***Darkened and Hardened

Colossians 1:3-8

COL-060***

We are looking today at Colossians 1:3-8 in our study of this book. Our topic is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians," number 38.

It is, of course, never a pretty sight to see someone who was once a godly Christian, active in God's service, and an inspiration to other believers, degenerate into a sinful, self-centered, disappointed worldling. And over the years, we've all seen people like that. They've moved among us, and they have been princes. And suddenly something happens. And they get on the slippery slope that takes them into reversion, and their lives may continue to be religious, but they have suddenly become useless to the people of God, and to the work of God. Salvation, while it is genuine and permanent in such people, does not remove the old sin nature which is inherent in everyone from Adam.

We are born with this heritage from Adam of a sin nature. That is why we study the Word of God. That is why we feed upon the living and active Word of God. And as people become negative to the Word of God, and resistant to it in some respect, it sets them on a slippery slope that eventually leads down and down, farther and farther away from God Himself. And when we see that, we know what's happening, and it's a great tragedy. And we weep for them. But it's a potential that is inherent in the Christian life for us all – to move down a direction away from being at the peak of great blessing, to being nothing in the Word of God.

The external evidences are varied. And you can almost see it developing as the deterioration begins to take place. I've seen some people who are very zealous. They always sat up toward the front. And they'd have notebooks out. And they're say, "Here's a good thought," and they'd jot it down. And when God needed them and the work of the Lord needed them, they were there. Then, gradually, as sin began to take over, and resistance to the mind of God began to take over, they began moving farther and farther off the front row. Pretty soon the notebooks weren't there anymore. Then the Bible wasn't there anymore. Then they were sitting out there in the foyer. And then they'd hook up the system so they could sit out in their cars and listen to it. They just got farther and farther away, moving out, trying to get away from this terrible voice that's creating all this problem in their lives.

Well, that may be extreme, but you know very well that that's exactly what does happen. There are those evidences, and you can see it and sense it as you deal with these people. What are they saying? They're saying, "Why should I sit there?" As one man said, "Why should I sit there and get beaten up? Of course, the implication is that the preacher is doing the beating; and, in truth, it's the Word of God that's doing the beating. They're getting beaten up, all right, because the Word of God is saying, "You're wrong," and I'm asking you to change your mind.

So, it's never a pretty sight to see someone of esteem among us go down that slippery slope. Because we always have the sin nature, we're all prone to that possibility. And that's the thing we need to remember. The doctrinal principle for the eradication of his terrible sin nature is stated in 1 John 3:2, where John says, "Beloved (speaking to Christians obviously with that word), now we are the children of God." We're born-again people. We belong to the royal family of God: "And it has not appeared as yet what we shall be." How tremendous we're going to be is not to be seen at any certain point in time because the person who stays with the Word of God, and who stays with short lists of unconfessed sins, and who is subject to proper lines of authority – that person is going to keep growing spiritually, and is going to be blossoming out into a more and more magnificent human being.

So, there may be one person that you know as they are now, but you don't know them how they're going to be a year from now, as God develops them in their character, and in their life, and in their usefulness. They become a greater inspiration all the time: "And it has not yet then appeared what we're going to be. But we know this: that when He (Jesus) appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is." So, that's where the sin nature goes out the door. Until then, we all have it, and if we're not careful, it can take us down. Never, as the Word of God says, presume that you stand, lest you fall. Never forget that Satan is walking around, pussy-footing as a roaring lion, seeing what Christian he can bring to his knees – what Christian he can bring down with a swipe of his paw at some unprepared moment.

Now, I'm not telling you that these people stopped being religious. They just moved someplace else to be religious. . . The word "sin" in the singular indicates that we're talking about the nature of sin: to be dead to the sin nature, but to be alive to God is to be in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts. You can say no to the sin nature. In your willpower? Never. But the power the Spirit of God gives you the doctrinal principle which you've said is absolutely right: Amen. You'll find that you lose your taste for what is evil. Romans 6:13: "And do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourself to God as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." Sinning is done through the parts of your body, including your mind.

So, all of those things have to be handed over to God, and that's what the Spirit of God enables us to do. At one time, such was true of one of the associates of the apostle Paul: a man whose name was Demas, and whom we will come to later on in this book of Colossians. Near the end of the chapter, when Paul ties things up, and sends greetings from various people on his evangelistic team, Colossians 4:14 sends greeting: "Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greeting, and also Demas."

In the book of Philemon, this man is again spoken of. In Philemon 24, he speaks about those who are sending greetings: "As do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers." Now that's a great honor to be called a fellow worker of the apostle Paul – to have been on his team. You know that this man had an openness to the Word of God. He was a born-again Christian. He had spiritual substance. He was something significant on that team, or he wouldn't have been on it.

However, over a period of time, and a little-by-little negativism, whatever the reason, the harshness of the military-like service that was included in evangelism in those days as always – there was a gradual spiritual reversion that took place. The old sin nature began to creep up in its authority and power over Demas. And suddenly, one day he fell from grace. He fell from the grace of being a spiritual man to the sorry state of being a carnal man. 2 Timothy 4:10, in passing, notes to us of that great disaster. This is the last book that the apostle wrote, and he knew when he wrote it that he was going to have his second trial before Nero. And God had told him, "This time, Paul, you're not going to be exonerated. This time you're going to be found guilty, and this time they're going to execute you." So, Paul is writing this letter, setting things up for his associates to take over the work. And certainly Timothy was one of them.

So, in 2 Timothy 4:9, he says, "Timothy, please come to me as soon as you can." I need you here pronto. We need to make arrangements for my departure. And I need your presence just for your comfort to be near me. And he says, the reason for this, in verse 10 is: "For Demas, having loved this present world, has departed me, and gone to Thessalonica." Demas should have been there with him in Rome. Demas should have been there assisting him at this terrible time. But instead, Demas goes for the good life. He goes to one of the all-time great cities of the ancient world: Thessalonica. And suddenly, Paul is left alone without this associate. How could this happen? Demas was no doubt a disappointment at that stage to the apostle and to the other believers who were saddened to hear of Demas' reversion. It is no fun to know someone who's been one of your associates in the Lord's work suddenly gets so misguided, and so misdirected, and so disoriented, that they go off into some religious triviality, and think they're still walking with God, and still saving their lives for eternal rewards.

The apostle Paul condemns this kind of carnality. It is never approved. In the case of the Corinthian Christians, the opening of 1 Corinthians indicates to us false condemnation of this carnality which existed in a widespread way in that congregation. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3:" And I, brethren." Now, he's speaking to Christians: "Could not speak to you as spiritual men." I couldn't talk to you as people who were in temporal fellowship. You were running amok with sin in your lives. You weren't cleaning it up. You weren't confessing it. You weren't ceasing and desisting. So, you're not spiritual Christians: "But I had to speak to you as men of the flesh." The word "flesh" is a way of describing the old sin nature: "I had to speak to you as men of the old sin nature. And, while you're Christians, you're just baby Christians."

Paul says, "Now, you've been in this a long time. You should have grown with some spiritual strength. I should be able to talk to you about the deep things of the Word of God, but since your eyes glaze over when we start opening up to you the deep things of the Word of God, the next thing you know, you're not here for the next service, because you can't take another walk through the deep things of the Spirit of God."

So, Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3:2 says, "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you are not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you're not yet able." After all this time, you should have been able to be able to take the heavy steaks of the Word of God. Instead, in 1 Corinthians 3:3: "I'm feeding you the Pablum, for you are still fleshly (carnal). For since there is (and here are some of the evidences of their carnality) jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?"

So, the problem is that the sin nature can bring us down. It can bring you down from super-grace level of living almost overnight. You let the thing go, and it's on its way. And that's what's "falling from grace" means in the Bible, when it speaks to that in the book of Galatians. A Christian who falls from grace living is a sad and terrible sight – who is enslaved to sin and human viewpoint on earth, and who suffers the loss of the value of his life in terms of earning rewards in heaven for service to God. It is a sad and terrible sight. Just as a Christian can build a spiritual maturity structure in his soul, all the way to that prime of your spiritual life at super-grace living, so he can also tear it down again by a series of steps. And we have been taking a look at those steps in Ephesians chapter 4 – one of the most important sections of the Word of God for you to understand as a Christian.

**Futility in the Mind**

At the end of Ephesians 4:17, the apostle Paul says, "Don't live as unsaved gentiles who walk in the futility of their minds." So, the first thing in the downward step of the believer into reversion is futility in the mind. A Christian can build a spiritual maturity structure, and he can tear it down again. He is not filled with the Spirit. He's not controlled by the Holy Spirit. He is in the status of carnality. He is out of that inner circle of temporal fellowship, though he is still in the outer circle of eternal fellowship.

**Filled with the Spirit**

Being filled with the Spirit, we have pointed out, requires three things. Briefly, one: do not quench the indwelling Holy Spirit by refusing His request to do something. Now, in a variety of ways (you're not going to hear voices), God the Holy Spirit burdens your heart for something to do in His work. He wants you to perform something. And you give Him the back of your hand. The Bible calls that quenching the Holy Spirit, saying, "No, I couldn't do that. How could I do that? Look what I would have to give up. Look at the position I would have to put myself in. I can't do that just because of the work of God.

Secondly, do not grieve the Holy Spirit by willful evil acts. Evil is sins and human good from the sin nature.

And third: to walk in dependence upon the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit through the doctrines of Scripture.

Do not quench; do not grieve; and, walk by means of the Holy Spirit. It's very simple. That's the mechanics, and it works. The status of being filled or controlled by the Holy Spirit is thereby established. And when it is broken, confession of sin to the Father of what you have done that is out of line (how you have grieved Him; how you have quenched Him; or, how you did not walk by His guidance of Scripture) – if you admit that (the 1 John 1:9 principle), that confession brings you back into temporal fellowship where God is working with you again.

The first step onto the slippery slope of spiritual regression from Christianity and the carnality, in Ephesians 4:17, is marked by this word "futility." The word "futility," as we pointed out to you, connotes an emptiness condition in the mind. The mind cannot perform its divine purpose of giving you divine viewpoint guidance. So, this compares a mentality devoid of divine viewpoint which you have learned from the pastor-teacher. This is a mind that gradually has less and less of the Word of God functioning in it. The Christian's perceptive mind develops a spiritual vacuum then, which then draws into itself a horrendous array of human viewpoint misconceptions and evils. Your mind will not stay empty. It will take in the evils. The believer then begins to think, and thus to act, as a natural or unsaved man – what he refers to as: "walk ~just as the gentiles walk." Don't do that. Don't walk as those who have a mind that is filled with human viewpoint, and that is empty of divine viewpoint.

The Christian's spiritually empty mind will fill itself with Satan's views which are against God in morals; against God in economics; against God in government; against God in religion; against God in family; against God in authority; against God in education; against God in entertainment; against God in value systems; and, against God in societal practices. And you and I know Christians who are in exactly this position. They are against God. And those are the ones who evaporate when you call their attention to the fact that this condition exists within their souls. And it is evidenced by what they say; by what they do; by what they promote; and, by their temperament and characteristics. The Christian has a mind which is futile. It is empty. And this sets up the first stage toward the destruction of the spiritual maturity structure. This will increase with great rapidity as you step on this slippery slope of reversion.

**Darkened in Understanding**

In Ephesians 4:18, the next consequence in the descent downward will be from a mind that is empty and drawing into itself all kinds of human viewpoint misconceptions: "Being darkened in their understanding," so that the next step is that the understanding is darkened. The word for "darkened" is the Greek word "skotizo" (skot-id-zo), S K O T I Z O. "Skotizo" means "a blackout." It's like standing in a room that's perfectly dark such that if you put your hand in front of your face, you can't see it.

In years past, the Rangers, when they would take you through Carlsbad cavern, and have you down in the depths of the caverns, where there was absolutely no opening of light from the surface, they'd have you sit down on benches, and they would say, "Now we don't want anybody to move. We're going to turn the lights off for one minute to show you what total blackness is really like, in which the bats operate." And then they would turn the lights off. And everybody would be perfectly silent. And you knew what it was to be blind. You would put your hand up there in front of your face: nothing. Finally, you found yourself moving over close to the person next to you so that you could hear some breathing, and so that you knew you weren't there alone. And it was scary – total blackness ("skotizo"). That's what this word means. You cannot see a thing. Everything is totally wiped out. And you have no perception, therefore (and we're talking about spiritual wipe out) to reality. You have a condition of spiritual blindness.

This word is in the perfect tense. Here you did the action, and (bingo!) it goes on forever. So, someplace back you went, "No God. I'm quenching you. Now I like to do this evil. All my friends do it around me. I'm grieving you. No, I don't want to be guided by the Bible. I want to be guided by Sam Donaldson and Brokaw; the men of great wisdom; and, the men who inherit office in the Congress. Those are the people I want to be guided by."

So, you go negative to the principle of the Word of God, and it kicks in this continuing result: blindness in your understanding. This word is in the passive voice, so it is done to you passively (automatically). Once you have gone negative to the Word of God, and once you have thumbed your nose at the pastor-teacher, who's telling you the truth, and leading you in the right direction, and pointing and signaling you a great moment of your life, then your mind begins to close down on itself, And pretty soon you have trivialized yourself because you don't know where you're going.

I have had one experience in my life, on an enormously dark night, with the shades and blinds and everything drawn, and I happened to get up in the night, and I was sleepy and disoriented. And I could not find my way back into the bed. I didn't know where I was. I didn't know whether I was in the hall. I didn't know whether I was in another room. Finally, I had to get down on my hands and knees, and crawl around, and touch a wall, and move out, and move in a different direction. It was Halloween (haunting night) all over again. And I was just totally disoriented, not knowing where to go. But if I had taken off, I'd have gotten a bloody nose by bumping into something. And that's the spiritual life.

However, what do these Christians do? Oh, they get up, and their minds have been emptied of God's viewpoint. They've cut themselves off from the Spirit of God's leadership, and they just charge out there like they know exactly what's happening. And this happened to them. They didn't do it to themselves). They wouldn't black out their mind. This negative attitude has closed their mind to spiritual understanding.

This word "understanding" is important too. It's the Greek word "dianoia" (dee-an'-oy-ah, D I A N O I A. This means the ability to think something through. These people have great IQs, and lots of experience, and they're thinking their way through about some issue of life, and thinking that they're doing something really smart, and that they've made the right decisions, and they don't know they're standing in a darkened spiritual room, and muddling around, and making decisions that are all wrong, because they cannot think through. Their thinking-through mechanism is completely short-circuited. That's what happens to a Christian whose mind becomes emptied of God's viewpoint, and who steps out of temporal fellowship, and is on that way downward. He begins to smell like the world; dress like the world; look like the world; and, talk like the world, just as if he never knew Jesus Christ. And what honor is that to a person's manhood or womanhood?

The perceptive mind (that mind – that area within us that is designed for our learning) is black and dark, and cannot think its way through to anything. It is filled with great satanic deceptions. And Satan is able, then, in this total blackout, to make this Christian totally unreceptive to God's wisdom and to God's leading. He can't see a thing, but he still thinks that he does. And he feels that his mind (his wisdom) is superior. He feels that, concerning the lies and deceits of the old sin nature that are surrounding him, he has superior wisdom. He feels he's a worldly sophisticate. And, of course, the world really commends him.

So, the first step is a mind empty of human viewpoint. The result is a darkened understanding. You have no capacity to be able to see things in reality. You're just as ignorant as some jungle creature who has never had any contact with civilization.

**Excluded from the Life of God**

Then the next step (after the darkness – the capacity to reason through being understanding) is a result in being excluded from the life of God. The Greek word "excluded" looks like this: it's terribly long word "apallotrioo" (ap-al-lot-ree-o'-o). This emphasizes the separation (with this little preposition "apo" – away from) – out of it completely with God. Do you know what it means? It means "to be estranged." You become an alien to God. Here's a Christian to whom God his Father has now become an alien. This is intense separation from God – total alienation (to be estranged).

Also, here it is again in the perfect tense. You kicked in. You grieved. You quenched. You refused to be guided by the Spirit of God and the Word of doctrine. And bingo! You set a thing in motion that is now tearing you to shreds, and you're wondering what's happening to your life. All of a sudden you have now been estranged from God your Father, and it was done to you as a result of that action.

This connotes the condition of total separation. Here's another place that it's used in the Bible, to give you a little better understanding. In Ephesians 2:12, in speaking to Gentiles before they were born-again, it says: "Remember that you were at one time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel." "Excluded" means "total separation." Gentiles were totally excluded from the commonwealth of Israel.

In our book of Colossians here, in Colossians 1:21, it's used again: "And although you were formally alienated (excluded)," there it is, "and hostile, indeed engaged in evil deeds, alienated in the mind from God." So, here you are, a child of God, separated from the mind of God. You are alienated from God your Father. You have been alienated from the life of God. That refers to the lifestyle of God. You're not alienated from the lifestyle of the world. Boy, you know how to live there. You know how to function there. And you make it evident that you're one of them. Here, all of a sudden, you, as a child of God, are alienated from the life of God. What a tragedy to see a Christian who is alienated from walking by means of the Spirit. That's the life of God.

Galatians 5:16 says, "But I say walk by the Spirit, and you'll not carry out the desires of the old sin nature." The Holy Spirit produces the life of Jesus in the spiritual believer. It's a great tragedy when we see a Christian who is removed from his resurrection new life in Christ, and we watch, and we see a prince or a princess become a pig in their lifestyle. That cannot be a pleasant sight. And none of us ever takes pleasure in seeing that happen. That's why this passage of Scripture is so important for you to understand how the spiritual life works, and this negligence of being absent from the church services. Can you imagine the poverty of so many people who could have been so ennobled had they been here this morning? How about the young people that should be here, and that should be hearing this, that need to be alerted on how what seems right and natural is exactly what is wrong and unnatural when it comes to God? This is a prince and a princess who becomes a pig.

**Ignorance**

So, we go from an empty mind, to having the understanding darkened, to where we are excluded from the life of God. We are excluded now from the godly lifestyle. And the reason for this is because of the ignorance. The next step down is ignorance. Now, in spiritual things, you go completely berserk. Boy, you're making decisions; you're making moves; you're acting; you’re thinking; and, you're saying, "Oh yes, I am really on track with God." But you're so completely off track, you don't even know what has happened to you. You now have a condition called "agnoia," A G N O I A (ag'-noy-ah). This means "total lack of perception of reality." You don't know what life is all about at all. You're nothing more than that poor, sorry, unsaved person who's going to spend eternity in the lake of fire. Here you are, going to spend eternity in heaven with God, and what do you have? You've become totally ignorant when it comes to spiritual things. And do you know who I find to be the most ignorant? Those who've been reared in spiritual things, and those who have had a lifetime of instruction because of the home they were born in, who think that they have a great insight. They think that they've heard it all, and that they have great understanding. And they move out, and think that they don't need to continue feeding upon that Word. They don't need to continue being sensitive to walking by means of the Spirit; to not grieving Him; and, to not quenching Him.

1 Peter 1:14 has this to say, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance." When you are ignorant of the ways of God, that's when you fall into the unreality of the lust pattern of the sin nature. Exclusion from the spiritual life produced by the Holy Spirit will now result in ignorance about God's will and leading. This is like watching a small child who is about ready to do something very destructive. And you stand there and watch this kid, and you wonder how he could be that ignorant of what he's about to do. And he proceeds to do it, and suffers the pain and consequences because he has no wisdom.

When we read the Proverbs on Sunday morning, I know that the bells of truth are ringing all over this place as people say, "Boy, I didn't think of that. Boy, what a wisdom that is" – the whole system of not being spiritually ignorant that God has provided for us to overcome. And now we're talking about somebody who was super-grace at one time, and then they get sloppy. Then they started being indifferent toward the Word. Their understanding began to cloud up because human viewpoint is in there permeating their mind. Then they became excluded from the life of a godly person. And now their minds are filled with such ignorance because they are thinking like the world. This spiritual ignorance is in the mind due to the lack of doctrinal understanding. Such spiritual ignorance becomes so great that, at a certain point, you're not even aware that you are ignorant. You actually view yourself as superior – as being smart, and serving God in a different and right way.

This is the person, like I watched a Muslim on TV the other day, defending his beliefs and saying to Christians, "You have your belief, and I have mine." And in his ignorance, he thought that they were both equal. He thought that, with God, one was as good as another. And the truth of the matter is that the Christian only had enlightenment, and the Muslim had nothing but lack of enlightenment. He had this "skotizo" darkness. He didn't know what was up and what was down in terms of reality.

**Hardness**

Well, where does that go? Then it goes down to the next step: hardness. Here is the great tragedy of the Christian life. They went from futility to a mind darkened so that they can't think things through anymore spiritually. Suddenly, they're excluded from being able to live a godly life. Sin and evil is normal. They have become ignorant now. They've lost their way of spiritual principles. And this is because of the hardness of their heart. Now comes a hardness. The Greek word is "porosis" (po'-ro-sis), P O R O S I S. "Porosis" means a condition of a rock-like substance – a calloused condition. And that's what the word actually means. It's translated as "a callous." It indicates a lack of "sensitivity" (past feeling). Where? In the heart. In the "kardia" (kar-dee'-ah), K A R D I A. The "kardia" is the directive mind – the side; the quality; and, the function of making decisions. All of this is darkened out. All of this is blackened. You've lost your way. You're muddling around. You're going to heaven, but your life is a total useless waste. You wake up in the morning, and all you do is think of totally useless things to do with your life. And here in the directive capacity is hardness. If God says, "No, please don't do that," you respond with rock-like resistance. He says, "No, that's not a good move. I don't want you to do that." But you have rock-like resistance. He says, "Here's what I wish you would do. Cast yourself upon Me. Launch out with Me on this." But you have rock-like resistance. This refers to a calloused condition, and a lack of sensitivity of the heart – of the decision-making capacity in your life.

The Christian is spiritually ignorant because of his calloused mental attitude toward God. This is the basic cause for the destruction of the believer's spiritual maturity structure. He just becomes hard, and literally mean, toward God Himself in his resistance. The directive mind capacity is totally out of touch.

So here's the summary of what we have seen in these verses. How do you get a hardness upon the heart? And remember that you don't wake up with a callous overnight, do you? The callous is a result of layer upon layer of resistance. You're resisting something.

When I used to play a baritone horn in high school, I was first chair of baritone, so I had to do a lot of playing. I was in the second largest high school in the city of Chicago – 90 to 100 pieces in that band, and about three or four baritones down the line. It was a big organization. And you had to put your finger through a ring. And, gradually, between practicing at home, and playing, this whole right thumb became larger and larger, with a large bump here, as hard as a rock. It was a callous. And it kept building up and building up. Every time it was rubbing against the ring of that support, the thing got harder and harder. Now, obviously, it's gone now. But it had to be peeled off a layer at a time, over a period of time.

Well, this is what happens. You get this callous. It begins with that negative volition here in the perceptive mind where you've been taught. You don't like what you heard from the pastor-teacher, especially if you've heard some television evangelist who's got a different idea. Then you prefer that. And you're not enough of a student of the Word of God, and mature enough to say, "Well, I'll set that on the back burner until I see how this evolves, and make my decision." But the next thing from that negative volition is it creates an emptiness in your mind. You create an emptiness of divine viewpoint. A spiritual vacuum begins to build up. You have less and less divine viewpoint. So, in comes the drawing in of false doctrine and human viewpoint into the mentality of the soul in order to fill it. This is the "nous" N O U S part of the thinking. Now the vacuum has done its work. All kinds of misconceptions are there. These false concepts then gradually created darkness in terms of spiritual things.

You have nothing in the human spirit. You have nothing to move over to your directive mind to give you guidance except what is wrong. You have a total blackout. You have no godly expression now in the facets of your soul. There's no divine viewpoint guidance from the Holy Spirit. The only guidance you're getting is from the sin nature. The mind then becomes alienated from God's way of life because of the spiritual ignorance resulting in callouses on the soul. And you're not only hardened in your mind, but you are also hardened in your emotions toward God. And you're hardened in your will. You will not do God's way. You will not yield. You know better, especially if you consult your other unsaved friends. They're such good guidance to you.

Then what happens? You lose touch with all reality. You're driven by the world; you're driven by the old sin nature in you; and, you're driven by the devil. Now, those of you who are really on the ball using your spiritual gifts for God, I'm going to tell you right now – you're a high priority target for the devil. If there's anything he wants you to do, it is to stop using your spiritual gifts. And that's a dangerous first step down the slippery slope. You go negative toward the only reason that you're breathing. The only reason that you're still breathing is to use your spiritual gift. And because God is still indicating that there's a chance for you to change your mind, and to start using your spiritual gift. If you don't, He'll jerk you out. And I'll be there to say a few appropriate words as we send you to the big congregation in the sky.

This is serious business – that the devil wants you to bring you into this kind of darkness. And that's why we have this splendid description of what unsaved people are like. The Spirit of God says, "Child of God, don't do that. Don't become like that." Once you are an esteemed and lighted child of God, you are a great blessing and a great inspiration to fellow believers. But then you have become a spiritually benighted believer to be pitied because you have fallen from grace.

Then there are the consequences of this condition we built up – these layers of resistance that have created this terrible callous. He goes on with the consequence in the verses which follow. And you don't think that Ephesians 4:19 could ever possibly apply to you. Oh, how I wish I could give you the life living examples, but too many of you still know those people, so I can't do that. But the result of a calloused lifestyle – we look at that next time.

Dear God, we do thank You for the enlightenment of Your Word, and for the instruction which we have received.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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