s the consequence to this nation for their negative response.

In Numbers 14:16 Moses is pleading with god not to destroy the people. One of his arguments is “the Egyptians will say the Lord was not able to bring these people into the land which He swore to give unto them. Therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness.” Now in a way the Lord was not able to bring this generation out of Egypt into the Promised Land. But why was He not able to bring them? It was not, obviously, because He was unable to free them from Pharaoh. He did that. It was not because He was not able to protect them in the journey. He did that. It was not because He was not able to transport them into the Promised Land. He did that.

The reason He could not bring them in was because these people did not appreciate God. And because they did not appreciate God, because they did not love God, they could not see with their human eyes and interpret what was taking place. Hasn’t it seemed strange to you, haven’t you sat down some time and said, “Now, I just don’t understand this?” If I had stood there by the Red Sea and saw that tremendous body of water open up and water standing up so that I had to look up to see it, standing up as a wall on each side, and the ground perfectly dry, and I’m walking across, and I see all of these people coming across, and I stand on the seashore, and I stand out there and I watch Pharaoh’s army come thundering down with his magnificent chariots, right down that opening in the sea, and then I see the waters close in on them, I don’t think I’d ever be afraid to do anything that God told me to do.

And you and I are inclined to look back and to say, “I don’t understand these people.” They’re murmuring against God and they’re saying, “What did you bring us out here to kill us for?” A little later they say to Moses, “Hey, Moses, you weren’t satisfied with the cemeteries in Egypt? You had to bring us out here? Were there not enough cemetery room in Egypt? Are you going to open up some new lots out here in the wilderness?” And they’re harassing Moses like he brought them out there to kill them.

Now you say, “I can’t understand these people. This is insane.” It’s a beautiful example of what you and I suffer from. Our eyes, our physical eyes see things and we interpret it wrong. Why do we interpret it wrong? Because we are disoriented in our souls. So we have millions of Christians who sit in church and sit in one thing and another, and they’re fed husks. And they sit in cornball operations, and they’re treated like ignoramuses instead of the sons and daughters of God, and they’re never fed the meat and the substance of the Word of God. And do they know any different? No, because they’re disoriented in their soul.

God was able to bring them in, except for the callouses that had so obliterated their ability to respond to Him. There was a darkness upon their soul that had developed from the year of enjoying God’s blessing and saying, “No, no, no.” In verse 17 now Moses says, “I beseech ye, let the power of my Lord be great according as thou hast spoken saying, ‘The Lord is longsuffering and of great mercy, forgiving the iniquity and transgression, but by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers onto the children of the third and fourth generation.’”

Negative volition has a way of snowballing. If you are negative toward the Word of God, if you are negative to something that you hear taught, or indifferent toward the Word of God, then your children will be the same. You pass on to your children your negative volition. Obviously, if you sit at home and don’t show up for worship services, you needn’t tell your kids to be going to Sunday School at a certain age when they’re calling the plays in their own life because they’re not going to do it. There’s no need for you to tell your children to act under certain moral principles if they see that you yourself do not. When they come to a certain age, they will follow your pattern because you are negative to something that God says this you should be and do. And it has a way of snowballing, and it goes on from them to their children to their children. Parents who don’t teach their children produce children who are in the same spiritually calloused condition that they themselves are.

In verse 19 that’s what’s happening here to Israel. Verse 19 says, “Pardon I beseech ye, the iniquities of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy. Thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said, ‘I have pardoned according to thy word, but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.’” God responds to the appeal of Moses. Moses, who was free of spiritual callouses so he’s able to plead for this people and preserve them from immediate death.

The congregation is still calloused in soul. And so I want you to notice that while they had been forgiven, the callouses are still there. This is the frightful thing about being negative to the Word. You don’t just get over it when you decide, “I’m through saying no to God.” Because then you come into God’s presence with a hardness upon your emotions, a hardness upon your will, and a hardness upon your mentality, and you find that it takes time. It takes a constant program of absorbing doctrine to begin to soften and to peel off the callouses. Then gradually you discover that you’re beginning to change. All that you do by confessing sin that has resulted in hardness of your soul has set up the condition whereby you may begin peeling it back off.

So if you’ve been building it up for a long time, you’re going to have a sweet time bringing it back down. Sometimes you may go to the point where you stay out of the plan of God so long, you are functioning so far out of the Lord’s will that you may never fully return because you have a thing that works against itself. You have these callouses constantly fighting. You know it and you’re trying to say “yes” to God. And you can’t understand yourself. You look at yourself and you can’t understand. You ask, “Why am I going ‘no’ here?” When what I want to do is to go “yes” toward what is God’s purpose and God’s idea for me.

Well this congregation was still calloused in their thinking, I their feeling, and in their deciding. But says, “I’m going to be glorified in spite of their negative response to me.” They have no appreciation, mind you, and so no love for God.

Alright, verse 22 says, “Because all these men who have seen my glory and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put me to the test now these ten times, and have not harkened to my voice, they shall not see the land which I swore to give unto their fathers. Neither shall any of them that provoke me see it. But my servant Caleb, because another spirit with him and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land wherein unto he went, and his seed shall possess it.”

The Exodus generation, God said, will never enter into the land. Anybody twenty years old and up will die out in the wilderness because they saw with their physical eyes the miracles of God, but because they had built callouses on their soul, they were unable to appreciate what they saw, and they were not able therefore to respond. Because they did not do what? Because God says they did not harken. To what? To the voice of God. Well what is the voice of God? It is His Word. Because they did not listen to doctrine, they were unable to enter the land because they could not appreciate what God was doing for them. Therefore God was not able to bring them in.

How much do you and I lose that we can’t appreciate that God says he wants to do for us? But we are so calloused that He can’t produce for us. We are such stupid idiotic dunderheads when it comes to spiritual things that we can’t have any sensitivity to go along with God. And when you don’t go along with God on doctrine, you reduce yourself to an animal level of functioning. That’s what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, and he went out and lived like an animal.

The result in verse 23 says that God was provoked. “They provoked me” by this negative response and the callouses they built up. But Caleb had another spirit. This is the Hebrew word meaning breath. He had a different breath in him. What kind of breath did Caleb have? Well he had a breath that was inhaling doctrine. He had a mind that had a relaxed mental attitude. Caleb had self-awareness. What was he aware of? The Lord. Not himself. He had conscience. What was his conscience filled with? With God’s values and God’s standards. He had emotions. What kind of emotions did he express? Love for God and love for the people. He had will. What kind of will was he expressing? Positive response to the plan of God.

So God said, “Caleb I will bring into the land, and his children after him are going to inherit that which I am going to give Caleb.” Why? Because Caleb was in the light. Psalm 119:130 says, “The entrance of thy words giveth light. It giveth understanding unto the simple.” Now you’d better believe that. “The entrance of thy words giveth light. It gives understanding to the simple.” And if you want to gain smarts in all facets of your life, then turn to the Word of God.

Joshua was in the same position. Verse 30 tells us that he too was going to go in. Verse 25 through verse 29 tells us the discipline that was going to come upon this people because of their hardness toward the Lord. Verse 25 says that they were sent back out into the wilderness to die because they couldn’t respond to blessing.

Verses 26 and 27 called them an evil congregation because of their spiritual hardness. And how was this hardness shown? It was shown by their murmuring. “How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who murmur against me?” These people were complaining against God. Because they had callouses, all they could exhale toward God was complaints. And when you and I get callouses upon our soul, we’re not praising God. We’re not thanking God. We’re not complimenting God. All we’re doing is complaining to Him. Why should this happen to me? All we’re doing is sitting with self-pity over the circumstances that have engulfed us.

That’s what they were doing. They were murmuring. Because their souls were in darkness, all they could exhale was bitterness. So God had to deal with them. Verses 28 and 29 says that that “their carcasses would fall in the wilderness.” Every one of them twenty years old and up was doomed.

So if you have callouses upon your soul, you bring discipline into your life. God indicated that one of the things they were using as defense, saying, “Our children are going to die out here in the wilderness.” God said that that’s the very thing that’s not going to happen. Numbers 14:31 says, “But your little ones whom ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in and they shall know the land which ye have despised.”

Now why was it that the children of these people were going to be able to enter the land when their parents were unable to? Well if you’ll turn to Deuteronomy chapter 6, we have the answer. Beginning at verse 4, this is the end of the road for Moses. The 40 years are up. The 20-year-olds and up have died. The second generation stands poised a second time at Kadeshbarnea ready to enter.

Now Moses, as God’s spokesman, said, “I’m going to spell it out to you once more.” Now mind you that for 39 years they’ve been out in that wilderness. And these children have been taught and taught and taught. They’re a generation, most of them, who did not know slavery. They had been introduced by Moses and his workers to doctrine. Now on his departure, Moses sums it all up.

Deuteronomy 6:4 says, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord.” This is called by the Hebrew people the “shamah.” It’s their declarative doctrinal creedal statement, the summary of what they believe about the magnificence of God, the one and only true God. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord.” Now this is speaking about the essence of God. Our God is sovereign. He is righteous. He is justice. He is love. He is eternal life. He is omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. He is immutable, and he is veracity (He is true.). This is the essence of God. God is in three persons but He is in one essence. Total love for God is to be from all facets of our soul.

So verse 5 says, “And thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all they might.” We are called to love God totally. In what way? With all thine heart. This stresses the individual facets of your soul. With all of your mind and all of your emotion and all of your will. Then when it says, “with all thy soul,” this looks at the soul as a whole. With the whole totality of your being you’re to love God. “And with all thy might.” And how can you love God with strength. Only as you know the Word of God, as you’ve inhaled doctrine into your human spirit.

Verse 6 therefore says, “These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart.” The trouble with most Christians today is that they’re trying to exhale Christian living and they never inhaled anything. Most Christians are walking around trying to live like Christians, and nobody has ever gone up to them and said, “Look, friend, you can live like a Christian. You can’t even begin to live like a Christian. What do you thinks make up living like a Christian?” “Well, I’m going to go out and get all my bills paid. I’m going to do what’s right.” Bologna.

You’re not going to get all your bills paid and you’re certainly not going to do all that’s right. Living the Christian life is impossible until you have acquired a basis of doctrine in your soul, and until you keep that basis there.

So if you’re here this morning and you look into your soul and you say, “Well, you know, I’m kind of poor down there when it comes to knowing the Word. I’m really kind of poor when it comes to doctrine and promises and prophecy. I’m really kind of poor.” Now, I can tell you one thing. Your Christian life is poor too. You’re a good morale 20th century American, but there are plenty of good moral 20th century non-Christian Americans. That isn’t the same as living the Christian life. Most Christians are trying to exhale this life that they never inhaled first.

Now these children were to be taught. They were to be taught the Word so they had the capacity to love God, and this is what was done for them. Consequently, when they returned to the land, they were able to enter in because they were able to appreciate God. Because they were able to love God. Because their eyes were able to look at those giants. And because appreciated God, they saw the giants in the right perspective. Because their eyes were able to look at those fortified cities. Because they appreciated God, they could look at those cities in the right perspective. The whole bit fell into place.

And this is our trouble today as Christians. Our physical eyes are incapable of discerning in true perspective what we see because our souls are calloused. Our souls are starving for something to exhale toward God.

These children built up doctrine in their human spirits during these years of wilderness wondering and they were able to enter. Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 8, the first three verses. God says to the second generation Jews now, “All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe that to do that you may live and multiple and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give unto your fathers.” Possessing the land that their parents had been excluded from.

Verse 2 says, “Thou shalt remember all the ways which the Lord thy God led thee these 40 years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to test thee, to know what was in thine heart (that is, to “expose” what was in thine heart), whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or not.” He tested them to demonstrate the condition of their soul to determine whether they were calloused or whether they would be responsive to the Word of God.

Verse 3 says, “And He humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.” Now verse 3 is telling you that God put them in the situation where He humbled them, where He removed their capacity to do anything. They were out in the desert and there was no food. And He said, “And I put you in the position where your stomach began growling. And the children began crying because they were hungry. And you know that physical food was necessary. And you looked at these two million people with all these growling stomachs and no food, and you knew you had to have food.”

Now God says, “I put you in that position because I wanted to see what your physical eyes, and I wanted to demonstrate to you what your physical eyes would do with what you were seeing. You were seeing a bunch of hungry mouths. And I was demonstrating to you when I provided miraculously through the manna that because of your positive response to the Word of God, I came through and supplied for you all of those years. Even your clothes didn’t get old on your back.”

It doesn’t matter what you see with your eyes. It’s how your soul interprets what you see with your eyes. And these kids who had grown up under doctrine were able to look at a demanding situation like people to be fed, and they were able to look at God and say, “God, we need to be fed.” And God provided.

Verse 11 gives a warning, “Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I commanded this day.” In verse 14, why this warning? “Then thine heart be lifted up (be built up with callouses in the soul) and thou forget the Lord thy God who brought thee forth out of the Land of Egypt from the house of bondage.” The reason these children were able to go in, in Numbers 14, was because they believed God as a result of what they’ve been taught.

Now let’s go back to verse 14. What about their parents? What about their parents now that they had discovered as Moses had come to them and said, “Alright, I’ve talked to God, and this is what the Lord has told me. The Lord has said that because of the hardness upon your soul that you were not able to love Him and respond to Him in love so that you obeyed Him and went into the land, all those of you who are 20 years old and up are going to die. We’re going to take the whole camp and we’re going to move it out into the wilderness. All of us are going to retreat back from Kadeshbarnea. We’re going to leave the port of entry. We’re going to go out into the wilderness and we’re going to stay out there for one year for every day that the spies searched out the land, and every day of which God gave abundant evidence of what He was going to do for us. One year for every day. We’re going to be out there for a total of 40 years. We’ve got 39 more years to go. Let’s turn around. Let’s pack up. Everybody break camp. Let’s move out. And we’re not going to return until everybody who’s 20 years old and up is dead.”

Now supposing somebody walked in and said that to you this morning. “Everybody in this room that is 20 years old and up is going to die before the year is out,” because you did not do something. Suppose that all the people who aren’t in church this morning should get a letter that says, “The Lord has told us that all of you that did not attend church last morning 20 years old and up will be held accountable and you will die before the year is out.” Wouldn’t that be a dilly?

Well, it was frightening. Numbers 14:31 says, “But your little ones whom ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in and they shall know the land which ye despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in the wilderness.” What they were experiencing is what the Bible calls the sin unto death. The callouses had become so complete there was now no return for them.

Verse 33 says, “And your children shall wander in the wilderness 40 years and bear your harlotries until you carcasses shall be wasted in the wilderness.” Callouses create spiritual unfaithfulness so that you can accept anything.

Verse 34 says, “After the number of the days in which ye searched out the land, each day for a year shall ye bear your iniquities, even 40 years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.” That is, my postponement of blessing because I cannot give it to calloused souls.” That’s why they couldn’t be blessed.

Verse 35 says, “I the Lord have said I will surely do it unto this evil congregation who are gathered together against me in this wilderness. They shall be consumed and there they shall die. And the men who Moses sent to search the land who returned (this is the reconnaissance party) and made all the congregation to murmur against Him by bringing up the slander upon the land, even those men who did bring up the evil report upon the land died by the plague before the Lord. But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunah who were of the men who went to search the land still lived.”

Now it was bad enough that Moses came and announced how they would die while they stood there. Here these leaders, twelve leading men who had made up this reconnaissance party, and right there in front of the eyes of the congregation who composed the majority report dropped dead on the spot. And the people looked and they couldn’t believe their eyes. But they also noticed something else, that two of them, the minority people, Joshua and Caleb, stood and they lived. But you know they got the message right away. Right away it was clear to them. Do you know why these ten had died? Because they were wrong in what they told us. We were stupid enough to believe these ten. But it was the two that we refused to believe, they were the ones who were right. Well, why didn’t they believe the two? Because they were so calloused in their soul that their physical eyes misinterpreted what could only be understood through the eyes of their soul, and they were blind in their souls.

Now look what they do. They’re beginning to get the picture, this evil congregation. Verse 39 says, “And Moses told thee saying unto all the children of Israel. And the people mourned greatly.” What was their reaction? They repented. They confessed. They said, “We were wrong. God, we should have listened to your two men. They were right. We were wrong.” Alright, they had made their confession, and when you confess your known sins, you are immediately restored to fellowship.

But, notice something else. This is one of the most important passages of Scripture to give you a basic understanding of a dramatic truth. That when you confess your sins it does not remove something else that’s already there. That you needed to pay attention before you put it there. That is that they mourned greatly, but verse 40 says, “They rose up early in the morning and went up into the top of the mountain saying, ‘Lo we are here. We will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised for we have sinned.” Now they’re in fellowship with the Lord, and what’s the first thing they decided to do. They said, “That was wrong for us not to go in. We’ve changed our minds. We’re going.”

And they got up early in the morning and they’re packing their gear and they’re taking their tents down and they lining up the kids and they’re getting everybody fed and they’re grabbing the last handful of manna and they’re ready to move out. And Moses says, “Wait a minute, you’re wrong.” And they said, “How can we be wrong? We just confessed our sin. We’re in fellowship. God is able to teach us now. He’s able to direct us. What do you mean we’re wrong?”

In verse 41 Moses says, “Wherefore now do you transgress the commandment of the Lord, but it shall not prosper. Go not up for the Lord is not among you that you be not smitten before your enemies.” Because here’s the problem that existed. They confessed, but all these callouses were still there. And the darkness and the insensitivity to the plan of God were still there. And because of that they were ready to make another wrong move. Do you see how frightful it is for someone not to have warned you over the years what it does not to have doctrine or to go negative toward it when you are taught it?

This is what’s being built up, and this is what’s going to destroy your whole being. Well these people barged in. Moses told them not to go. Their sincerity and their zeal is not enough. You’re in fellowship but you’ll still make wrong moves because of what you’ve built up over a period of time. It takes doctrine. It takes a lot of positive volition to peel that back off.

And the result was that the people, because they’re so calloused, charged up. Verse 44 says, “They presumed to go up unto the hilltop, nevertheless the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and Moses departeth not out of the camp. And the Amalekites came down and the Canaanites who dwelt in that hill and they smote them and they routed them (they panicked them) even unto Hormah. They struck them down. They killed them. Smote them means they killed them, and they routed them. The key is not doing, but it is learning doctrine so you can have love and respond to God.

So here’s the summary. A Christian with callouses on his soul may be in fellowship with the Lord after confession of sin but he is spiritually incompetent. It is difficult to recover from an excessive buildup of spiritual callouses. Those very callouses keep stimulating negative responses to the word while you’re trying to clear up the callouses. Thirdly, it is not wise therefore for a Christian to pursue service while he’s trying to clear up the callouses on his soul so he can start free breathing again.

Have you ever had a hard time breathing? That’s what happens to your soul. You’re not able to breathe in and to breathe out. And until you begin to open up the breathing passages of your soul, it is wiser for you to lay off of Christian service so you can become sensitive to God. Otherwise you’re going to be charging up the hill where God says, “No, that’s not what I planned for you to do.”

Christians like to think that it’s a matter of doing, but God says it’s a matter of capacity to love Him so that you can appreciate Him. And when you love God, your physical eyes will see things in the right perspective. You will appreciate what God is doing for you. You will understand what He is doing for you. And you will respond properly to what you see and you won’t be distorting and misinterpreting. The capacity to love God begins with response to His Word.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971