***The Spiritual Maturity Structure  
  
Colossians 1:21-23  
  
COL-165***

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Our subject is "Reconciliation of the Colossians," segment number ten in Colossians 1:21-23.

As we indicated this morning, Satan is no friend of any Christian, because Christians are enemies of the devil, and the devil is the archenemy of our God. Any Christian, therefore, who lives a life separated from the lifestyle of Satan's world system, and separated unto the will of God as His servant, is under a priority attack of Satan and his demons. Unfortunately, sometimes I have observed that Christians resent believers who decided to be all out for Jesus Christ. They are sold out to the life of the will of God. Therefore, they live and they breathe the Word of God and the service of God. And that, I notice, becomes an irritant, for some reason, to some people.

Any Christian is free to live his life as for his own choosing. That's the greatest way. But God's way is for us to live that life separated from the world, but at the same time, a second separation unto the will of God. The focus of attack by Satan against the believer who is dedicated to the will of God, and who is a pilgrim in this world, is the mentality of his soul. A spiritually disoriented mentality enables the devil to control the other two facets of the soul; namely, the emotions and the volition. The believer's soul is controlled by either the Holy Spirit or by the old sin nature.

This is what produces either a spiritual Christian: one who is filled with the Spirit, because the Spirit of God is directing his life (he is in temporal fellowship, with all known sins confessed); or, else it is controlled by the sin nature because that believer is out of step with the Lord, and he is living a carnal life under the direction of the sin nature. Satan's attacks against the believer's soul is designed, of course, to neutralize the Christian's spiritual life, and to incapacitate him physically. That is the whole objective of the devil's operation: to silence the believer; and, to make life physically hard on him. The apostle Paul is a classic example of this: how many things he experienced simply to silence his testimony; and, how many things physically he suffered in the process of that attempt on the part of Satan.

The sole condition of the unbeliever and of the carnal Christian is detailed for us in Ephesians 4:17. We have been following this passage, which is a broader expansion of what the apostle Paul is talking about in Colossians 1:21. The condition of the unbeliever is, first of all, that he has a futile or empty mind, because that mind is devoid of Bible doctrine, divine-viewpoint guidance. The mind which is devoid of divine viewpoint perspective creates a low pressure condition spiritually, which is then filled by human viewpoint values and principles from the sin nature. These are concepts which come from the evil age in which we live. Negligence of attending the feeding upon the Word of God personally and with the expository preaching instruction in the local church ministry, which provides that divine viewpoint, will create a mental vacuum in the mind of the Christian.

The mind which is empty of divine viewpoint will always fill up with Satan's world system of human viewpoint beliefs; the values of the world; the false doctrines of the world; and, the religions of the world. The mind which is empty of God's divine viewpoint truth will be filled with the human viewpoint of Satan. This results in a condition where we have seen that the apostle says, "The person's understanding of spiritual things is darkened." He has an inability, then, to think through spiritual matters relative to God's truth.

Please remember that this is the normal state of the unbeliever. This is also the accepted (the chosen) state of the believer who is out of fellowship. What happens then in this mental darkness is that there is a groping about in the dark for answers about life. The mind is clouded with human viewpoints which are drawn in from the world. And the emptiness that's there, which has been created by an absence of doctrine, is filled by Satan's viewpoints.

A major impact of this darkened understanding is the incapacity of love for God; love for spouse; and, love for friends. And when love is undermined, then the whole structure of life comes apart. This is the key feature that God has built into human relationships: this mental attitude love. This is a condition which is self-imposed by a believer who absents himself from the pastor-teacher instruction. Or, if he is there, he is negative to it. The result will be the same. And, in the tense, that we pointed out to you in the Greek, when you go negative, the results aren't just bingo – then they go on from then on until the thing is reversed.

Negative volition expression of accusing the teacher of reading things into doctrine is another thing I want to alert you to. I told you how the cover-up word for non-doctrinal instructing pulpits is making a lot of the word "Jesus," and a lot of the person of Christ. And there is certainly nothing wrong with doing that, but it is a technique to play touchy-feely religion so that people can be bestirred emotionally, and left completely at the mercy of Satan because of the darkened mentality of their souls.

So, negative volition often in Christians, I've also noticed, is that they will say that the pastor-teacher is reading something into a text. I was told that recently, and I thought I was right on-track with what the text said. So, I sat down, and I researched it, and sure enough, it was just exactly that way. The Word of God is very clear, but it is interesting that the negative Christian who is hearing something that conflicts with what that person wants to do in life accuses the teacher of reading into the text what isn't there.

Well, when the mind is darkened, that is a condition of spiritual disorientation; a condition of frustration; and, a condition where the person is miserable. And they will do all kinds of things to defend themselves, in saying, "Well, he's misapplying the Scripture, or he's reading something into it that isn't there. This kind of a mind attaches itself to pseudo causes, and to pseudo persons, and it actually deserts the true objects of their love; the true objects of their loyalty; and, the true mission that God has for them.

Now, this would be true in any area of life. Christian, whose mind is darkened because of the resistance to the Word of God or the lack of instruction – that person is going to go to false theology. He will go to false politics. He will go to false social matters and relationships. He will go to false economic concepts. He will certainly go to false religion, and he will go to a false educational system. And that is very prominent in colleges today. Many of the great universities with the great reputations are total cesspools of evil and of disorientation for the simple reason that these people have minds which are blocked from God's frame of reference.

These people, who have darkened minds, also will choose to follow the false man or woman in marriage. They'll choose the false pastor-teacher. They'll choose the false church. They'll choose false friends. They'll choose false causes to support. They will pursue false goals. They'll have false values. And certainly, they'll have false doctrine. This is not uncommon among Christians. And the worst part about it is that all that choosing of the wrong, in place of what God's right is, is done with the utmost sincerity – Christians are just as sincere as they can be, and just as sure as anything that they are on track. But how do they know. They don't? The average person who has no instruction in the Word of God does not know what he's being denied, and what he's being robbed of.

Those of you who have instruction, you're able to make that judgment. Nobody's going to fool you with touchy-feely instruction and emotional manipulation. You're wise to that game of the devil. But if you haven't been instructed in the words, you'd be as vulnerable to that as anyone else. These people feel very deeply about these pseudo objects to which they devote themselves. And such a Christian is nice, but all he is, is nothing more than a reformed unbeliever in his lifestyle. A good moral unbeliever will do all these things.

So, the progression is very serious. First there is emptiness of divine viewpoint in the mind. The result from that is that the understanding is darkened on morality and the issues of life. Stepping up from that, the next thing that happens is that there is an exclusion (Ephesians 4:18) – being darkened in their understanding, and excluded from the life of God. I remind you again that the apostle Paul puts this in a teaching order. He says, "Excluded from the life of God." Then he uses the word "because" – how come we got excluded from the life of God? Well, it was because of the ignorance that is in them. And how come we had the ignorance in them? It was because of the hardness of their heart.

So, I'm putting it in the logical order, where he put it in teaching order, because the next thing that happens, after the mind is darkened, there's a hardness toward God (an enmity). That results in spiritual ignorance, which will characterize the mind. And that results in exclusion from the lifestyle of God. So, we're up here at this one right now in the order in which he is teaching it: "Being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the mind of God. What this means is to be estranged from the ultimate source of your soul, the mind of God.

This Greek word is in the perfect tense, which tells us again that this begins at that point when you go negative to the Word of God, or you neglect feeding upon it. Therefore, true interpretation, and true application of the Word of God begins at that point, and it keeps going, and it keeps getting worse. It is in the passive voice, which means that you don't have to do anything but just be negligent about the Word. And this will happen to you automatically. There will be a blackout as a consequence.

What this pictures is a believer who is so spiritually disoriented in his soul that he's actually estranged from his heavenly Father. This is a big problem for people when they find, on a human level, that they don't have good relationships with their father. In fact, it's a very serious problem. One of the clear causes of homosexuality is that some boy grows up without a clear image of what it means to be male, and what it means to be a man, because someplace in the picture you have a father who, for some reason, is out of the picture, and is not carrying the role model that is required of him.

**Life**

However, to be out of step and estranged from your heavenly Father – that is unthinkable. Yet that is exactly what the result is for the Christian. His heavenly Father is a stranger to him. In what respect? In respect to the life of God. This Greek word for life is "zoe." "Zoe" means life as a principle, not just experiences of life. It means all that a Christian possesses in God. This is not viewing life in its. It is what life actually is in God. It views the life that was received at salvation, and that is the life of God.

**The Spiritual Maturity Structure**

And that life is what is expressed in the spiritual maturity structure of the soul. This life of God in us, as believers, is the life that we carry in the midst of the angelic warfare. It is the spiritual maturity structure that is developed in the soul. It means that we are oriented to the principle of grace. It means that we have a mastery of details of life – money and things don't control us. We control them. It means that God gives us a capacity to have mental attitude love. It means that God gives us a relaxed mental attitude, which means we have an ability to have a "phileo" rapport love with one another. And it also means that it supplies us with the quality of inner happiness, which is not dependent on people or circumstances or things. That is the objective of the Christian life: to build the spiritual maturity structure in the soul. And that is done as the result of the Word of God.

. . . Here's what we're talking about. As Bible doctrine is stored in the human spirit, it becomes "epignosis" knowledge. From your instruction, and your positive acceptance of it, then comes this spiritual edification. This is described in Ephesians 4:12, Ephesians 4:16, and Ephesians 4:29. And 2 Corinthians 12:10 particularly uses words which describe these five qualities that make up the pentagon of spiritual maturity. And it begins with grace orientation. That is a very difficult first step in growing up spiritually.

**Grace Orientation**

Most church people do not understand grace orientation. They have never grasped the principle of grace. When they don't grasp the principle grace, that's why they think that they can lose their salvation again, because they think that, somehow, what has happened is what they have done.

Bob Evans, this morning, who is one of our witnesses and Bible student par excellence here at Berean Church, told me that he was speaking to a man – a man who is in a religious group, a denominational men. And this man was taking issue with the fact that faith in Christ secures salvation once and for all. And the man said, "What you have to do is to believe, and believing is a constant operation. If you stop believing, you're going to be lost." Well, first of all, when Paul said to the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," the Greek tells us what kind of belief. And it's in what's called the aorist tense. And that meant "once for all." Bingo! It's done. Other Scriptures speaking about belief use the perfect tense. You do it, and that tense says that it goes on forever. So, the Greek tense – if the man had known anything about Greek, he would not have made such a stupid statement, that believing is something that you have to keep cranking up, and keep going, all together, constantly yourself, so that you will remain saved.

Then there is the fact that the apostle Paul says, "Even though we deny Him, He cannot deny us," speaking of Christ. "Even though we deny Him" – "I don't believe in Christ anymore. I quit believing in all of this religious stuff," and yet the person was genuinely born again. He genuinely trusted, at some point, in Christ as Savior, and was born again spiritually. You can't undo a birth. And even though the person says, "I'm denying Christ now" – "Though we deny Him, He cannot deny us."

Do you know what that is saying? It says that Christ is going to take you kicking and screaming into heaven. Period. You can't reverse it. Now, isn't it nice to know a little bit of basic doctrine, and a little bit of the language, so that you know what's going on, so that you're not a victim of that kind of thing? Grace orientation – that's the word. That's where it all starts. That's the whole basis of the foundation of this structure.

**Super Grace**

Then there's that inner happiness; a relaxed mental attitude; the capacity to love; and, the mastery of the details of life. And what do you have? Then you get to what James calls "super abundant grace living" – super grace maturity. That is the objective of the Christian life. You can have this, and you can tear it all down almost overnight. How? By doing this: by allowing the sin nature to come into the life, and to begin doing its destructive work in your life as a Christian.

"Being darkened in their understanding, they were excluded from the life of God, as represented by that spiritual maturity structure, because of something. They were alienated from God's life as represented in the spiritual maturity structure. And what results from that is that they become very subjective in their thinking. A Christian's reception of the Word of God depends on how the communicator strikes him. You have these Christians who receive the Word of God on the basis of subjective decisions. They don't like to listen to some preacher who stands up there, wears a dark suit, and a Rush Limbaugh tie. That is obviously not a man of God. He wears dark socks and black shoes. To them, that is not a godly picture. So, they don't like his dress. They don't like his mannerisms. They don't like his speech. They don't like his jokes. They don't like the way he phrases things. And he keeps coming to the place where he quits preaching, and starts butting into their sacred cows, stepping on their toes. And he hits their sacred cows.

One time, one of our good friends from Brigade was here, many years ago, and we were talking about some of the problems that are faced in youth work, and what we are doing about them. And after a while he said, "John, you've just knocked over some of my idols, because some of the very things about which I said: "This was not the way to do, and it causes problems," were the way that he thought was the way it should be done.

So, some people can't be taught. And they pass the preacher off, as I said, as someone who's reading into the Scripture what he wants it to mean, when they don't like what they're hearing. And when somebody does that, I just say to them, "There's the Scripture. You tell me what it means. Just read it." And that really gets them hung up. When these people are subjective because their minds are darkened to the life that is in God, and they don't like the ways and the personality of the communicator, that is not the issue. The only issue is the message. If the devil himself were here tonight, and some people think that he is, perhaps – doing the preaching, when he spoke, it's the truth. It's still the truth, no matter who says it; what your impression is of it; or, whether you like him or don't like him – it's still the truth. And you have to be very careful of that.

There are a lot of yo-yos out in the religious world. I listen to them. I read their writings. And I always ferret out when they're playing yo-yo. But I don't dismiss when they have a good idea – a point of truth, or a thing that is biblically compatible. That's the nature of a Berean – to be receptive to the truth, and confirm it with Scripture.

Usually these people that I know that some of these resistant Christians are so devoted to, are people they've never met. They may have seen him on TV, or they've read their books, and they're devotees of these preachers. They don't know a thing about them. And they are not aware of the fact that these preachers will speak in loopholes, and thereby, they're able to create a following by pleasing people. And as I said, the name of Jesus is one of the ways that they do that, to cover up the fact that they're not explaining the Bible.

No communicator of the Word of God is a worthy person. So, don't put him up on a pedestal. None of them are worthy of it. But that's not the thing. It is whether their message is of God. That's what is worthy.

Now, we like the communicator to have his own gravitas and dignity, and be compatible, and practice what he preaches. But that does not affect what is true. The communicator of the Word is never worthy, but his message of the Word of God – that is what's worthy.

The problem with being a subjective Christian is that then you fall back on your feelings and your experiences. Then the emotions govern the mind. Then you're looking for the excitement of the moment for you to engage in, in something that you think is spiritual. And when you do that, the mind is closed off.

When I watch "Wheel of Fortune," I have some very terribly agonizing times. And it's fun to analyze the people when they introduce them. Some people get up there and are very serious. They know that they're lucky to have been chosen for that show. They can make some really big money, and they're there for business. Others come in and they're just a bunch of yo-yos, and they're just so excited. And they're yelling, "Big money," and they're clapping their hands and getting all excited. So, they get a big number up on the board, and they get all excited: "A big number! They haven't even got a letter to know if they're going to get that amount. But right away, I tell Mrs. Danish: "This one's out. They're going to blow it." This one is not going to make it, because they're all excited. Their minds are disjointed from the seriousness of the moment. Whereas, some other guy stands up there, and he's watching that board, and he's thinking of the letters, and he's thinking through.

A lady yesterday, just to spoil supper for me – I mean, she had like two or three letters left. The whole thing was there. And she hits the jackpot. The thing was over $10,000. And all she had to do was get that one letter. I forget what the whole phrase was, but any one of you, even the low IQ ones her would have gotten it. You could have seen what this was. But she was giggly-goo-goo all the time, through the whole thing. And her mind was detached, and she blew it. So, the next person finishes it off. But this person was all very sober. So, in life, that's how it works. If you're going to detach yourself from the mind, then there's no control over emotions. And there's no control over the choices you make.

So, the subjective Christian will view his experiences as a greater guide to the mind of God than he does the Word of God. He has contempt for instruction, because that person is so confident that they are significant. What they do is that they pursue an orgy of stimulating their emotions, and then they call it a great blessing from the Lord. These people who like to operate on the emotional level, too, are those (and this includes religious leaders) who have no dignity when it comes to their personal shortcomings, that they should recognize that they have. And nothing is so tragic as somebody who wants to hang out his dirty laundry for everybody to see – this public confession.

Often there will be somebody who's making an impact spiritually in the Christian community. And all of a sudden, this person thinks that he's going to inspire somebody by telling him about his personal sins, or his past experience of breaking the laws of God, which have nothing to do with anybody else, and it's nobody else's business, except that person's and God's. Well, right away, I know that that person does not understand the doctrine of the privacy of the priesthood of the believer. How dare you get up and pollute the minds of other Christians with your sins? We have enough of our own to do that for us. We don't need you to get up and pollute our minds with all the bad things you can do.

What causes this is become a Christian, whose mind has been darkened, because he has been excluded from the life of God, he doesn't think like God. And when he doesn't think like God, he doesn't act like, and he doesn't have the emotions of God. And what he is, is a sitting duck for the sin nature. And the sin nature always manipulates the emotions. So, you have this sad picture of people who become actually grotesque, and they're so subjective in what they believe to be the truth. They know what God thinks. They're very self-righteous, and they're very pleased to analyze their abilities and their dedication of service.

These people, who are so subjective because their minds (their understanding) are thinking things through that they're groping in the darkness spiritually. They're excluded from the life that constitute the spiritual life in God. These people are dominated emotionally, so, they have great yearning for happiness. They're always searching. They're always trying something to get happy. And all of this is because they failed at point number one. They had an emptiness in their mind. And they did not fill it with doctrine. They let the world's principals come in, and bring in the darkness with it.

So, these people have a frantic running around searching for happiness while they're alienated from the life of God. What does this do? This inevitably leads them to pursuing the details of life. They're after money; they're after possessions; they're after fame; they're after power; they're after notoriety; they're after standing in the community; they're after ambitions; or, they're after influence – everything that's not worth a thing. They inevitably go after those details of life when they have detached themselves from a mind that is enlightened with doctrine. And when they do this, that intensifies their isolation from the Word of God. And as their apostasy deepens, the hardness on their soul (which is what Satan is after) becomes worse.

The life of God – and why is that? Because of the ignorance that is in them. Here again, he's doing this in a teaching order – telling you why it is that these people are excluded from the spiritual maturity life of God. First of all, it is because of the ignorance that is in them. This ignorance is the Greek word "agnoia," which means "no knowledge," or "no information," or, "no doctrinal instruction." So, they are ignorant. And this is an active-voice word. They choose to be ignorant. They choose not to be taught the Word of God. And the reason for this ignorance of the Word of God is because of the hardness of their heart. And he comes up. The mind is hardened. That creates an ignorance, and that excludes them from the life of God. This is the logical progression. The mind is empty, by nature of God's point of view, when it is not filled with doctrine. The understanding is darkened on issues of morality and conduct. Then the mind becomes hardened toward God. You have an enmity toward Him. He's your enemy. Then you have real spiritual ignorance.

Do you remember what it says in Romans 1? People thumb their nose at God from the information they had. They didn't want to know Him. They didn't want to be subjected to Him. So, what did God do? He let them go. He abandoned them to their spiritual ignorance so that that characterized their minds. And the result was that they were completely excluded, in Romans 1, from anything that characterized the life in God.

This word "hardness" is the Greek word "porosis," and it means a callous, like you get someplace on your body, from something rubbing and rubbing, and building up layers of hardness. Here, this hardness is of the heart, and that refers to the mind. Now we have the mentality of the soul hardened. 1 Chronicles 29:18 speaks about the mentality of the soul as the heart. And what happens is a hardness (a blackout), resulting in ignorance built up on the soul toward God, so that there is now a hardness (a callousness) toward your heavenly Father. Your mind is jaded; your emotions are hard; and, your will is hard toward God. And a chain reaction has now taken place.

It goes like this: You hear doctrinal truth instructed, and you go negative to it. Or you stay home, and you say, "It's not important. I don't need to be there." Hardly a service goes by. It happened this morning. One man said, "Why did you decide to speak about the structure of the soul and its influence on the spiritual life?" And I said, "Well, just because Colossians 1:21 deals with that, but Ephesians 4 deals with it in greater detail. And it explained the Colossian passage." He said, "Well, you couldn't have been on a better subject because of the questions that I have had, and my wife has had. And you've answered them again. And almost every service you hit the thing we need to know." Well, it's the Spirit of God that's putting things together, and bringing people at a point in time with the answers, again. Wouldn't it have been tragic had he not been here, and if he had stayed home this morning? That would have been a great tragedy. God is here, getting ready to clarify things for him, and he could have been sitting at home.

You hear doctrinal truth taught, and you go negative to it, or you're not here. You enter, then, a state of carnality, and the flow of divine viewpoint to the mind is shut off, resulting in an emptiness of the mind. A spiritual vacuum develops. Then hardness develops on the facets of the soul, so that you become insensitive to God in the mind; the will; and, the emotions. False doctrine and human viewpoint are drawn into the mind. So, the result is that there's a darkening (a clouding) of the mind from God's life. And the Christian is completely alienated from the spiritual maturity structure of life in God, because of ignorance that has been developed in the soul.

Now, this is information that is extremely important to young people. You're not going to lead young people to moral purity by telling them that they should maintain sexual morality. You can say that to them, but society says that their parents, and their preachers, and their Sunday school teachers, and their club leaders are all wrong. Society is going to say to them that the Bible is just a book which was written by men who express, in their time, what they thought were good principles to live by. They deny that it is God-breathed, and that, therefore, it is the official statement of God. And people now comfort themselves with doing what we considered once horrendous evil, because the Bible has been disconnected from divine authority.

So, when young people go astray, and they break the rules of God, it is because the Bible has become a book of indifference to them, if not contempt. It is because they have followed this pattern that has built the callous upon their soul. They went right up the line, and here is all the hardness that now develops. And when that callous is there, it expresses itself in a variety of ways. For some of the ways, there will be a layer where the person is now very indifferent to the Word of God, and very cool to our doctrine.

Look at all the people who are sitting home tonight. I'll guarantee you that those people could have been here – a lot of them. They didn't have to be at home. They just chose to be at home. Why? There is a little problem in the soul already. And if they're willing to admit it to themselves, they would say, "Here's a coolness toward the Word of God – the first sign of hardness in my soul." They'll be indifferent to prayer. Not only will they not particularly care about coming to prayer meeting. But I mean, even in our prayer meeting, you don't even have to pray. We make it very clear that you can just come and sit in the group. But your presence is enormously important to us. And I constantly stress to our prayer leader: "Don't say, 'OK, Jim, you lead in prayer first, and we'll go around the circle.'" You don't even have to pray, but your presence is important. But the personal prayer is what's even worse.

God says, "Pray without ceasing – every day." Now, each of you can examine yourself. How many times during the day are you about to do something, and you stop and ask for divine-power, guidance enablement? It should be all the time. There's hardly anything you can do in life that, throughout the whole day, you're not turning to God for the guidance, the wisdom, and the enablement.

So, that layer of the hardness comes there. Then there's resistance with your offerings. Some people cannot wait to give to some cause of the Lord's work that they have the means to be able to meet. They cannot wait to do it. There's an enormous drive and an enormous joy. And after you've done that a while, you have a pleasant surprise. You discover that you give it to God, and He turns right around, and He reimburses you in one way or another, let alone the eternal reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Now, you can't beat that. That's a very good deal. And that's how He operates.

However, when you're crazy, because of this condition of hardness that is developed upon the facets of your soul, you won't even think about bringing an offering. You won't even think about saying, "Well, listen. This is what I've earned this week. This is what I need. This is what I want to give to the Lord." And people who don't think about this (who have this problem) are very sloppy with their finances.

Not too long ago, we had a condition in the academy – a family that was checking out going to the public school. We're always concerned for that. We want to know: "Can we help you?" Sometimes we can help people make it over a tough point financially. But in this particular case, the father and mother were both full-time workers, with two late-model cars, and a big trip to California, and all kinds of things – accouterments of life that they had. And that was their life. There was this hardness. Their offerings were not going. I don't know where they're going to church. But even the offering to pay for their child's time at Berean Academy was being put aside, and they were going to go to the public school. Now, I'm sure that they probably were up to their eyeballs in indebtedness, because they had taken on so much debt that everything they earned had to go out to pay for it. That's what happens when you're hard toward God.

Also, you evade Christian service. You're not out there saying, "Here I am, Lord. I'm waking up this morning." Somebody got mad when I said this morning: "Some people just can't wait to read the Dallas Morning News (the paper), to see what Minyard's and Kroger are doing, and to rush off tomorrow morning to buy those 20-cents-a-pound bananas, because some people do just exactly that. That's their life. And here they could be concerned with: "What can I do to serve God today?" Jack Smith makes some people mad (our friend in Kentucky), because his life is walking Christ in him, the hope of glory. And his day begins: "Sir, what is your mission for me this day?" And then the Lord guides him, and he makes Christians nervous. They like to say that he shouldn't be making them feel so uncomfortable. Well, he's not trying to do that. All he's doing is saying that this is his life. And when your life is Christ in me, the hope of glory, and that is my focus, it makes a very big difference. You will not be out there evading Christian service. You will be on the line.

These people are, of course, always out of temporal fellowship because of the calluses. They are emotionally dominated in their souls, and they are the ones (you can count on it) that will go into the immoral lifestyle.

Now, this is what a young person has to know: that this is what can happen to him. This is the progression. Don't go telling him that he should be good. They don't even know what it is to be good today. The only protection any of us have is saturation of our minds with the thinking of God in the Word of God. So, our youth have to be alerted to the danger of negative responses to biblical teaching, from their parents and their leaders. You should not teach your young people that anything can be substituted for church service, or that anything can be substituted for being at the Berean Youth Clubs, or that anything can be substituted for the church activities or the campouts. That is a bad thing to teach them. And I'm right about this. Their life should be focused in the things of God. And nothing else gets greater priority. And I don't care if they're the star on some athletic team. When it comes to Berean Youth Club campouts, that's what they go on. And the organization will have to understand that – that God gets priority.

It's amazing how parents actually think that something is more important for their sons and daughters than to be here in the instruction of the Word of God. Well, go ahead and do it. This is what you'll create. You'll create this kind of a callous on them. They'll become very comfortable. And then you'll wonder, eventually, why in the world they're up here expressing this layer of the callous (the immoral lifestyle). It's inevitable. A youth program which lacks a solid doctrinal instruction, and instruction on this callous-of-the-soul principle is nothing but a fun-and-delusion program. And God always has to protect us from getting into a fun-and-delusion program when it comes to youth. A youth who is negative to the Word of God is very subject to illicit, immoral conduct, both in his mind and overtly. A youth who is lacking the personal dignity that only doctrine can give him, will love the world. He will give spiritual things second place every time. School things will come before God's things. Activities of fun and recreation will take precedence over service to the Lord. They will treat Jesus Christ as a cool-cat, good-ole-boy clown. And they will get very emotional over Him. But they'll be the patsies (the sitting ducks) of Satan.

So, this is the life that God has called us to – a life of victory, and not this kind of a life of hardness against Him: "This I say, therefore, and affirm together with the Lord." Paul says, "I am His agent. I am communicating. And God and I are saying this to you: that you walk no longer, just as the gentiles also walk." Don't live as if you were still an unsaved person: "in the emptiness of their minds." That means being devoid of divine viewpoint: "being darkened in their understanding." So, they're groping around in life, trying to find divine orientation, and excluded from the life of God – that wonderful life with five facets of spiritual maturity that bring us to super-grace living. And when you're at super-grace living, remember that what you have built with the spiritual maturity structure of the soul is a container. And that is what God is going to fill, so that you will say, with the psalmist: "My cup runneth over."

Don't expect great blessing from God: physically; emotionally; morally; or, in any respect, overflowing, until you've built the container that He can pour it in. That's what it takes – the life-of-God, spiritual maturity structure. And because of the ignorance that is in them, such that they are no different in their thinking than the world, because of the hardness of their heart (the hardness of their mind). The mind is hard, and therefore, the result is that emotions are hard, and the will is hard.

Next time, we will pick up the sobering first phrase of verse 19: "They became calloused" – having become calloused – this condition having developed. And maybe you were guilty of helping your kids develop this condition of their soul. Well, there's a consequence. And then he tells us the horrible consequences that are going to follow the calloused soul. As night will follows day, this will follow. And he will walk us through those steps that are the result of spiritual insensitivity.

God's way is the best way. God's way has made it possible for us always to be soft-skinned toward Him, and never calloused.

Father, we thank You for our time this day in the Word of God, and we pray that You will help us to esteem what we have heard. These things that are dealing with the spiritual part of our beings (our souls and our human spirits) are sometimes not so easy for us to grasp. But we pray that You will help us with our diagrams, and the specific statements of the Word of God to be able to get the picture of what is involved in walking with God. Since time immemorial, there have been men from the time of Enoch who understood this principle of the structure of the soul, and of avoiding callousness toward it. Enoch was a man that knew how to live the life of God. There was no darkness in his mind. There was no disorientation. There was no enamorment with the world. And he was a man that You loved so much that You took him alive into heaven without dying.

We recognize that even a man like King David, who was not always a man who walked with a sensitive soul, but who permitted his own soul to become hardened, so that he fell into some very grievous sins as a consequence. Yet, he turned around and followed the road back to peeling those callouses off his soul, so that You could describe him as a man after Your own heart.

We pray, our Father, that each of us tonight would be a man and woman, or a young person, after the heart of God. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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