**Lessons from a Lockdown**

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**Day 46**

**Ephesians 4:17-19**

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

***Questions for Personal Reflection:***

1. When do our thoughts become futile or useless? When do I indulge in useless thoughts?
2. What does it mean to be darkened in understanding and separated from the life of God?
3. What causes the hardening of my heart? What can I do to prevent this?
4. When am I tempted to give in to sin? What temptations are the most difficult for me to overcome?
5. When was the last time I sinned? How did I feel after?

***Insight:***

Christians should not live like those who don’t have relationship with God. It begins with our thoughts. Our thoughts should not be futile, useless or worthless. When do our thoughts become like this? When we don’t think about things which matter. When we worry. When we sin in our thoughts. God has given us a wonderful mind that can think about godly things. Why should we waste our thoughts on useless things? Imagine a computer which we can use to create insightful writings, beautiful designs or drawings or uplifting music. Now imagine it being used to write lies and hateful speech, obscene designs or discouraging music. What a waste right? Why indulge in things that can hurt us when we can use our minds to focus on things that can help us? What kind of thoughts have you been having lately?

Sometimes futile thinking may not be obvious initially. But in the long run, foolish thinking will be revealed for what it is. These include plans to get rich but sacrifice more important things in life. These may be selfish ambitions that motivate us to achieve our goals but feel empty anyway. These may be schemes we draw up to avoid consequences of our actions. Foolish thinking may at the start give us money, comfort, popularity or power. But eventually the rewards of futile thoughts do not last. Why waste your thoughts on things which can only give empty pleasures or fleeting rewards?

Let us remember that we only have a limited time on this earth. While our thoughts may be many, the number is finite. God has given us this special privilege of being be able to think, to reason and to dream. For what purpose will we use this wonderful gift?

The thing about foolish thinking is that we often we do not notice our own foolishness. In fact, the more foolish we are, the more we don’t know it. That is why we need to surround ourselves with friends who will tell us immediately if we are acting foolishly. The person who shuts down people who dare talk to him about his foolishness is the greatest fool.

Christians should no longer be darkened in their understanding nor separated from the life of God. Something is darkened when there is not enough light. When we are darkened in our understanding it’s difficult for us to figure things out because we can’t see clearly enough. We don’t see life from God’s eyes so we wander away from the life God gives. We become lost. We used to be lost so we don’t want to be like that ever again.

But why does this darkening happen? It is because of the ignorance that is due to the hardening of hearts. People miss out on the life of God because of ignorance caused by a hard heart. Therefore, this ignorance is a matter of choice. It is our fault. This ignorance is not because of a lack of intelligence. We can read the Bible and even memorize it but we can still be ignorant if we have a hard heart. If we want to know God’s will and have the life God wants us to have, we need to prevent our hearts from getting hard.

We know our hearts are getting hard when it loses sensitivity, it becomes numb. This happens when we no longer feel broken about our sins. We don’t feel like confessing. We don’t feel like repenting. We don’t feel sorry we hurt God. We don’t feel bad about hurting other people. We don’t feel guilty about sin. We don’t feel.

Mass media, the internet, and social media are filled with content that show how people in the world have lost sensitivity to sin. Not only are sinful behaviors tolerated, they are even glorified and praised. Those who don’t share the world’s acceptance of sinful behavior are ridiculed for being backward and prejudiced. We shouldn’t be like the world. But as we get bombarded by these sinful values, we may lose our sensitivity to sin. We should therefore shield ourselves and those we love so we do not get needlessly exposed to these sinful influences. Sin is more infectious and fatal than any virus. We should therefore protect ourselves accordingly. We should not allow our hearts to harden.

Above all else, let us guard our hearts during this lockdown.