***The Defense against False Teachers, No. 4 - Jude 17

JD13-02***

We're looking at what the Word of God has to say in the book of Jude concerning a Christian defense against false teachers. We have discovered that the negative responses of a Christian to the teachings of the Word of God and to the leadings of God the Holy Spirit within his life create a hardness in his soul. Saying "No" to the truth from the Word of God has an effect upon our souls. Saying "No" to a leading of God the Holy Spirit has an effect upon our souls. That leading may be to reject what the Spirit of God says. It may not only be that we do not do what He wants us to do, but it may be that we insist on doing the very thing He does not want us to do.

In any case, this is a variety of expressions of negative response, and it has an effect upon the soul. It creates a hardening which gradually builds upon the facets of our soul. This hardening develops on our minds; it develops on our wills; and, it develops on our emotions. It causes us to become insensitive always first toward God, and when we become insensitive toward God so that we are walking in darkness, we then become insensitive toward people, and we begin walking in darkness relative to our relationships with other people.

So spiritual callouses upon the soul of a believer expose him to all the distortions that his old sin nature is capable of cranking up to him. The believer's mind, as a result of this hardness on his mind, loses its divine viewpoint. His will begins to resist the will of God because of the hardness upon his will, and his emotions, because they have become hard, begin to dominate the mentality of his soul. The emotions begin taking wild erratic swings.

The Christian who is an apostate condition of callouses upon the soul will be a very hard person to deal with emotionally. He will be irrational in his moves. He will be erratic. He will be unpredictable. The swings will really catch you off your guard. You must be prepared to expect the most outlandish behavior and the most outlandish choices. The mind is completely disoriented to God's thinking, and it is simply functioning on all of the influences of the old sin nature and of the old sin natures of people all around that individual.

So a Christian building callouses on his soul has opened the doors to considerable disorientation in his life. The problem is not only that he is hard toward God and then hard toward his proper expressions toward people, but at the same time that callouses are being built upon the soul, the spiritual maturity of the believer is being torn down. It is very important that we understand that a person does not maintain a certain level of spiritual maturity just because he has arrived at that point. That's why the Bible uses the words referring to spiritual maturity that compare it to a building, because a building is a very apt illustration. A building always has to be maintained. A building, from the moment it is finished, begins to deteriorate unless there are certain maintenance procedures that are followed. The identical thing happens in a Christian's life. The thing that will sometimes catch us off guard is that people who should know better and who should have gone on far enough into the Word of God and who have gone on in times past, and who did have a certain spiritual outlook and maturity suddenly reflect a childishness in spiritual things.

How does this come about? It all begins someplace along the line with rejecting the mind of God the Holy Spirit. It's just as simple as that. That rejection can be rejecting an explanation of the Word of God that you hear that doesn't strike your fancy. Or it can be a rejection of what God is asking you to do with your life, and you don't want to do that with your life. Wherever along the line you say "No" to God, that starts the hardening process. As the hardening process sets in, the breakdown of your spiritual maturity accompanies it.

Christian fellowship among believers is determined to the extent of the spiritual maturity structure to be found in each believer. Christians have no other lasting basis of fellowship and of relationship. There is no basis of unity except as one Christian can relate to another Christian in spiritual maturity. That's why believers will find camaraderie in certain directions in spiritual things, and they will not find camaraderie with other people in spiritual things. The reason for that is the wide divergence between their spiritual maturities. They may not find a natural camaraderie for very natural reasons of personality and other reasons. Those are not bad things. You don't have to be the intimate comrade and friend of every other Christian that you know. You don't have to feel obliged to invite every Christian you know over to supper or to a social event.

There are some Christians that have this legalistic obsession that they have to be really nice to everybody in the congregation. You do have to be free of any mental bitterness toward everybody in the congregation, and have that mental attitude love. However, you don't have to be everybody's social friend and partner. However, in spiritual things, you cannot be anybody's friend and you can't be anybody's comrade unless they have the same common space or ground that you have.

Now here is where the old axiom indeed holds true that birds of a feather will flock together. What happens is that people who are low on spiritual IQ will gravitate toward other low spiritual IQs, and they will form a certain common ground, as we shall see a little later in this session. This is exactly one of the things that apostates do. They rally toward each other, and then they create boundaries around themselves to identify themselves. People who have a higher spiritual IQ, simply because they are responsive to the Word of God, will find unity and fellowship with people of like mind.

Maximum callouses upon the soul has disastrous results for it leads to the sin unto death. Obviously, it is necessary for us to know how to remove spiritual callouses. We are all in one way or another guilty of this. We begin the Christian life completely free. From the time that you're born again and you enter that inner circle of temporal fellowship, you are free of all spiritual callouses. The whole old life has been wiped out. Everything is peeled off, and you start completely from scratch as your own priest. From there, you take it and handle it as per your own decisions and as per your own understanding of the Word of God. From that point on, you may develop callouses or you may develop spiritual maturity. You cannot do both at the same time. You're either building callouses or you're building spiritual maturity--one or the other--for the two are mutually exclusive.

**Ephesians 4:20-24**

We will now continue looking at Ephesians 4 that we have been studying. We have gone through the results of callouses that are built upon the soul. The picture was very dark indeed. However, we want to now turn to the solution to this, and we pick that up at Ephesians 4:20. In this verse, we have a Christian's resource. Here the apostle says, "But you have not so learned Christ." This is in contrast to the people he has been describing in this context who have been hardened toward God in their souls. He says to the Ephesian Christians, "But this is not true of you." All solutions for spiritual problems must come through the Word of God. Mistakes in solving our spiritual problems and callouses upon the soul, be they small or great, is a spiritual problem. Mistakes are often made in solving spiritual problems in that we bypass the learning of doctrine to solve the spiritual breakdown.

If the physical body breaks down because of malnutrition, what would you recommend to resolve that condition? Would you say, "Well, my friend, what you need is to get out and exercise more?" If the body is lacking the food that it needs to sustain itself, it would be idiotic to say, "Get out there and get into action. Get into some kind of a program. Get yourself busy. Get yourself moving around and get some exercise." That would be the very worst thing to do. Here's a character who's suffering from malnutrition, and you want him to use his energy up with running and jogging and playing tennis and everything else. All you would do is compound the problem. Obviously, what you need to do is supply the food he needs.

When we have a spiritual breakdown, one of the favorite solutions is, "Why don't you get active in the Lord's work? There are these things that need to be done at the church. Why don't you volunteer to do some of those things? It'll make you happy. Are you unhappy? You're not happy in the Lord? Why don't you get into the work of the Lord? Then you'll be happy. You don't like the way things are going. Get into the work of the Lord. Get into the program. Get into some action." That's just as foolish as in the natural realm of a person suffering from physical malnutrition. Obviously, spiritual malnutrition is not going to be resolved by hustling around in some religious activities. That's only going to make it worse.

Many times, Christians are led astray by this kind of suggestion to solve their spiritual problems. I cannot emphasize enough that there is no solution for our spiritual breakdowns and for the things that disturb us spiritually except learning more of the Word. It is the learning process and the intake of the Word of God, and our positive response to it, that will resolve the spiritual problem. It puts things into perspective. It secures for us the answers that God indeed has.

**Psychological Solutions**

Many of the solutions that people have for spiritual problems, I want to warn you, are of a psychological nature. You are told, "Do you have a certain problem? Do you have a case of bitterness? Do you have a case of greed? Do you have a case of antagonism? Do you have a case that you can't even describe such a case?" So the answer is, "Now here are four things that you should do: one; two; three; four." Very frequently, these are pure psychological devices. They're techniques in order to create illusions for us in order to enable us to accept certain things that, because of our spiritual breakdown, we won't accept and that we perhaps should accept. You want to be careful of somebody's advice to solve certain problems that are mere psychological gimmicks. The problem with that is it may give temporary relief, but it has no sustaining basis for a long-range solution. Only the Word of God gives us long-range solutions. These temporary psychological gimmicks will not cut it.

The interpretation and the learning of Bible doctrine is the key to everything in our lives. That's the business of a local church ministry to supply. So in Ephesians 4:20, Paul is speaking to the Ephesian Christians and he is able to contrast them to the kind of people he has been talking about in these verses from Ephesians 4:17 on. He says, "But you (the positive believers who are free of callouses on the soul) have not so learned." The word "learn" is the Greek word "manthano." "Manthano" is aorist, which should tell you something. It is active, and it is indicative. Aorist, as you know, means some point of action. It means at some point these believers learned Bible doctrine. At some point, they listened to a teacher who explained the Word to them on the basis of hermeneutics, isagogics, classifications of truth, exegesis, and etymology. All of these elements go together in order to explain the Word of God.

Aorist means that at some point in time they listened to a teacher explaining the Word from that frame of reference, and they received it. Active tells you that they deliberately did this. They saw to it that they were making the learning of the Word of God available to themselves. They attended church. They listened to tapes. They took measures in order to listen, to learn, and to hear the Word of God. Indicative is a statement of fact. It's a fact of their spiritual well-being.

Positive volition to doctrine has prevented these Ephesian Christians from developing callouses on the soul. That's why Paul says to them that "You have *not* so learned--this condition that I have been describing of hardness toward God in your soul is not true of you." Why is it not true? Because they have learned the Word of God. As the learning and the positive response of the Word of God prevents callouses from building up, so it also reverses the process. This is how you remove callouses from the soul--through, again, the Word of God. That's why I am stressing that there is no solution for our spiritual problems except through the doctrines or the Word of God. The psychological gimmickry is not the solution. The action program that you might be invited to participate in is not the solution.

What you may have built up in callouses, the reception of the Word of God will begin to remove. "But you have not so learned Christ." This is the Christ, that particular One who is related to the church as her right man--as her right head. The church is guided by the thinking of Christ her head, and His thinking is recorded in the canon of Scripture.

1 Corinthians 2:16 tells us that in the Word of God, we have the mind of Christ. For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ." How do we have the mind of Christ? By how we feel about things? No, we have the mind of Christ according to what is written in His Word. This is where He has recorded His thinking for us. There is no other way for you and me to secure what our Lord thinks except through the Word of God. You will not receive what God thinks through meditation. You will not receive what God thinks through simply sitting around and being quiet. You will receive what God thinks on the basis of the Word of God and of your learning of doctrine. Through it God will indeed speak to you, and He will guide you and He will inform you.

Ephesians 4:21 tells us about the Christian's grasp of doctrine: "If so be that you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus." He says, "What I have said about these calloused Christians is not true about you, for you have not been learning Christ in this way." How have they not been learning Christ? By going negative toward it, as these people have who developed this condition in their soul. It says, "If so be that you have heard Him." And "if" here is first class condition. What does first class condition mean? It means it is true. Since you have heard Him. They did listen to him. These Ephesians heard Him. The word "heard" is "akouo." "Akouo" is in the arrest active indicative again. This means again that at some point they sat in Bible class and they heard Christ through the teachings of that instructor. They attended this by choice, and it's a statement of fact.

When you and I hear instruction under the filling of the Holy Spirit, that enables us to understand the doctrine. That means we have heard it. These people learned it by sitting in church and hearing it. However, hearing the Word of God is not enough. As the book of James tells us, you must not only hear, but you must now respond with the positive action that leads to doing. So it says, "If so be that you have heard Him and have been taught." The word "taught" is our word "didasko." "Didasko" is the word for "teaching." This one is aorist passive indicative.

Aorist again means that point where they attended Bible class. They were being taught. They were receiving the Word of God. They weren't just hearing it. They were going positive toward it, so their minds were now being affected by it. It is passive which means that the believer was being acted upon by doctrine. You can't be acted upon by doctrine that you reject. But by doctrine that you accept, that begins to bear an influence on you. This is why we are saying that there is no solution for spiritual problems except to learn more doctrine.

We are overwhelmed in the church ministry today all over this nation by devices and gimmicks and procedures that are being recommended to solve the spiritual problems of people. A great deal of that centers upon improved techniques and improved devices by which we are going to solve our problems. This is not true. This is deceptive. This is a delusion. What temporary relief may come will soon be dissipated. The only solution is having the Word act upon us. That's exactly what this verse tells us. They heard the Word, and then because they were positive to it, it was able to act upon them. It is an indicative statement of fact--another principle which is presented. If we are positive to the doctrine that we have heard, then the Lord through the Holy Spirit teaches our human spirits, and these insights are stored there for use in our lives.

Now this hearing of the Word is, of course, generally done in a group. The reason you are taught in a group is so that you can exercise your own priesthood to be private before the Lord. Nobody knows whether you are saying "Yes" or whether you are saying "No" at any particular point to what you hear. Nobody knows what is going on in your mind. Only the Lord does. He is the only one who has to know it. That's what's so relaxing about the Christian life. We don't have to have any policemen among God's people. We don't have to have any watchdogs who are running around supervising other people's lives.

The Word of God makes it very clear to us that either we shape up according to what we know and according to the enlightenment that God brings us, or else He shapes us up and ships us out. We do one or the other. We don't have to have any human hands running the show for God in order to help God to get the job done. Now that's the fantastic quality of grace--the utter and complete dependence upon the Word of God. You as a believer enter this Christian life clean in your soul, and you handle it as your own priest from there. You either develop spiritual maturity or you develop a spiritual degeneracy in the callouses that you build up. This truth--this which is taught--is called "the truth which is in Jesus." That is the truth which we now have in the Bible.

Now moving on to Ephesians 4:22, we have the subject specifically of the removal of these callouses. Ephesians 4:22 says, "That you put off concerning the former manner of life the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." "The old man" is a designation for the old sin nature which is within us inherited from our father Adam. Unbelievers are always subject to the old sin nature and all of its lust patterns. The believer, however, has been given the capability of controlling that. We are told to put off the old life. The word "put off" is "apotithemi." "Apotithemi" expresses what we do when we confess sin. The word means to remove something like you would take a coat off. You have the same idea in Colossians 3:8-9. This is like removing a garment.

**Confession**

How do we remove sin from us? We remove it by confession. It is aorist. It is middle voice, and it is infinitive. Aorist again means that point where the believer decides, "I'm wrong in being negative in this issue; in this doctrine; in this instruction; or, in this expression of God the Holy Spirit to my mind. I'm wrong and God is right," and we call it sin. The middle indicates that when you and I do that, we are benefited by it. We are benefited by our confession of sin that puts off this coat of sin that we have assumed, and which if we do not put off, will begin building hardness on our souls toward God and toward man. The infinitive is a way of expressing the purpose that God has for us.

Now the old sin nature is corrupt because it functions on false values. It has deceitful lusts as Ephesians 4:22 calls it. It means that the lusts are excited within us by deceit. It is the lusts of deceit. The old sin nature does this because it is functioning under Satan's influence and on his human viewpoint values. So our old sin nature is a distorter of everything that is good within us. Everything that God would do through us and everything that we think and that we feel and that we choose, the old sin nature distorts. This is because of the lusts of deceit.

Now confession of sins, concerning all that is involved in this old manner of life, causes the Christian to be filled with the Spirit. When you have been negative, at first you will not discover that a hardness is developing. The hardness begins in a very subtle small way such that you're not even aware that anything happened. You just said "No" and you think seemingly that nothing happened, and you got away with it completely. You had your way against what you heard, and you had your way against what God wanted you to do, and nothing seems to have happened. However, gradually you will come to the point where you begin to see the symptoms and you will begin to get signals that the hardness has set in. You will discover that you have resistances and reservations toward people and things and situations that you did not once have.

When you do confess that sin, it does not remove the callous. That's why this is such a serious matter to allow the hardness to develop. When you and I confess sin, it only does one thing. It now puts us back in fellowship with God the Holy Spirit. It now puts us back on the ground where He can teach us the Word of God and where we can receive the Word of God. It is the receiving and the inhaling of doctrine that begins to peel the callous off. This takes time to do. Depending upon how far you have gone out of fellowship will determine how long it takes for you to return. The longer you stay out of fellowship, the greater is the callous and the longer the return trip in rising back up to the spiritual maturity that you once possessed but which you formerly abandoned. The first step on the road to spiritual recovery is naming and admitting our negative attitude to the Father.

**Forget Confessed Sin**

When you have done this, it is very important that you should forget the sin that you have confessed, and to prepare to move on with the Lord. All has been forgiven, but you can hinder things by not forgetting it. Satan loves to do this to us. He loves to hinder the removal of callouses by bugging you with the sin that you were guilty of, and by bugging you with the negative attitude that you have already confessed to the Lord. You must believe that the Word of God is telling the truth--that when you confess sin, it is forgiven. You do not get very old before you can think of things that you wish that you had never said; things that wish you had never done; and, places you wish you had never gone to. All of this you recognize as a violation of the Word of God and of God's will for you. You may look back upon a thing and recognize that it was an act of foolishness.

This is like the apostle Paul always looked back upon the fact that he was instrumental in the murder of Christians, and he recognized that he wishes that he had never done that and that he had never been engaged in that. Yet he recognizes through that very act that the magnificent thing that God was doing through the testimony of the life of the apostle Paul was the greatest testimony to the grace of God that any man could ever ask for. He who had once been a murderer and who says, "I am therefore unworthy to, of all things, have the gifts of an apostle, and to be the agent of ministry and of enlightenment to the whole gentile world, and yet God in His grace enabled him to say, 'I am what I am by the grace of God.'" Paul, while he could remember what he did, was not grieving and having guilt complexes or in any way being restrained from a fruitful ministry.

The first step is to confess. The first step on the road to recovery is to confess. Along with it, we must forget. The final solution for an apostate condition of callouses on the soul is to turn around, take in doctrine, and start building a spiritual maturity structure.

Ephesians 4:23 tells us the goal of putting off through confession our former manner of life and the elements of the deceitful lusts that accompany that life. Ephesians 4:23 says, "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind." The Greek word for "renewed" here is "ananeoo." This is present. It is passive. It is infinitive. The word means "to restore something again." To be renewed means "to restore." It is present. It is constantly to be the practice of the believer to be removing the callouses from his life and to be restoring himself to a condition of freedom from callouses. It is passive which means he cannot do it by making a determination. He cannot do it by taking a list of psychological gimmicks and saying, "Now I will do this every day. I will be very faithful to perform this." He can only take in the Word of God and be responsive to that Word, and the callouses will be removed for him. The Word of God acts upon us. We cannot act upon ourselves. It is infinitive which expresses the divine purpose for the calloused believer. What God wants you to do with your callouses is to get with it and to get restored.

What is to be restored? "That you be renewed in the spirit of your mind." The word spirit here again is that word "pneuma" that refers to the thinking reasoning capacity here of a person which has been distorted by his negative volition and the callouses. The thing that is to be restored is his mind. There we again have our word "nous" that refers to that perceptive side of the mind. It is in the perceptive side of his mind that a Christian goes negative to Bible doctrine. As we have already reviewed in Scripture, when that happens, the mind becomes a low pressure area, and the perceptive side of your mind begins drawing into it like a low pressure vacuum all kinds of satanic viewpoint and false concepts, and a darkness descends upon that mind. What the Word of God is saying is that God wants that darkened side of our mind once more to be enlightened and to be renewed in the thinking capacity of your perceptive mind.

As doctrine is inhaled into the mentality of the soul, the callouses peel off. As the callouses peel off, more and more light is permitted to shine back into that mentality. More and more, the believer is able to orient himself to the will and the plan of God in his life. His "gnosis" (knowledge) is converted to "epignosis" by being believed and transferred to his human spirit. His human spirit then is able once more to supply materials to guide his directive mind, which makes choices, and to build a spiritual maturity structure in his soul.

This is something very very fantastic. If you will follow the train of the argument and the train of these verses, it will be a very encouraging thing to your heart. No matter how far off you go, the moment you turn and say, "Father, I was wrong," and, like the prodigal, you confess, the condition has now been established for you to start removing the darkness. As you start getting with the Word of God and absorbing doctrine, the callouses will peel off; the light of your perceptive mind will gradually expand; you will be enlightened in your thinking; and, gradually you will be again functioning within your soul the way God designed you to function. Remember that He made you in His image after His pattern, and God is light--in Him is no darkness at all.

Then the goal of all this process is in Ephesians 4:24: "That you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." "That you put on the new man." This is the word "enduo." "Enduo" is aorist--at a point that you decide to start getting restored. It is middle--you will be benefited in your life when you start becoming enlightened again in that perceptive mind. It is infinitive--it is the purpose of God. The soul of a Christian is to be clothed with this new man. What is the new man? Well the new man is that spiritual maturity structure in the soul--that pentagon which is a place of defense and a place of attack. It has grace orientation. It has a relaxed mental attitude. It has a mastery of the details of life. It has the capacity to love. And it has inner happiness.

These are the factors that basically constitute spiritual maturity in our souls. This is what the intake of doctrine enables us to develop. It is doctrine that provides the material to develop these facets because it is the principles of the Word of God that guide our understanding and orient our soul to these concepts and these attitudes as God gives them. The soul of the Christian is to put this on as representing the new man. It is again aorist. It's that point when you develop "epignosis" in the human spirit through your renewed, cleansed, and enlightened perceptive mind. It is middle. You personally benefit by this. It is infinitive. This is God's purpose.

It says "new man." The word new in the Greek is "kainos." "Kainos" does not mean recent. There is a different Greek word for that. This means "new" as a species--a new kind of man. What kind of man does God want you to become? When you have descended into the darkness of a callous condition, the Lord wants us to move back into the "new man" position of the new species. What is the new species? The new species is that which reflects the glory of God, and that's the spiritual maturity structure. When you have this structure functioning in your soul and when you have its facets fully developed, what you have created is that which reflects the glory of God.

Why do you have orientation to grace? Because God gave it to you through His Word. Why can you have a mind of mental attitude love toward people that is free of bitterness so that you have a relaxed mental attitude? Because God gave it to you through His Word. Why can you have a mastery of the details of life so that things are in their proper place? God gave it to you. Why can you love God, your opposite number, and your friends? Because God gave you that capacity. Why do you have inner happiness that's not dependent upon people, circumstances, or anything else--a tribulation outside, but a millennium within your soul? Because God gave you that. This is a new species reflecting the glory of God. This is what God does and it is to His glory. It is functioning toward God and toward man on His divine viewpoint. So the soul is going to move from the chaos of callouses to the maximum happiness as you begin breathing the Word of God.

Here's the description of this new man. We are told that he is made after God. This is one of those prepositions we looked at in the previous session. Here it is with the accusative case. This means "according to." The new man represented by the spiritual maturity structure is created "according to" the pattern of God. What God designed for the soul when He created it was the spiritual maturity structure which reflects His own glory. The translation here should be: "After God in righteousness and holiness of truth." After God is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. This doesn't say, "True holiness," but "in righteousness and the holiness of the truth." The spiritual maturity structure of the soul reflects the glory of God because it expresses His righteousness and His holiness. However, this can only be developed through the intake of the truth. His righteousness is His love of what is right. His Holiness is His rejection of sin.

So the calloused believer can come back. He can come back to the point where once more he can breathe freely again. Let's think it through to be sure we have it straight. We began in Ephesians 4:17. At this point, we have explained to us this very important principle that when a Christian resists the Word of God, he begins to harden himself toward God.

Incidentally, in the case of Pharaoh, for example, the Word of God tells us that Pharaoh repeatedly "hardened himself." If you go back and read that account, you will discover that all of a sudden the record changes, and it no longer says that Pharaoh hardened himself. It then repeatedly says that "God hardened Pharaoh." Pharaoh came to the place where he had constantly resisted the clear declarations of the Word of God. And boy, he couldn't have had it any clearer. He had his messenger Moses and Aaron, and they went up to him eyeball to eyeball and they said, "Mr. Pharaoh, we just talked with God and this is what God says he wants you to do." Now that's as clear as it could be.

Sometimes you and I say, "Well, I just wish I could go to the Lord and just yell up there and say, 'Lord, what should I do about this?'" Then you would listen and get the answer back. You say, "That's how I'd like to deal with God." That's exactly what Pharaoh had. So he was saying "No" to what was evident and clear because Moses, along with saying "I've just talked with God" says, "And I want to show you my credentials." Then he performed the plagues in order to demonstrate to him that he had indeed talked with God. However, Pharaoh said, "No." Pharaoh compromised. He gave in a little; came back a little; hedged around; and, tried to play footsie. And every time he was getting harder and harder and harder until finally his soul was so clogged up that it was no longer possible for him even to return.

I hesitate to say that it is never possible for a Christian to return. But you can get to a point where, in all practical effects, everything that God tells you from that point on is, in effect, God hardening you. That's what happened with Pharaoh. From then on, everything that God told him only made it worse. There comes a point in your life when you are so resistant to the Word of God, and you are so hardened toward Him that everything you hear from the pulpit; everything you read in the Word of God; and, every instruction you see that is indeed the mind of God will only make things worse for you. You toughen up, and you resist, and there is no way for you to return. It begins with a subtle first callous. If you let it go too far as Pharaoh did, it will end in the sin unto death as it did for him eventually, as well as his troops and all those who resisted with him.

Sin creates a hardness of the soul toward spiritual things. Callouses gradually develop and build up. It clogs the breathing of your soul toward God and toward man. You become insensitive toward God, then toward people. Your walk with the Lord then begins to break down and you begin to notice certain factors in that walk. You notice that Bible study is a drag. You really have to get yourself out to church. You really have to force yourself to attend the services. If you manage to make one on Sunday, that may be pretty good, but it's hard to make two. For many, it's hard to make it more than once a month.

But in any case, there was a time when perhaps you were there every time the doors were open. Now you're doing it under compulsion and whipping yourself. You find it hard to pray. You find yourself startled by the fact that you say, "My goodness. I haven't even talked to God all day today. You find yourself dealing with problems, and you're looking for solutions, and you're consulting with people, and all of a sudden you think, "Why didn't I pray about this and talk to God about it?" That's a signal. Your interest in Christian service breaks down. You have very little interests. Mental attitude sins begin to mount. The bitterness is there as well as the anger; the indignation; and, the resistance. You may reflect a spirit of being hot for every new movement that comes along. Callouses make us unstable, and unstable people are forever running around with the latest hot movements, especially in religious things.

So the walk with the Lord breaks down. Our self-awareness is occupied increasingly with ourselves. This expresses itself in pride and self-pity. Our mind is tied into human viewpoint and into the judgments that our human viewpoint makes. Our will goes negative toward the plans that God has for our lives. Our emotions become unstable, and we begin frantically moving around trying to find peace and quietness for our nerves. Our divine standards are overruled in our conscience, and we take human viewpoint standards. We rationalize our sin. Our old sin nature is in complete charge of our life, and our soul, as 1 John 2:9 and 11 tell us, "Walks in darkness."

A Christian in this condition is miserable; he is unforgiving; he is touchy; he's fearful; he's spiritually bored; he feels sorry for himself; he's injured; and, he swings back and forth emotionally. One day he's for something, and the next day he's against it. What you have now is the condition of spiritual emphysema in the soul. The soul is gasping for breath; trying to survive; and, the air that it must breathe is the doctrine of the Word of God. Because it has built up callouses, it cannot get the breath that it needs. You can't exhale divine viewpoint toward God, and you can't exhale divine viewpoint toward people. You are suffering under this blackout condition. It may result in the sin unto death.

So the removal of the callouses is simply this: Number one, when you finally become aware of the negative attitude that you've had towards God's Word, the first thing to do is to confess it to God. After you have confessed, you must forget that sin. You can have no guilt complexes. That throws you right back out of fellowship if you do. Then you have to turn to the Word of God. As you take in the doctrine of the Word of God, this will begin removing the callouses, and one day you'll wake up and say, "I can breathe again."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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