

## GROWING COLD

### Background

In our love for the Lord (as in any love-relationship), devotion can wane. We find ourselves 'slipping' – losing our spiritual glow (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:19). If we are not careful, the slipping becomes backsliding; and this is a very dangerous spiritual state as it can eventually lead to willful apostasy – a form of spiritual 'divorce'. We have to be on our guard so that we do not develop a cold heart towards the Lord Jesus.

### What are some of the things to watch out for so that we do not grow cold spiritually?

**Unbelief** Mark 6:5–6; Hebrews 3:12; Jude 1:5

**Bitterness** Hebrews 12:15

**Unforgiveness** Matthew 5:23–24, 6:12; Romans 12:19–20

**Cherishing sin** Psalm 66:18

**Sinful relationships** 2 Corinthians 6:14–15 (but see 1 Corinthians 5:9–10!)

**Satan's activity** Matthew 4:3; Luke 8:12

**Pride and snobbery** Luke 18:9–14; John 5:44; Romans 10:3; 1 Corinthians 8:2–3; 1 John 1:8–10; Revelation 3:17–18

**Argumentativeness** Matthew 16:8; Romans 14:1; 2 Timothy 2:14, 16, 23

**Worry** Matthew 6:31, 34; Philippians 4:6–7

**Debts** Romans 13:8

**Bad conscience** Acts 24:16; 1 Timothy 1:19, 3:9; Titus 1:15

**Impurity** Mark 7:20–23; 1 Corinthians 9:24–27; 10:6, 13

**Gossiping** (which can include 'confessing' other people's faults, real or imagined) Leviticus 19:16; Psalm 101:5; Romans 1:29–30; James 3:2–10

**Neglect of prayer** Matthew 26:41; Luke 21:36

**Other priorities** Matthew 6:33, 13:22

**Ungodly influences** Matthew 24:12

### What is the remedy?

All sin clouds our relationship with the Lord, but it is clinging to it which is the ongoing problem. The Lord knows our frailty and is quick to forgive when we repent (Psalm 103:8–14) – which includes turning from whatever sin we may have been committing. However, when we are slow to confess our sin we are treating our relationship with the Lord as unimportant, and that offends him. We become estranged. If tempted to backslide, we need to heed the warning in Hebrews 10:26–31.

The remedy lies in our being quick to come to the Lord Jesus for forgiveness and restoration when we become aware of sin and of coldness towards him. Be alert! Falling into sin is one thing: being willing to live with it in our lives is quite another. Acceptance of sin leads to coldness.

It is vital that our relationship with the Lord is cultivated as our absolute priority and, as we saw in Unit 25 (*Love*), our love for him is not just an emotional kind of 'love' relationship, there is a connection with *obedience* to him. "If you love [agape] me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15); and, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my [agape] love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (John 15:10).

1 Corinthians 9:26–27; Philippians 3:14; 1 Timothy 6:12, 2:8; Hebrews 12:1