***Callouses on the Soul
RO142-02***

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Today, our subject is "The Divine Hardening." This is segment number two in Romans 11:7-10.

**Are Jews Going to Heaven?**

I watched a TV panel discussion by three well-known Christian leaders this past week on the subject of Jews going to heaven. And it made me wonder, as I listened to the response of these Christian leaders, whether we were all using the same Bible. The master of ceremonies, whom you all know, and whom I will not mention, introduced the subject by ridiculing the absolutism of the fundamentalists who believe that, because the Bible is inerrant, it is the final Word. So, they can definitely, on the basis of the Bible, make the statement that Jews cannot go to heaven if they reject Jesus Christ.

The implication of the master of ceremonies' attack was that it is unreasonable to think that the Jews, who are so devoted to God, would be denied access to heaven simply because they reject Jesus Christ. The panel members, interestingly enough, gave a true biblical explanation of how one gets into heaven: By grace, out of which God gives faith in Jesus Christ, and on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ alone, eternal life is secured. They could not have presented it more clearly, and they could not have presented it more definitively, in terms of the fact that Jesus Christ is the Way into heaven. And He alone is that door of access. The master of ceremonies challenge the reliability of the panel's biblical plan of getting into heaven, since he immediately and logically saw that it eliminates all unbelieving Jews.

Then it became interesting as the members of the panel, one-by-one, responded, and presented the classic example of what is happening today in the reticence and the fear that controls Christians, so that they do not want to state the biblical view as we have been learning it in Romans 9:10-11, concerning the eternal destiny in hell, which is facing all unbelieving Jews. Paul clearly says that that is the case, and that it gives him great grief. He wishes that he could change it. But he says, "This is the case, and there is no way out.

One of the panelists was a lady. This lady was formerly associated with the Oral Roberts organization. Her response to the master of ceremonies on this question of Jews getting into heaven without Jesus Christ was that she did not want to get into a discussion on that controversy. She, in effect, preferred to avoid the controversy, and to let the Jews go into the lake of fire.

Another man who was on the panel is in the business of researching and exposing the fund-raising gimmicks and the frauds which are used by the TV evangelists. He said that there might be another way for the Jews. He was, in effect, avoiding the controversy, and leaving the door open to the delusion that the Jews are not necessarily lost without Jesus Christ.

Another man was one who I considered a super person in the Christian life in his knowledge and in the annunciation of the Christian position. So, I was doubly shocked by his response. He's a newspaper reporter, formerly with the Jerry Falwell organization. He refused to state categorically that unbelieving Jews go into hell. The master of ceremonies was pushing: "Are you saying that the Jews, without Christ, go to hell?" And even this man would not say, "Yes, that's what the Bible says." He was reluctant, for some reason, to state the terrible truth about the Jews, in order, perhaps, to avoid society's rage. After all, he has to sell his articles that he writes for the newspapers. There may be financial retaliation. I don't know what his motivation was. I do know that he knows better.

The prominent emcee, quite properly, after these three responses were given to him, took the panel to task for contradicting themselves, and being inconsistent in claiming, on the one hand, that Jesus Christ was the only door into heaven, but refusing to state the logical and biblical conclusion that unbelieving Jews are all automatically shut out of heaven without Christ. He took them to task that they could not have it both ways. And he was absolutely right.

So, if these three panelists understood Paul's Holy Spirit-led teaching, which we have been studying in Romans 9, 10, and 11, there is no way in the world that they could have given the responses that they did to that question. Had they been willing to state it, they would have indeed served the Jews in a very great way. I thought it was very cruel of them to be speaking at that point in time to millions of people, and not to take the golden opportunity to proclaim what God has revealed in Romans 9, 10 and 11 concerning the impossibility for the Jews, for whom Christ died, to get into heaven without Him.

So, the result of the whole discussion was that religion was dignified as the thing that counts with God, which it is not. It was religion that was put forth as the key thing in being saved. This was presented by Christians who know better, and who know that it is a relationship with Jesus Christ that is the key feature with God. In effect, religion was dignified in relationship with Christ, which was lowered to simply being a mere option among many.

The world of Satan obviously still hates Jesus Christ, and Christians, and Christians are intimidated by this. The world loves the Christians who seek its rewards and its favor, but it hates the Christian who doesn't want the favors and the rewards of our society. The world is extremely antagonized by our exalting Jesus Christ as the only way to get into heaven. But John 14:6 makes it very clear. Jesus says, "I am the Way, and there is no other way, given among men under heaven, by which they must be saved except through Me."

In Romans 11, that we are currently studying, it has been made clear to us that the negative attitude of the Jews toward Jesus Christ, when He arrived on earth, has resulted in God delivering up to the consequence of that attitude by hardening them over the centuries against Jesus Christ. Only a small number of Jews, whom God has elected to save, have had their hardening toward Christ removed, so that they could exercise faith in Him. The vast majority of Jews, however, have been left in this hardened condition, and they're marching all together into the lake of fire.

The Old Testament prophets, Moses and Isaiah, describe the hardening of the Jews as "drowsy eyes and deaf ears," which prevent them from grasping the fact that Jesus Christ is their Messiah Savior. Paul has used the analogy that God has set a table before the Jews – a table which was rich in spiritual enlightenment, in the form of the Mosaic Law, and in the form of the Old Testament Scriptures. And Paul says, "This, which should have been food unto eternal life (this spiritual enrichment) has become for them food unto their eternal death, because they are depending upon keeping the rules, and the works system, and the rituals, and the religious holidays of the Mosaic Law. And they are ignoring the person of Jesus Christ, for whom all of these things were but illustrations.

So, the very thing that God has given them to enlighten them in the form of the Mosaic Law and the Old Testament Scriptures, and which proclaimed Jesus Christ, has become the source of God's condemnation of the Jews, as they continue pursuing their works; pursuing their ritual; and, pursuing their morality, but rejecting the person of Christ.

**Retribution**

Today, we begin at Romans 11:9, where Paul quotes David as saying, "Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block." The last thing that verse 9 says is that the attitude of the Jews toward Jesus Christ, and toward the spiritual enlightenment which God has given them, would be "a recompense unto them." The word "recompense" in the Greek Bible looks like this: "antapodoma." This word means "a retribution." When you reject Jesus Christ as Savior, you can count on divine retribution. Most people say, "Baloney, that's not the case." The Bible says, "You better believe it." If you reject Jesus Christ, you will have an antapodoma, which is a severe, divine retribution. This word is quite significant because it is actually made up of three words strung together. The first is this word "ante," which is a preposition, which, when added to a word, indicates that there will be a full and complete return. It is a way of stressing that you're going to get the full measure. You're not going to get a half a cup of retribution. The second word is also a preposition, "apo," which indicates that you're going to get something back for what you have done. So, the first word says, "You're going to get full measure." Full measure of what? You're going to get full measure back for what you have done. And the last word here, "doma" is a noun which represents something that is an actual thing that happens. It's something concrete. You're actually going to receive this full, absolute measure.

So, the word, just the way it is structured, is a word that, in the Greek, stands out on the page and says, "Boy, when God acts now, you are going to get everything that you deserve, to the last drop." When he says, "Recompense to them," he is, of course, referring to unbelieving Jews. The divine recompense came from God, the judge, on those who are hardened toward Jesus Christ, so that God's justice was executed.

Well, to this day, as you know, the Jews have rejected Jesus Christ for their salvation, and they are in a spiritually hardened condition. This is the worst possible condition for a human being to be in. So, they reject Jesus Christ, the bread of life, and they eat poison of their human good works for their salvation. The Jews rejected the true light of the world, Jesus Christ, and they followed the darkness of their rabbis. The Jews reject Jesus Christ, the water of life, and they drink the deadly waters of human viewpoint deceit.

Verse 10 concludes this section. Paul says, "Let their eyes be darkened (quoting again here from the Old Testament), and bow down their backs always. Let their eyes (referring to the organ of sight) be darkened." The word "darkened" in the Greek Bible is the word "skotizo." "Skotizo" means that you are incapable of seeing anything – total blackout. In this case, it refers to a spiritual incapacity. So, it means that these people cannot see spiritual reality. When it stands before them, they don't know the real thing. They're totally incapable. This passage is being quoted from Psalm 69:23. It calls for spiritual blindness upon the Jews, who there in Psalm 69, looked upon the suffering of David. That psalm deals with the suffering that David has experienced at the hands of his enemies. And his fellow Jews, who did not like David's attitude toward God (his devotion and his godliness), were glad to see troubles come to David. So, they rejoiced in the hard times that David was experiencing. And the result was that David looks to God, and he calls down God's curse upon them. This is not an evil, vindictive thing to do. It is the right thing to do. It is the point of justice. These people deserved this treatment, and David was saying, "God, deal with them according to Your fairness and to Your justice." And David expressed it as calling upon them an incapacity for them to be able to see spiritual things. They have this spiritual blindness, so that a darkness surrounds them relative to the things of God.

Now, Paul takes this quotation of David from Psalm 69:23, and he applies David's curse to the Jews who reject Jesus Christ. Paul says, "I quote David, and I call, as David did, upon you, O God, to give the Jews what they had coming because of their antagonism toward God's man, David – that you give them the same thing they now deserve because of their antagonism toward God's man, Jesus Christ. That they should not what? Well, they should not "see." This is the Greek word "blepo." "Blepo" is the Greek word for "looking upon a specific focus." There's another Greek word that is describing the panoramic view. That's the Greek word "horao." But this word "blepo" is looking on a thing, and focusing on a specific thing. And here, of course, that specific thing is Jesus Christ.

So, retribution for the joy of seeing the righteous Jesus suffer, which the scribes and the Pharisees and the people of Jerusalem rejoiced to see Jesus suffering: that for that, now, they should suffer the consequences of spiritual blindness – as He died in agony on the cross, that they die in spiritual blindness; and, that their darkened eyes would now keep them from seeing the trap into which they were entering when they rejected Jesus Christ. And that's the point here. He has said, "Let this table and spiritual enlightenment information prove to be a trap. That's like something that you catch an animal in. That is a stumbling block – something that you make a person stumble over, so that he falls into a pit. May all this be something now that brings them unto their own death – divine justice against their negative attitude toward Jesus Christ. The Jews did not see that their prosperous spiritual table of the Mosaic Law was leading them away from the very Savior that they were looking for, and God's justice properly cursed them for that. The Jews, to this day, still think that God is blessing them, even after rejecting Jesus Christ. So, they keep moving in, and they spring upon themselves continually the trap which results in their eternal death and their eternal doom in the lake of fire.

Furthermore, King David in making this statement in his day, called upon God to do one thing more to the Jews. He said, "To bow down their backs always." The Greek word is "sugkampto.” "Sugkampto" means "to bend down under a load. Picture a person who is carrying a heavy load on his back, and what he is doing is being bowed down under the pressure of what he is carrying. And the load is always there so that he cannot stand up straight. This is a figurative reference to a slave carrying the yoke of bondage on his back. This, again, is a command that is set forth here. David is calling upon God to command that this should happen. And he says, "Let this happen to the Jews *always* (throughout their history). May they find themselves being borne down under pressure."

Well, if there's anything that has come to pass for the Jewish people, it certainly has been that. Since they crucified Jesus Christ, they have been under enormous pressure. They have suffered from one generation to the next. They have borne the suffering of continuous grief. And, of course, the final blow to them, in New Testament times, was when the Romans finally came in, in the year 70 A.D., and they destroyed the city of Jerusalem; they destroyed the temple; and, they took the people off into slavery and scattered them throughout the world. And the Jews have lost their country. They lost their nation. They lost their system of worship. They lost their identity as a separate people in a political geographical location until 1948, when God finally brought them back together in their land again, and began preparing them for their entrance into the Millennial Kingdom. The final blow was 70 A.D. The Jews rejected the freedom that was theirs, potentially, through Jesus Christ, and they ended up in eternal slavery and temporal suffering as well.

Today, we're going to pursue the subject of callouses (hardness) upon the soul, because we Christians can be playing the same stupid game that the Jews did, with the same terrible consequences. Oh, we'll go to heaven, but we will go to heaven at having lost such great personal opportunities and rewards in heaven as to cause tears when we discover up there what we have done to ourselves. We find this in the book of Ephesians in Ephesians 4:17. In Ephesians 4:14, the apostle Paul envisions the ideal of the Christian life for these Christians. He says, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive." Christians, when they come into the Christian life, are not informed on spiritual things. Well, this is what Paul says: "Let's face it. You're born again. All of us are like that." And it's going to take a couple of years of good, solid instruction in the Word of God, which most new born Christians, I'm sorry to say, never get. But it'll take a couple of years of solid instruction in the Word of God before you can finally stand up and say something that will be edifying to people; that will be instructive; that will be illuminating; and, that will ennoble their souls.

Paul says, "We should all come to the point where we are not babbling kids, and where we are not caught up with every little, trivial, new doctrine that comes along. When somebody comes up with a doctrine, we will know the story. When Oral Roberts stands up and tells us that God is holding him hostage for $8 million, and he's going to knock him off if we don't give him the money, you know enough doctor to know that the guy's a liar, and you are not going to be taken in by that. But most of the charismatics rush home to get their checkbooks out, to start pouring the money into good old Oral, because they are such children that they do not understand the truth of the Word of God. And they are blown around very easily by every stupidity.

It also says, "By the slight of men, practicing cunning craftiness, and people who are lying in wait to deceive." Lying in wait to deceive who? Christians. This is not just the unsaved, but lying in wait to deceive Christians. And, as you know, again, putting this in the natural realm: the smaller the child is, the more you can con him. When a child is young, you can deceive him. You can get him to do things by distracting him, and directing him in different directions. But the more mature the person becomes, the less you can deceive him. Now, Paul says, "That's never going to happen until you have Christians who have risen through the training of the Word of God, and through their own volitional, positive acceptance of the Word of God, and being willing to rise to that capacity, to have the spiritual maturity to like that.

Then he comes to verse 17, and he gives the reason why this is so critically important. In verse 17, Paul says. "This I say, therefore. This is an explanation in view of the need of Christians to grow into spiritual stability. Some of the Ephesian Christians were immature people, and that was hindering their capacity to walk with the Lord. He says, "This, I say, and I testify in the Lord." To say, "I testify in the Lord" is like raising your hand and saying, "I am now taking an oath before God. I'm going to tell you something that is absolutely the truth, and I swear before God that it is the truth:" "That you henceforth (that you are now born-again believers, not the unbelievers, but you born-again people) walk not as other gentiles."

**Vanity (Emptiness)**

You do not continue to live your life as the other gentiles around you, who are not believers, and who are characterized by vanity in the mind. The word "vanity" is the Greek word "mataiotes." "Mataiotes" means "emptiness." It is the keyword which will describe the first step downward into reversionism, and into the worst kind of carnality on your part as a Christian. And it all starts with building a hardness on your soul against God. This is number one. When an emptiness develops in your soul, it is the first step toward hardness toward God.

Now, the unsaved person has an emptiness in his mind. He has absolutely no understanding of Scripture. Therefore, he has no divine viewpoint concepts whatsoever. He is totally empty. The Christians can create the same state of mental emptiness of divine viewpoint by negative responses to Bible doctrine principles which are taught him.

**Callouses (Hardness)**

So, what we're saying is: here is a mind. You come into the Christian life, and it is filled with human viewpoint. When you come into the Christian life, this is the mind – full of darkened human viewpoint. It is empty of all divine viewpoint. In comes the divine viewpoint of the Word of God, and gradually that darkness is pushed back until there is full enlightenment, and divine viewpoint has replaced that darkness. But for the Christian, it is possible to reverse that whole process, and to empty the mind out of divine viewpoints, and to stuff it full of human viewpoint. When you do that, callouses build up upon the soul, and hardness takes place.

In Colossians 1:9-10, we have this principle of removing human viewpoint darkness laid out before us. Paul says, "For this cause, we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you." What is Paul praying for these Colossians Christians, of whom we heard so many good things? "To desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will." This is the Greek word "epignosis," full knowledge – knowledge that you have believed, not knowledge you have heard, but knowledge that you believed, such that you live accordingly. He says, "I want you to be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, for the purpose that you might be worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work (that's going to get eternal rewards), and increasing in the knowledge, (and there it is again – the same word again, the second time) in the full knowledge of the Word of God."

So, I call your attention to the Colossians passage to point out to you that we all come into the Christian life darkened and dulled with human viewpoints. We've got to push all that stuff out. And when we push it out, we become increasingly tender and sensitive toward God, in how we think; how we feel about things; and, how we act. But the whole thing can be reversed. And this is what Paul is talking about here in Ephesians 4. He says, "I don't want you to come to the position of emptiness in your mind." Emptiness of what? Emptiness of God's viewpoint.

**A Vacuum**

All of you know enough about science such that if you take a sphere, and you empty it, what will be created is a vacuum. And a vacuum, the minute you give it an entrance, will suck in to equalize. A vacuum always wants to eliminate itself. The same is true in spiritual things. When you fill your mind with human viewpoint, you have created a vacuum relative to divine viewpoint principles. And when you have created a vacuum in your soul that is empty of divine viewpoint, then your mind begins taking into it all of the things from the world around you. You will find that you are ready to respond with every evil thing that the world has to offer. You will suck into your mind false doctrine. You will suck in human viewpoint conclusions. You will draw in religion. You will draw in guilt complexes that will eat away at you, so that you're always frustrated and unhappy. You will respond readily to the world. You'll find no problem about attending motion pictures in general, and what is portrayed out there. You'll find no problem of tolerating the vileness of our society. You'll find no difficulty toward the undermining of the Constitution of the United States. All of you are well acquainted with that since we have had such an extensive study on that subject.

**A Hardness on the Soul**

It is these people with this kind of viewpoint who are also contributing to the eventual demise of this nation, because the Word of God says that this emptiness in the mind brings in all kinds of evil things. And these gradually build up a hardness on the soul toward God. And the soul then enters increasing frustrations; restlessness; dissatisfaction; and, unhappiness. It is the carnality of the old sin nature dominating the soul. The thinking of some Christians, then indeed, can only be described as being crazy.

**The Understanding is Darkened**

Verse 18 says that this has a very dramatic effect. When that mind is empty of God's viewpoint, a vacuum is created. Human viewpoint concepts of the world are drawn in. Verse 18 says, "Having the understanding darkened." The word "understanding" is the Greek word "dianoia." "Dianoia" means "to think through." It is the capacity to think a thing through. That's literally what the word means.

**Darkened**

So, here in your mind (in your brain), this capacity to think through, we're told, is completely removed. This capacity to be able to think through to reality, because you become hardened, has become a source of darkness: "Having the capacity to think through darkened." The word "darkened" is "skotizo," which means "a total blackout." This is a blackout of the mind to divine viewpoint, because of all the things brought in from the world system. And this happens in the past, and then it continues. It is done to the person. This is a passive word. It's done to him because of his rejection of the Word of God.

**Emptiness**

So, the mind is empty of God's viewpoint. A vacuum is set up. The misconceptions of the world system are brought into the mind. Gradually, the Christian who has enlightenment from God finds that the bulb is getting dimmer and dimmer in his mind (in his thinking). Pretty soon, he's to the point where his mind is totally blacked out. And the saddest thing about it is that the Christian often doesn't realize that that's happened to him.

**The Effects**

The effects is disastrous. It has a terrible effect upon love, which is the key feature of the Christian life. When the soul becomes darkened in this way, we are then incapable of loving God with our whole being. We cannot love the right person of the opposite sex. We cannot maintain stable affection with our friends. We can't do anything that's going to make us happy. The blocked out of the mind, as a matter of fact, causes us to do the opposite. We get to be friendly, and we marry the wrong person. You see it all the time, don't you? You shake your head and say, "I can't believe it? Did you hear who married whom? I can't believe anybody would do that." Here's a Christian that's got some quality; some enlightenment; and, some capacity in the Word of God, and they marry somebody that makes them a clod. Isn't it wonderful to be married to an old goat that can't appreciate the Word of God; or, to be married to some pig who could only wallow in the dirt of the world system? And you are a child of God. You are making close bosom-buddies with people, and you cannot appreciate the pearls of the Word of God when they're cast before them, because of their pig mentality. The mind is attached to loyalties that should not be loyal. You have lack of support for the things you should be supporting. These are all the terrible things that gradually come into the life of a Christian who has permitted his mind to be darkened because of his indifference toward standing and operating on the Word of God.

However, it gets worse than that, because verse 18 goes on and says, "The result is being alienated from the life of God." The mind's capacity to think is blacked out by this false information. What we believe determines what we do, and what we believe comes to the fore when we have an opportunity to do evil. Oh, it is so easy to stand up here on Sunday, and do the teaching in Sunday school and Training Union. It's so easy to do it in club. It's so easy to talk about it at the Lord's Supper meeting – about what we believe about the Word of God. But how about the time when you walk up to the grocery store, and you give the lady a $10 bill, and she gives you change for a $20 dollar bill? That is the point in time where what you believe is going to take effect or not. And you will then see what it is that you truly believe.

**Subjectivity**

What this Scripture says is that what happens to people is that: "They are estranged (they are separated) from the life of God" (life in regeneration – the new life in Christ, and the life that has oriented us to what God has for us). Alienation from God's point of view, and from his lifestyle, is what this verse is talking about. And it leads them to a tremendous subjectivity.

When you are in tune with the eternal life of God, because your mind is filled with the Scriptures of the Word of God, then you are not a subjective person. You are very objective: in the way you look at people; in what you think about people; and, you're very objective in how you treat people. But it is the yo-yo whose mind has been detached from spiritual reality, and who is in a condition of spiritual darkness, that cannot treat people without subjectivity. You cannot be fair then. You cannot be honest with people. You cannot deal with the facts. You can only get wrapped up in your wild marauding emotions.

The Christian's reception of the Word of God is dependent only upon the fact that it is the truth. You might be disappointed in the communicator somewhere down the line, but that does not change the truth of the Word of God. And when you come in with subjective guidelines, then your emotions govern, and then you view things on the basis of how you feel about things, and your experiences, and you're off into an orgy of self-pity. There's a great yearning for happiness on the part of the person who has detached himself from the life of God. And that person seeks that happiness in a variety of ways, and never finds it.

These are the Christians who really rack up their lives. They're trying to find the happiness and the satisfaction life that has eluded them because they have cut themselves off from the Word of God. They don't come to church; they don't read the Bible; they don't listen to tapes; they don't feed on the Word of God; they don't act upon the Word of God; they don't think that the battle is the Lord's; and, they don't stand by and say, "God, whatever else I'm going to do, I'm going to be a decent, kindly, loving person in how I deal with other people. And I will let you resolve all the difficulties of life that I think need to be resolved, because I'm sure I'm not able to do it." Now, that is maturity. But the person whose mind is alienated from this new life we have in God does not act like that. Why?

**The Mind of the Soul is Hardened**

Well, we come to the climax: Paul says, "This terrible condition exists in the unsaved and in the carnal Christian because of the blindness of their hearts." This word "blindness" is not really "blindness." It's the Greek word "porosis," and it means "hardening:" “Because of the callouses upon their heart." And the word "heart" here is "kardia," and in this case, it is used metaphorically (symbolically) for the mind. That is because the mind of the soul is hardened toward God. This is what Paul is leading up to, such that he says, "You will never be a mature Christian, and you cannot walk as a mature Christian, if you have a mind that is hardened toward God, because you are operating on the world's system of thinking."

This is a chain reaction in a Christian to this hardened condition. You hear the Word of God taught, and you go negative to it. How do you go negative toward what is taught? Well, you don't show up in church. That's the first way. Or you think that it's not true – what you're hearing. Or you just ignore it. Or you think it's true, but you compromise on it. When you do that, you enter into a state of carnality, and the flow of divine viewpoint to your mind is shut off. The result is that a vacuum develops in you're thinking – a vacuum of divine viewpoint. When the vacuum is filled with the human viewpoint of the world, you begin developing callouses on the facets of your soul. And that is precisely, incidentally, the word that the Bible uses. It says, "You become hardened."

You develop callouses one layer upon another: upon your mind; upon your will; and, upon your emotions, so that you become insensitive to God in all those areas: "God, what do you think? How can I tell you? I haven't got any sensitivity to what you think: God, how do you feel about this thing? I know what I feel. How do you feel? How can I tell? There is no possible way for me to know how God feels: God, what would you do here? What is Your will for me here? I have no idea in the world. I'm so hardened against you that I can't sense Your will." It is a terrible thing to be hardened. And for a Christian, it is even greater. So, false doctrine (human viewpoint) comes into your mind to fill the vacuum. And the result is that your mind becomes a dark place toward the things of God, and then you have no guidance for social relationships.

**Abortion**

I was listening the other day to a discussion between Bill Moyers and Justice Blackman on the Supreme Court. Bill Moyers was discussing this problem of abortion, and how the court had come to that decision. And Justice Blackmun had written the opinion of the majority. And in the process, Justice Blackmun said, "We made this decision on the basis that we believe that the Constitution provides privacy." Moyers said, "But it doesn't say that anywhere." Blackman said, "Well, that's true. But you see, we don't believe that the Constitution should be interpreted in terms of what the founding fathers meant by these things in their day. We believe it should be interpreted upon how it is suitable to our day." This is from a justice on the Supreme Court, which means, "Hey boys, the Constitution is what we nine evil people up here say it is. And we will impose it upon you accordingly." So, millions of innocent children have been slaughtered. "Murdered" is the word for abortion, indeed. Millions of children have been murdered by the decision of nine evil men who decided that they could find something in the Constitution that they wanted, which was not there by the original intent.

**Homosexuality**

The subject went on to the question of morality because this dealt with a moral issue. Finally, Moyer said to the justice, "You know, I was raised a Baptist." And I've heard, on other occasions, Bill Moyers say, "I went to Washington with all of my Baptist background and belief in the Bible that had no mistakes in it, and I learned better. I have gone beyond that now." He said, "I'm a Baptist, and you're a Methodist. And I was taught that homosexuality is an evil because the Bible says. "You were reared such that you were probably told the same thing. Do you think that sodomy is wrong?" And I guess maybe a minute went by as Justice Blackman thought and considered, and thought it over, and mulled it over. And it was immediately evident that he was not saying, "What does the Bible say on that subject so that I can answer that question?" He was again, thinking on it from his human viewpoint darkness. And eventually, he said, "Well, it is hard for me to try to legislate how other people should live." And He just rattled on in that direction. But he never said, "Yes, I believe sodomy is wrong."

**AIDS**

What is the source of the AIDS epidemic? There's a very sobering Scripture in Romans 1:18 that applies directly to this, and sums up what we've been saying. Romans 1:18 says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness. Yes, everybody hates to hear us say that AIDS is a judgment of God upon those who are acting in moral ungodliness and righteousness. But you better it. It is the judgment of God. It is exactly what Romans 118 says, "What God brings in" – this judgment upon darkness. And it is people who are hardened toward the truth. They hold the truth of God in unrighteousness. That means that they don't care what the Bible says. They don't care what God says. They don't care from how to go to heaven, or from how to live your life, to what you may expect an eternity. And when that happens, God says, "You brought such a darkness into your soul that you're like a person stumbling around in a dark room." That's what happens spiritually. But it is so sad.

There is this strange thing about hardening toward God that it causes everything to reverse in your judgment. I like to describe it as what happens when you look through a camera lens, and you're taking a picture, and the pictures is upside down in the lens, because the lens reverses it on the film. And everything comes out backwards. What God wants you to do, you don't do. How God wants you to feel about something – you don't feel that way. How God wants you to think about something – you don't think the way He thinks. You're hardened toward it.

Well, we have not finished, because we have only described the condition that is attained. Out of this condition now come some of the most disastrous consequence to a human being. And it was this condition that was true of the Jews that brought them to the consequence of their eternal doom to this very day – hardness toward God in spiritual things.

I cannot close without telling you that all of this is reversed by simply saying, "I'm wrong, and I confess it to the Father, and I'm going to apply what the Word of God calls upon me to do. And I'm going to turn back. If you've been at this for a long time, your hardness toward God will not go immediately. You get a callous on some part of your body, you don't just remove it quickly. It has to come off (peel off) layer-by-layer. But you will discover that once you're back in temporal fellowship, suddenly you begin to have sensitivity in those points at which you are hardened toward God. So, the first step is to confess and admit, and then start acting in ways that are compatible with the Word of God.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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