***The Christian Lifestyle

Colossians 1:21-23

COL-172***

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Our subject is "Reconciliation of the Colossians," number 17 in Colossians 1:21-23.

Sometimes I wonder how many people have had the experience of saying, "I just wish I had listened to Dr. Danish. I just wish that I hadn't blown him off. I just wish that I hadn't elevated my friends at school above him. I just wish that I hadn't gone along with my parents in their negative attitudes. I just wish that the bottom line had been Christ, and my eyes on Him, and God, My Father, and what He has to say." That's the way it should be. The communicator is irrelevant. He's merely a cog in the great wheel of God. I suspect there are going to be a lot of people in eternity that are going to look back and say, "I just wish I had not followed Israel's attitude of being stiff-necked and hardheaded, and refusing to be subject to the Word of God." The Proverbs speaks about the horse and the mule that cannot be led unless you put a bit in his mouth, and jerk it around, and make it experience pain until it pays attention to do right. And how many Christians cannot do right unless they have the bit in their mouth, jerking them around, so that they experience pain? There are going to be a lot of them like that, because the Word of God is alive; it's powerful; and, it's active, and it never returns void. It never returns without its effects, either positive or negative, in your attitude.

Now, the Colossian Christians had been carefully taught doctrinal principles by one of Paul's associates following their salvation. He himself had never been to this church. The contrast between their sage and unsaved lifestyle was the contrast comparable to day and night – a dramatic difference. The Colossians believers were now God's friends, and therefore, they were not at peace with Him rather than in enmity. The Colossians had been reconciled to God's character standard of absolute righteousness. They were no longer adjusted to Satan's evil, unrighteousness characters.

Paul's concern, however, was that these reconciled believers not revert back to the level of the lifestyle of the world system through which they were moving. That is always the problem. It's an occupational hazard of the Christian life that all of us must face and be aware of.

The consequences of revisionism are explained to us, as we've been studying, in Ephesians 4:17-19. The Christian in revisionism becomes calloused, we have seen, in his soul, toward God, and unfaithful to the Lord Jesus Christ in personal morality, and in his service to God. Life for the reversionistic Christian is all turned upside down. Everything is backwards; it's ugly; and, it's pointless.

Ephesians 4:20-24 now tell us how to get back out of revisionism if we have fallen into that trap – the road back to spiritual super-grace maturity. In verse 20, Paul points out that he did not teach the Ephesians the doctrinal principles of the Christian life in order for them to degenerate spiritually. The counseling and the discipling for Christian living that he gave them, and for serving, is what is today given in the local church services by the pastor-teacher through expository preaching. The system is exactly the same. They had nothing in the New Testament times that we don't have today. The only thing is that we have it perhaps better in some respects, because we have so much wider outreach of communication. The only way those people, in the early church, survived is they knew the Word of God, and they were receptive to it.

Christians, we have seen, are to encourage each other in the study of the Word of God, and in obedience to that Word in their lives. The Ephesian Christians were present when the assembly gathered together for instruction in that Word. When it came time to feed on the mind of God, they were there to do it. And we have seen that they listened; they secured the knowledge of a doctrinal principle; and, they understood it, because the Holy Spirit made it clear to them. Now, what they would do with it was another question. At this point, they had it there. They might use it, and they might throw it out. And at this point in the church service is when people clam-up toward God, and they refuse to go with the truth that they've been given. But these Ephesian Christians did not do that. They were receptive to the Word of God, and they went positive. Therefore, the truth was stored in their human spirit as full knowledge, which is now usable knowledge. You cannot live the Christian life by mere knowledge. That "gnosis" knowledge will not get you anywhere. That is only a basis for creating pride in people. But it is not usable. The usable knowledge is that to which you have said, "God, you're right. Amen. I accept it." Now you have "epignosis." And this structure is built in the local church services, but your own personal reading of the Word of God and study builds and expands this reservoir of knowledge. There's no end of that throughout your whole life.

It is from here that the information is given up to the directive capacity of your mind, which makes decisions for your emotions, and for your volition in spiritual and in secular things.

The divine viewpoint of the Lord Jesus Christ is the mind of God that is received by the believer as the commandments of Christ. The Christian who, under the filling of the Holy Spirit, has taken his knowledge and converted it to full knowledge of doctrine, has that standing by, to be cycled up to his mind, so that this Christian is not dominated by his emotions, and this Christian is not making choices that are disastrous? That's no small thing.

I recently heard about a disastrous experience of a Christian. It was a horrendous, disastrous experience that has come into the life. And it was because of a decision to fight the government on a legal basis, on a legal situation that was onerous, and that nobody likes, but has now brought enormous, terrible consequences in the life. And what for? A voice is silenced.

Many years ago, we had a man. He was a terrific man. He was a great influence among us. He was a great cause for good. He got off into this human viewpoint frame of reference of doing things. And the result was that he had to abandon all public associations. What does he have? He has a silenced voice. How could that happen? Stupid decisions – a volition which God the Holy Spirit was not leading. That's all. You have a mind which was making decisions, and the Holy Spirit was not giving doctrinal principles up to guide that decision. Oh, he was doing it. But those Christians were turning their backs, shutting the minds, and saying "No." So, they short circuited the system. Then instead of the Spirit of God guiding their volitional decisions that they were making, the sin nature did. And the result is to be blown out of the water. It's one of the easiest ways for Satan to silence a believer.

This business of not letting your emotions run amuck, and this business of not letting your volition be guided by the emotions of the moment, is an extremely important consequence of the Christian life. It can have terrible consequences spiritually, but it can have consequences in every aspect of your life.

So, the road back to super-grace – the Christian has the condition, in effect, to be able to gradually remove those callouses from the soul, and to become tender toward the Lord Jesus Christ once more. Verse 22 speaks about the unsafe lifestyle. This is from whence we have come. This was the problem. We went back to it: "That in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit." "The former manner of life" means the way you were before salvation. This is the designation for the sin nature dominating the soul, and governing the emotions and the will. The unbeliever is subject to the sin nature lusts. But the believer can reject those patterns of the sin nature. He does not have to be in subjection to that sin nature.

This is what is pointed out to us by the apostle Paul in Romans 6:11-14: "Even so, consider yourself to be dead to the sin nature (sin in the singular), but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let the sin nature reign in your mortal body, that you should obey its lusts. Now, the reason we're being told that is because it *can* reign in your mortal body. The sin nature can take over. The sin nature can run things. And it is the Christians who are not taught doctrine that do not understand that this dangerous thing lies within them. And suddenly, they're just so sure they're right, and they're just so indignant for the cause of what they're pursuing, not realizing that the devil has tricked them because they have fallen into control of the sin nature, and not under the control of the mind of God through "epignosis" full knowledge guiding the mentality of the soul. Verse 13: "And do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. But present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." Does a Christian need to be told that – not to let the sin nature use parts of his body for sin? You betcha. But the Christian can't do anything about that unless he is in temporal fellowship – unless God the Holy Spirit is running the life, and the Christian has enough information of doctrine to be able to stabilize him in his emotions and in his volition. The mind of Christ is the most valuable thing we have.

Verse 14: "For sin (the sin nature) shall not be master over you, for you are not under Law, but under grace." Why would you go back when you were enslaved to this sin nature? Why would you go back to it? A life pursuing the objectives of Satan's world is always a disaster, and the Word of God makes it very clear that that is not the life for us. All those things you look back now tonight and wish you hadn't done, didn't have to be done. All the associations you entered in and wish you hadn't entered into, you didn't have to do it. All of the choices you made that were immoral, you didn't have to do it. All of the stupid moves in life you made, you didn't have to do it. It was because you put yourself in a position where the world was bigger than Christ in your life. And the mind was not functioning on the Word of God in the control of the Spirit of God.

Instead, you went for 1 John 2:15-17: "Do not love the world nor the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him." Yes, you went to church, and you stood up and gave testimony, and said you loved the Father, but you're out there acting like you were part of the world. "For all that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh (the lusts of the sin nature, that is), the lusts of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world." The lusts of the eyes is the desire for material things. And the pride of life (personal arrogance) – that's not from the Father. That's from Satan's world: "And the world is passing away, and also its lusts. But the one who does the will of God abides forever. And you do not do the will of God unless you know that will through the Word of God.

So, the direction to the believer, who wants to get back up out of the hole, a reversionism, is in reference to that former lifestyle that you had, and that you've fallen back into: "That you should lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit." You are to put aside the old self. The way you put aside the old self is one piece at a time, as you observe that old self of sin nature lifestyle within you. You confess it, and you admit it. What this word "lay aside" means in the Greek is to take something off (to peel it off, like you do a coat). It's all very simple. Just take off the coat of the sin nature that some people are so very proud and pleased to wear. When you look at people who are in the public eye, and in public fame and fortune, those people are clothed in the sin nature. And they are not the people whose lifestyle you want to imitate. And when you do, God says, "Take it off. That is not for you."

This is what is explained to us in Colossians 3:8-9. Paul says, "But now you also put them aside" (the terrible sins that he's just mentioned: anger; malice; slander; and abusive speech from your mouth). "Do not lie to one another since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices." Stop misrepresenting the truth. Why? Because you took that coat of deceit off. You're no longer wearing that coat, so don't act accordingly.

Now, the Greek tells us something here with this word "laid aside" – "apotithemi" in the Greek. It's in the aorist tense, which means that it's done at a certain point of time. When do you do that? When you confess your sins. It's in the middle voice. That means that if you do this, you personally benefit by it. Middle voice says that it comes back to you. It bounces right back to you. If you do this confession, you benefit. How do you benefit? You set in motion the process of peeling off the calluses off the soul. That's what you do. You take off the old lifestyle, and you put it aside. And you do that by admitting, which is an expression of repentance, and it's infinitive mood. And that tells us that this is the purpose of God for His children. It is the purpose of our God that we should keep taking all the elements of the old life in Adam – the old self. Here's the unsaved enslavement to the sin nature.

Ephesians 4:22: "That in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self" – you take it all off like a coat: a tattered, ugly-looking coat: "Which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit." Corrupted because of what? Because of false values. This old life is a life of corruption because it is being deceived by the sin nature, which is giving you lusts of deceit. The sin nature is functioning on Satan's human viewpoint, so it is deluded from reality. Now, evil is fun, and people do it because it's fun, but you will receive the consequences of what you have sown.

Confession of sins of the old manner of life. And with that confession of sin comes the filling of the Holy Spirit. He takes charge. That's what 1 John 1:9 (confession) does for you. And when you do the confession, Ephesians 5:18 tells you the consequences: "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit." I am filled with the Spirit. The word "filled" means controlled. Just put the word "controlled" there. I'm controlled by the Spirit. That is when he's in charge. He's in charge when I admit that he was right and we were wrong.

**Confess Known Sins**

Now, this state of spirituality, which is what this is, does not in itself peel off the callouses, but it does set up the conditions necessary for the gradual hardening to be reversed. It is the first step in starting a life with God again. People like to say, "Get a life." And indeed Christians need to get a life, and sadly sometimes get that life you once had with God. And through confession – establishment of temporal fellowship, now you have taken the first road of recovery back out of reversionism. You have named your negative, sinful attitudes. And you have expressed thereby your repentance. And repentance means "change." You've changed your mind.

**Forget what's Confessed**

Then you must forget what's confessed, and prepare to move on with the Lord. All is forgiven. King David, at his worst time, and at his worst part of his life in sin – all was forgiven. Then he went on, and it was put behind him.

Philippians 3:12-14 puts it this way. Paul says, "Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect (he's talking about maturity), but I press on, in order that I may lead hold of that which also I was laid hold of by Christ. I'm not perfect. I've missed the step. I have to make my confession, the apostle says. But God took hold of me, and brought me into existence for a certain purpose. I'm not just some animal. And I have come to be laid hold of by Christ. That's my objective in life. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet. But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Paul says, "I know how to admit my wrong. I know how to confess it to the Father, not to people, and then to forget it, because He has forgiven me, and to go on.

The final solution for the apostate condition of callouses on the soul, then, will follow, because you'll now be able to build up your spiritual maturity again. The structure will begin to arise in those five facets, through the grace system of perception. Aha, but you can't build a spiritual maturity structure in your soul except through the ministration of your right pastor-teacher. So, we're right back to God's way again. You cannot be in your wrong church with your wrong pastor-teacher, and expect to make much progress in the Christian life. You'll make an enormous progress in religion. You'll make enormous progress in activities like crazy.

One of our first called and said, "I'm just so sick and tired. We're in this big church, and we're jumping and jiving all the time. The screens come down; we sing from up there; we can hardly see it; we're clapping; we're jiving; and, we're doing it. We're a Bible church, but, boy, we're up there. We have programs here and programs there. The one thing we don't have is the Word of God. There's nothing more for this man and his family. And they are zealots for Berean Church. They listen to our tapes, and they look forward to the information that comes to them. That is their lifeline.

Well, because of that, we are their right spiritual guides. And while God has put them in a different geographical position, hopefully He may resolve that for them – that where they live, that's where they need to be in their spiritual life. And I have to constantly remind people: you stay with the best you have. You don't say, "I'm a Berean taper. I don't go to church. I don't show up at the local assembly." That is bad. That is not biblical, and people should not do that.

**Restoration**

Well, Ephesians 4:22 says, "In reference to a former member of life," that unsaved day – you take it off like an old, tattered, dirty coat (your old self: "Which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts deceit – the lusts of the sin nature which have been deceived by Satan, and that you may be renewed in the spirit of your mind." The word "renewed" is "ananeoo." This word means to restore something – something that's not in good health. It's an interesting word. Something happened to your mind. You got a sick mind. Here is where you really do have a sick mind. This, significant word that the Holy Spirit uses is talking about a spiritually sick mind. And the wonders of God the Holy Spirit, and the words that He selects to convey the mind of God. Here's a genius word: "ananeoo" – to restore something to its original condition of health.

This word is in the present tense, which, in the Greek, tells us that this is to be the constant experience of the Christian who's coming back out over reversionism – his constant Christian recovery from the callouses on his soul. Things get better for him spiritually. It is passive, which means that he receives this renewal, not through promises he makes to God, and not through some good works he tries to do, and not through something he tries to give to God, but the improvement comes as the result of the intake of doctrine into the mentality of his soul – what the Word of God does for him. That's how the callouses start coming off. You don't do it. You can't scrape it off. This has to be done by God Himself. You put yourself in a bad place. He has to take you out of it layer-by-layer.

I love that passage in Isaiah 55:11, which we should not forget. Isaiah had it right when he said, "So shall My Word be which goes forth from My Mouth. It shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the manner for which I sent it." What a statement! God said, "I send you the Word of doctrine. And because it is My Word, it is different than any words on any page in any book elsewhere in the world. These are significantly supernatural words, so to speak, on the pages of the Bible. And when those words and what they mean are taken hold of by you in the mentality of your soul, God says, "I have sent you these words (these words of doctrinal instruction) because I have a purpose for it. And when you have received it, it is not going to come back to Me until it has done the job for which I gave you that Word. You're going to succeed in the effort."

"Ananeoo" is a mind brought back to health. The mood of this verb is infinitive. This whole little past is just piled up with grammatical importance. This infinitive mood expresses God's purpose for a calloused believer. Isn't that interesting? It's not just a statement. It's an infinitive wave of God saying, "This is what I want you to do." Now it gets a little sticky. It's not optional. God says, "I don't want you to be hardhearted toward Me. You should be renewed." Where do you need the renewing? In the spirit of your mind – in the mentality of your soul: in your thinking; your reasoning capacity; and, in your mind. And that word "mind" there is referring to the Greek word "nous:" God says, "I want you to be renewed in the information that comes to your mind, and then I want you to receive that, so that it's stored for use in your life.

This, you may remember, is what Romans 12:2 says: "Do not be conformed to this world. Don't live like the world. Be transformed." By what? "The renewing of your mind." That is the same concept again. How do I change my mind from illness to health? How do I take a sick mentality and make it spiritually healthy? By the Word of God: "So that you may prove (you may demonstrate) what is the will of God, which is good, acceptable, and perfect."

A believer's mind has been blacked out from divine viewpoint in its stay in reversionism. He must now be re-enlightened. That mentality must be re-illuminated by the Word of God. That's why it's passive. It's not some emotional jag that you go on to get re-illuminated. It's the Word of God that does it.

As doctrine from the pastor-teacher is inhaled into the mentality of the soul, the callouses gradually peel off, and you become more sensitive to your Lord. "Gnosis" in the mind is converted to "epignosis" in the human spirit. Job 32:8 tells us that God teaches our spirit. That's what Job is talking about. In that wonderful book of Job, he knew this. He knew that operating with God is dependent on something down in his human spirit. That's why the book of Job is filled with such an enormous amount of theological concepts. The human spirit is able, then, to supply the materials to guide our minds, and thus to build us back up to spiritual maturity.

**Put on the New Self**

Verse 24 is the restored believer: "And put on the new self." Here again, we're taking the old coat off, and we're putting on a new coat – the new self. What is the new self? The spiritual maturity structure in the soul. The Greek word here is another brilliant Holy Spirit word: "enduo." "Enduo" means that the soul of the believer is clothed with a new set of garments. This again, in the Greek, is aorist – a point in time. When do I do that? When do I change the clothing (my spiritual clothing)? When I believe the instruction of doctrine, and knowledge becomes full knowledge. So, my mind is renewed. And it's middle voice again. Can you believe it? . . . It is aorist tense – an action point of time. It is middle voice – you personally benefit by taking this action. You personally will benefit by putting on the new man in Christ. And again, it's infinitive mood. God says, "I'm not just advising you. I'm telling you. It's not quite imperative. It is not a command. But it expresses that this is God's purpose for us – that you put on the new self.

This word "new" is this word in the Greek. There are a couple of words for "new:" "kinos." This does not mean "recent." This is new in species (in kind). It's not just new because it's recent, like: "I have a new car. It's a recent car." This is a species in kind. So, he says, "A new kind of man is now to be brought here. You put on a new kind of man. This man is the Christian for the spiritual maturity structure clothing. He's functioning on the mind of God. Therefore, he's able to breathe out toward man and God the principles of doctrine. His soul moves from chaos of callouses on the soul to maximum happiness through the breathing in of the Word of God. He now begins to live decently and in order. And the description of the new man is that he is free from spiritual callouses. You put on the new self in the likeness of God. You're back home free again. You're according to the pattern. "In" means according to the pattern of the likeness of God – what God has designed for your soul to be. And what was that?

**Righteousness and Holiness**

Well, He designed you for righteousness and for the holiness of the truth – to have the maturity structure which reflects the glory of God. And it expresses itself as righteous living and holiness in your soul. "Holiness" means you do the right thing, and you do the fair thing. Righteousness and justice produce holiness. This can only be developed through the Word of God. This is the kind of counseling that works for a person. Righteousness is God's love of what is right. Holiness is his rejection of sin.

So, the calloused believer can come back, and he can say that he can breathe again.

**The Christian Lifestyle**

In Ephesians 4:25-32, let's do a quick run-through of the Christian lifestyle. This is summarized for us by the Spirit of God. That would be the kind of thing that exemplifies the Christian who is back on-track, out of reversion, and back in touch with God his Father. In these verses, 25-32, there are five specific guidelines characterizing a spiritually oriented believer. And it is presented in a kind of an interesting way. Each principle of living is presented first as a negative: "Don't do this:" Then it's immediately followed by a positive: "Do this:" "Don't do this. Do this." A Christian who is in spiritual maturity, and who is walking with the mind of God – he will not do this. He will do this. Then it gives you the reason that you should do this.

1. **Don't Lie**

Notice verse 25. Here's the negative. If you're going to be dressed in righteousness and holiness of the truth of doctrine, this is the way you live: "Therefore, laying aside falsehood." That's the negative. Don't be a deceiver. Don't not only not tell the truth, but you don't act the truth. Don't act falsehoods. That's the negative. Then: "Speak truth, each of you, with his neighbor. Lay aside falsehood, and then speak truth: each of you with your neighbor." Then it gives you the reason why: "For we are members of one another." So, don't lie to other Christians. You don't lie to anybody. You don't take a brother or sister in Christ, and give them deceitful words. You don't misrepresent. You speak the truth with him. And the reason you do it is because you're in the same family. And you don't misrepresent facts to the members of your family. You don't do it in God's family. God doesn't do that in His family: "Lay aside falsehood. Speak the truth with your neighbor." It's very easy to color the truth just a little bit.

1. **Don't Stay Angry**

Verse 26: "Be angry, and yet do not sin." Don't sin when you're angry. The positive: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger." Don't go to bed when you're still hopping mad with somebody about something. Put it aside. It'll turn your stomach all night. Then why? "And do not give the devil an opportunity." Why do I not want to let the sun go down on my anger toward somebody, even if it's a just anger? Because it'll give the devil an opportunity for me to have ill feelings toward a brother or sister, and for me to think about doing some retaliatory things to them. I'll become vindictive. There are all kinds of things I could do. That's not the way of life of the person who is walking in spiritual maturity with the mind of God.

1. **Do not Steal**

The third principle: "Let him who steals steal no longer." That's the negative. The positive: "But rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good." Don't steal, but earn your own way. Don't steal by all kinds of deceptions to do that. Do that for which you have legitimate, honest income. Keep your word. Do the thing.

Now, it is hard in our country when we have a government that constantly steals from people, in violations of the constitutional restraints upon that government. That is because, in the court of law, judges have ganged up together, and they have said, "We cannot get the people to conform to socialist principles, where government can tell people what they should do for their own good." Therefore, the Constitution has been neutralized, and things added to it by the courts of law. They look the other way, and they accept it.

A whole new organization has been formed now, to fight and bring back the country to the restraints of the Constitution, because that is the way that freedom is preserved – when government is restrained. But I don't care what government does. You and I, as Christians, do what is right. Do not steal, but do labor. Why? "In order that he may have something to share with him who has need. And that's interesting. I would think I want to work so that I can get the things I need. Well, that's self-evident. We want you to be able to give to those who are in need. That's God's welfare program.

1. **Don't Use Bad Language**

The fourth characteristic for the spiritual maturity believer: "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth." Don't use swearing bad language. And don't talk vulgarity. And don't defend people who do it. I had somebody today getting all hot and excited, defending something that was a vulgarity of expression – that there was a reason that justified it. There isn't: "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth." Your mouth is the mouth of God: "But only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment. When you talk, ennoble people. Make them better than when they walked into your presence. That's what's characterized as a Christian who's walking with God. A reversionistic Christian doesn't do this. He's always dirtying up the waters. Why? "That it may give grace to those who hear."

1. **Be Kind to One Another**

Here's the fifth principle: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Do you know what grieving is? Grieving is unconfessed sin. It's the thing that creates the whole problem of falling into reversionism. Aren't you glad you were here tonight to understand how important it is to go back to the Lord, and admit when you're out of line? Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. The positive: "But let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other." That's the positive. Why? Just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. That's how He treated you. That puts a whole different picture. There are some people that are so downright ornery and irritating, that you want to squash them like a bug. The Word of God says, "Forgive the idiot. Treat him as God treated you, one of the all-time great idiots that ever was born – yourself. Yet, He forgave, and brought you into His family.

Here's the summary. The Ephesians 4:17-24 shows how we can go into reversionism and back out. In verses 17-22, a carnal Christian develops callouses on the sole. Sin Greece hardness toward spiritual things. Callouses on the soul gradually build up, and it clogs the spiritual breathing. And the Christian becomes insensitive toward God, then insensitive toward people. The walk with the Lord breaks down. Bible study is a drag. It's very hard to pray, and to attend prayer meeting. They have little interest in Christian service, and they have all kinds of mental attitude sins. The walk with the Lord breaks down. Self-awareness is occupied increasingly with themselves, and expresses it as pride, self-pity, or selfishness. The mind ties into human viewpoint in its judgments. The will goes negative toward God's plan for that Christian's life. The emotions become unstable and run amuck. There's a frantic moving about to find peace and happiness for their nerves. Divine standards of conscience are overruled by human viewpoint. They rationalize their own sin. The sin nature is in complete charge of the life at that time. The soul then walks in darkness (1 John 2:9-11).

This kind of a Christian is miserable. He is bitter. He is unforgiving. He is touchy. He is fearful. He is spiritually bored. He is self-pitying. He is injured, and he has wild emotional swings. The hardest people to be nice to are the unsaved, yet you do have to be nice to them. And the Christian cannot act in the brutality of the unbeliever. That's what happens when he's out of touch with the Lord.

The calloused soul then experiences spiritual emphysema. He can't breathe because the callous is built up. There is no doctrine in his soul. He can't exhale divine viewpoint. He doesn't have it. It's all clogged up. The lack of spiritual air (doctrine) creates spiritual blackout. A vacuum draws in false doctrine; human viewpoint; apostasy; and, human good. This may result, in fact, in the sin unto death unless the callouses are removed. 1 John 5:16 tells us that when you see the sin unto death, don't even pray for the person anymore. He's gone.

Then, in Ephesians 4:23, we saw how the callouses are removed. Confess sin. Name it to God. That creates the condition for removing the callouses. It begins the softening process toward the Father and toward other believers. Forget the sin that is confessed. Do not retain any guilt complexes. You inhale doctrine daily. You're faithful to the tenets of the instruction of the pastor-teacher. Gradually, the callouses start peeling off. Positive volition toward doctrine begins to remove the emphysema from your spiritual lungs. You find you can breathe freely. And the joy of the Lord comes back in.

We have a hymn in hymnbook, "How Great Thou Art" sums it all up when you think about: how shall I live? Out there in the world, out of step with my Father? Or shall I live as one who is not part of the world system, and my priorities are first and foremost with God my Father. That's what this is all about – first and foremost with God my Father.

When I have a conflict with something in the world system and something in the church system, who gets first choice? It's hymn number 4 in our songbook:

"Oh Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder,
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made.
I see the stars. I hear the rolling thunder.
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Then through the woods and forest glades I wonder,
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.
When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel a gentle breeze.

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
Send Him to die, I scarce can take it in.
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died, to take away my sins.

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclimation,
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart.
Then I shall bow, in humble adoration,
And then proclaim, 'My God, how great Thou art.'

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee,
How great you art. How great you art.
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee.
How great Thou art, how great Thou art."

Our benediction tonight will be singing the fourth verse. We're going to start at the optional last ending: "When Christ shall come, with shout of oration," on the top of the second page. Shall we stand?

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

[**Back to the Colossians index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/colossians.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)