

# They Drank From the River, Died in the Wilderness, Part 2

by David Ravenhill

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a disciplined and obedient life, despite the privileges and blessings we receive from God.*

**Duration:** 45:15

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 9:24

**Topics:** "Overcoming", "Perseverance", "Self-Control"

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## Description

David Ravenhill emphasizes the importance of perseverance in the Christian race, drawing parallels between the Israelites' journey and the challenges faced by the Corinthian church. He highlights that despite the Israelites' privileges, many fell short due to their cravings for evil and lack of self-discipline. Ravenhill warns that starting well is not enough; one must finish the race to receive the crown. He urges believers to learn from the examples of privilege, perversity, punishment, and perfidy, stressing the need for self-control and faithfulness to God. The sermon serves as a call to remain vigilant against the temptations that can lead to spiritual disqualification.

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## Transcript

We are imperishable. Therefore, I run in such a way as not without aim. I box in such a way as not just beating the air.

I buffet my body. I make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified. For I don't want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, all passed through the sea, were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

They all ate the same spiritual food. They all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them, God was not well pleased, for they were laid low in the wilderness.

Now, these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things as they also crave, and then he goes on to list the other sins. So you can see now, in the mind of Paul, this race. We're all in a race.

I'm in a race. Israel was in a race. They all started out well, but they didn't win.

They didn't finish. His obsession is with finishing. His obsession is with winning.

His obsession is with getting the crown at the end of it. And he's trying to, you know, labor the point here to the Corinthians. Corinthians, it's not how you begin that matters.

You see, the Church of Corinth here had been blessed incredibly with privilege. I mean, they were not lacking in any of the gifts. They had words of knowledge and wisdom and, you know, power gifts that were being manifest, all these things.

In other words, they had been tremendously privileged by God. And yet, they were in danger now of going back into their old lifestyle. They were in danger of being sucked back in to the idol temples that they come out of, and eating the food that had been sacrificed to idols.

And most of those idol temples, of course, were involved in immorality and, obviously, idolatry. And so, he's lightening the nation of Israel. He says, listen, these are some of the things that our forefathers stumbled with.

And as a result, they died. They got involved in immorality. They got involved in idolatry.

They got to have problems with food, and so on. And you are facing the same thing. And so, this is the illustration.

It's not the beginning. They all started the race. The gun sounded, if you like, there in Egypt.

And God sort of fired the gun. The Passover lamb, the blood was shed, and so on. They came out with, you know, a million people started this race, but only two finished.

And that's pretty bad odds, really. That's, you know, where you've got one million, and only Joshua and Caleb out of the original ones that started the race make it into the purpose of God. And so, he says, listen, if you think you're going to stand, take heed.

Now, he's not trying to be discouraging here. He's just saying, listen, we've got to buffet our bodies. We've got to be disciplined.

We've got to maintain a vision and an objective. Otherwise, we can be guilty of doing the same thing. And so, he says, all these things that happened to them are examples for us.

Now, there's four examples that we want to look at. First of all, the example of privilege. Secondly, the example of perversity.

Third, the example of punishment. And fourthly, the example of perfidy. Now, perfidy is a word that I discovered in the thesaurus.

And it means unfaithfulness, or disloyalty, or breaking of a vow or a promise. So, I'll explain that a little later on when we get to it. First of all, examples of privilege.

This is what Paul is talking about. Now, I don't want you to be unaware. In other words, I don't want you to be ignorant of all the damages that Israel had.

And he's saying, listen, you think that advantage is the thing that's going to get you by. You've been blessed with every spiritual gift. You're not lacking.

You're not coming behind in any of the gifts and so on. But he said, let me tell you about your forefathers. Let me tell you about the nation of Israel.

Talk about privilege. They had incredible privileges. Every single one of them.

All, all, all. They were all in this race. First of all, he says they were under the cloud.

Now, what was the cloud? The cloud was a sign of God's continuous presence with them. It was the cloud of His presence. It was also evidence of His protection.

That cloud, if you've ever studied the cloud itself, was not, you know, just a cloud that sort of went straight up. It was a cloud that sort of mushroomed out and protected them. It literally was, if you like, their air conditioning, their divine umbrella, if you like.

They were out, after all, in the wilderness, in the blazing heat. There were two things about the wilderness that were a problem. The intense heat during the day and the intense cold at night.

That's why the Bible says the sun will not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. There were two extremes in the desert. And God's way of taking care of that was to put up this huge umbrella, obviously this cloud that just encompassed the entire camp.

And it does say the cloud hovered over them. There are scriptures that bring that out. Numbers 13, verse 14, I think is one of them here.

And since I've been told to take as much time as I need, I'll try and respect that. But let me just read this to you. Did I say Numbers 13, 14? I think maybe it's 14, 13.

Because that isn't right. Yeah, it's 14, 14, sorry. They will tell it to the inhabitants of the land.

They have heard that thou, O Lord, art in the midst of thy people. For thou, O Lord, art seen eye to eye, while thy cloud stands over them. That is, go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and as a pillar of fire by night.

Notice how the cloud stood over them. It literally was this sort of divine umbrella that kept them from the intense heat of the desert. And then at night time, they had God's heating system that was this pillar of fire.

And it was more than just something I'm convinced of that gave them light and illumination. But it also, it was a source of heat. You know, we're down in Florida where we're living right now.

Of course they have all the citrus plantations. And there are certain times during the year when the weather gets unseasonably cold and they get the frost. And what do they do? They go out into the orchard and they put these pots, you know, so many feet apart.

And they turn the heat on. And that heat heats that whole area so that the fruit is not destroyed. And so God protected them by day.

Again, it was sort of an air conditioning system. And by night, by this heating system. But it was a sign again of God's presence, of His protection.

Obviously it was a sign also that He was their potentate. He was their king. He was their leader.

He was their master. And so everything, I mean, all of this was supernatural. When they came out of Egypt, you recall.

The Bible says that this cloud separated them from the Egyptians. And on one side of the cloud it was day. On the other side of the cloud it was night.

In other words, the Egyptians were in darkness and they were in light. Again, God says we are not of the night. We are children of what? The day.

We walk in the light. We don't walk in darkness. The world against sin is typified as darkness.

And so this cloud literally acted as a curtain, a barrier between the two of them. And it was a sovereign thing. They could see it.

They could see there was light here. They could look back and it was just blackness. And the nation of Egypt was in darkness.

I mean, this was a remarkable supernatural manifestation of the presence of God to the nation of Israel. So here it begins by saying they were all under the cloud. They all passed through the sea.

Now the sea again was God's miraculous deliverance of the nation of Israel from Egypt. It was a symbol, if you like, a baptism. They came through the waters.

They left behind the old life with all its bondages, all its servitude, all the taskmasters, all the hardship, all the sorrows and everything else. And if you like, they were raised up into newness of life. They stood there on the banks of the sea and they saw all these taskmasters.

The whole Egyptian army was drowned. I mean, that was an incredible display of God's power. Miriam grabs the tambourine, you know, and there's music, there's dancing as she's singing the song of Moses and so on.

And they're seeing that, you know, these ones that had domination over their life for so many years are now totally and completely cut off. And so the sea again was this miraculous sign and evidence of God's deliverance. The power of sin was broken over their lives.

The taskmasters and everything were drowned and they were raised up into newness of life. And then it says they were all baptized into Moses. It basically means that they were all immersed under the leadership of Moses.

Just about every commentary agrees with that. In other words, they acknowledged that Moses was their leader. To the Jew, this was the greatest leader that you could possibly be under.

I mean, you know, for the Jews that were in Corinth, obviously there were a lot of Gentiles as well. But for the Jew, this was like, man, I mean, we think Paul's great. But to be under Moses, can you imagine being led by Moses? I mean, Moses was sort of the ultimate Jew to the Jews.

And so they were all baptized. In other words, they had the privilege of being under the leadership of this great man of God, this great instrument of God. And then it says they all ate the same spiritual food.

And of course, the spiritual food there was a manna that came down day after day, providing sustenance for them. There was no food in the wilderness. Again, it was supernatural.

And God obviously was trying to teach them a lesson. As He said, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. They had very strict rules.

You see, God was trying to teach them His ways there in the wilderness. That was, you know, a part of His training program. And He said, listen, you can gather it every day, but the day before the Sabbath on Friday, in other words, for them, you've got to gather twice as much.

Because there's not going to be any supply in the morning. It's the Sabbath. I'm not going to work and you can't work.

And so, you know, if you want to eat tomorrow, you better gather it on Friday. And they thought to themselves, well, listen, you know, I don't know if we need to do that. After all, we've had it on Sunday and Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and there's no reason why it shouldn't be there tomorrow.

And so some of them didn't gather it. Guess what? There was no breakfast, you know. On the other hand, there were those that thought, well, what in case there isn't any food tomorrow, I'm going to gather some more.

You see, they didn't really believe the Word of God. God was trying to teach them His Word is reliable. When I say gather, gather.

When I say you don't need to gather, there'll be food in the morning. There'll be food in the morning. And they said, no, well, you know.

See, they didn't really know God. And God was trying to let them know Him. My Word is true.

I can be relied upon. If I say I'll do something, I will do it. If I say I won't do something, I won't do it.

And they say, well, we're not sure. And so there were those that gathered, you know, extra. And they stuffed it under the mattress or under the bed and they woke up in the morning and, you know, honey, did you take a shower last night? You know, what's going on? I mean, you know, and it bred worms and it stunk, the Bible says.

You know, I mean, God allowed this stuff just to ferment and it was, the whole place was smelly. And they learned a lesson. Boy, God, I'd better start listening to you.

I don't want to have to clean house. I mean, this thing has gone through our clothes. I've had to do an extra wash today.

You know, the place just reeks with this terrible smell. So God, again, you know, God, you are right. And so anyway, it was this provision of God and it revealed His concern for them.

Again, He's concerned about not only our spiritual needs but our physical needs. And the Bible says, My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory. And so it showed again God's concern, God's compassion.

But it was supernatural. There was no possible way. They didn't have to plant it.

They didn't have to, you know, wait until the harvest or anything else. It was just there. They didn't have to till the land.

They didn't have to rely upon a certain amount of rainfall and seed and so on. Every single day there was God's provision. And if you've ever studied that, it's interesting that the manna fell around the camp.

So if you've got any bright ideas about not liking being in the will of God, and you thought, you know, I don't like it here in the wilderness. I think I'm going to go two days' journey that way. Guess what? When you woke up in the morning, there was no breakfast.

You see, God had His way of keeping them in the center of His will. All of that was to teach them. I want to lead you.

I want to guide you. YWAM has a saying, where God guides, He provides. And where God leads, He feeds.

And that was true for the nation of Israel. Where God led them, He fed them. And so they soon learned, listen, it's better to be in the center of God's will.

It's better to stay here with the cloud and the pillar of fire, because I know that God's going to take care of me. If I step out of His will, get out from under the cloud, out from away from the fire, and I decide to do my own thing, there's no provision. I'm all alone here in the wilderness.

And so, again, all of this was supernatural. Then He comes to the spiritual drink. And He says, they all drank the same spiritual drink.

Again, God supplying their thirst. Then spoke again of refreshing. And it was supernatural.

Again, it came from the rock. In fact, the Bible calls it the flinty rock. Notice in Psalm 114, talk about something being supernatural.

Flint is about the hardest of all rocks. When I was a little kid, I used to, in England, pick up a flint on the street. And I'd get under the covers in bed at night, and I'd strike those two things together, and it would light up.

The whole thing would sort of light up. We had the old flintlock rifles, and all it is is a piece of incredibly hard stone, flint. But it makes a spark, and then it would ignite the powder and so on.

And the Bible says it was out of a rock of flint that God brought forth a river. I mean, that is supernatural. The hardest substance, and yet out of it comes something that is a source of life for them.

Psalm 114, verse 8, I think. He turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a fountain of water. So there is the type of rock.

Again, sovereign, supernatural. And only God can do that. One writer says this, It became the emblem and demonstration of the divine favor and of a spiritual mercy, the idea of the spiritual mercies bestowed on them by God.

That's Barnes' commentary. Let me read it again. It became the emblem and demonstration of the divine favor and of spiritual mercies bestowed on them by God.

And so all of these things, Paul is saying, were privileges. They were immersed in the supernatural. They were surrounded with the supernatural.

Everywhere they turned, the bread that they ate, or the food that they ate, the water that they drank from, the protection over them, the pillar of fire, all of these things, the provision of Moses, this great man of God. I mean, they had everything going for them that God could give them. He lavished them again with all these privileges.

And so, Paul now is recalling Israel's incredible beginning. This incredible beginning. That the race began with every privilege imaginable.

God provided them again with everything that they needed and they're surrounded by the supernatural. That's the way the race began. They were all in the race.

Number two, they were now examples of perversity. Examples of privilege, but also examples of perversity. In other words, wickedness, sin, departing or deviating.

The word perversity means deviating from what is right or deviating from what is good. It means wickedness or sin. Now, keep in mind as we look at this, that these were written as examples for us.

It's very easy to read the word of God, and we all have a tendency to do this, as a history book. And to sort of look at these people back here and say, well, you know, they were bad. They were wicked.

They were terrible. And so, instead of applying it to ourselves, the Bible says all these things were written for our instruction. Not for the Corinthian instruction right now.

Obviously, there was a time in which that was true. But this is the prophetic application. The word of God is living.

It doesn't just apply to the past. It applies to the present. And so, as we read this, let's not just say, well, boy, that's incredible.

They had all these privileges. Corinth had all these privileges. They had all the gifts of the Spirit working.

But let's look at ourselves. We've got tremendous privileges today. A lot of us have experienced the river.

We're in the blessing of God and so on. We could testify, if we took time right now, of all the blessings that God has given us. But also, we can be examples of perversity as well.

And that's one of the tragedies, again, isn't it, about the house of God. So, some lessons that we can learn. First of all, the privilege does not guarantee us immunity from trials and problems.

In other words, just because they drank from the river did not mean that they didn't face problems and trials and temptations. They did. Privilege does not free us from personal responsibility.

Privilege is not the same as character. Privilege reveals God's nature towards us. But it doesn't say anything of our relationship towards Him, necessarily.

So, in other words, you can be a recipient of the privileges of God. And yet, at the same time, it says nothing about you. I think of a young man right now who is in our church up in the Seattle area who never missed a meeting.

Drove the longest of anybody in the church, something like 60 miles, one way, to church. He and his wife. He used to come to the prayer meetings and so on.

We had a healing evangelist that came, and this man had had some severe problems with his back to the point where they said they couldn't operate it. I think he'd had a couple of discs fused together and so on. He used to be an avid hunter and so on.

And this brother stood up in the meeting and had a word of knowledge. He said, there's somebody here who's got a very severe back problem and God's going to heal you. So he came forward, and this man was healed.

Totally healed. He ran around the church, he bent over. It was incredible.

For two or three weeks, he was totally healed. Still is totally healed. But it was an amazing miracle in this guy's life.

It wasn't just a little bit of a twinge or whatever. It was a very severe condition. And he went backpacking.

He carried his 60-pound bag. He went out hunting again. It was amazing.

And yet he came to me a few weeks after that and he confessed to me that he'd been involved in an incestuous relationship with his daughter. That had gone back. His daughter was in high school.

Gone back all the way until she was like two years of age. And you scratch your head. And you think, God, why this guy? I can give you a dozen people in this church that deserve to be healed, that are living close to you, that are fasting, that are praying, and so on.

In other words, privilege doesn't say anything about us. It just talks about the blessing of God and the goodness of God, you see. And we need to understand that.

So, again, it's not the same as character. All right. There are five major sins, then, that Paul lists here.

As examples of the perversity that they went in. First of all, the sin of greed. The sin of idolatry.

The sin of immorality. The sin of rebellion. And the sin of grumbling.

First of all, the sin of greed. Now, what I don't want to do, necessarily, is get bogged down in the actual circumstances. Let me just give you one illustration concerning this first one.

The sin of greed was this. They got to a point where they didn't like the breakfast cereal, basically. You know.

Cornflakes every day, Lord, is getting... I'm getting tired of cornflakes every day. We want a Big Mac. I mean, this was basically what was going on.

And they sort of, you know, had a tantrum until God finally gave them meat to eat. Now, those were the circumstances. Now, you can't always... What Paul is doing here, he's not necessarily taking that identical

situation.

He's just basically dealing with the area of greed. You know, in other words, we can say, well, I've never been in that place. I don't complain about the breakfast cereal.

I don't complain about this and that and the other thing. No. The basic thought here is greed.

The basic thought is immorality. Not the exact details of how that immorality came about, or how that greed came about, or how that grumbling and murmuring came about. You see, in other words, the Corinthians weren't in a place where they had the same diet for, you know, a couple of months, or maybe a year or so.

So, they could say, well, we've never been in that situation. No. But they were in danger of having a problem with food.

And lusting after food. Going into the idol temples, sitting down with their friends, partying, and so on. And it became a sin, or it became, you know, a major obstacle to some that were weak in the faith, to see them going back in and eating meat sacrificed to idols, and so on.

And so, there was an area of greed there. In other words, they were putting their natural desires above the desires of God. That's basically the essence of the sin of greed.

In other words, they chose to pursue the physical, the natural, the carnal at the expense of the spiritual. They were choosing and coveting, if you like, desiring something that was outside the will of God for them at that particular time. Now, we need to be careful that we're not totally consumed.

The Bible uses the word lust in the King James, that we should not lust after evil things, as they lusted. My translation said they should not crave, but it's that intense longing that absolutely consumes you. Now, it can be an intense longing in our life for a position that God doesn't have for us right now.

For a marriage relationship that God doesn't have for us right now. For something that God says, right now, this is not for you. And yet, we are driven by that thing.

God, I've got to find a mate. I don't care. I've got to find a mate, or I want that position, or I want this thing, or that thing, whatever it is.

And it's allowing the natural to take over from the spiritual. And it's so easy to do that, isn't it? In other words, the lust after that which is outside the will of God. And God calls it evil.

In other words, this was an evil thing. Even though in their case, it was just a matter of the food that they ate. So again, it's putting the will of flesh before the will of God.

You can see now how important it is for us to have self-control. You see, Paul had areas in the natural that his body wanted. Just like we all do.

Wouldn't it be nice to have a big steak? Wouldn't it be nice to have this? Wouldn't it be nice to have a certain car, or a certain house, or that particular dress, or that particular suit, or that sweater, or whatever it is, or that watch that I've been looking at in the jeweler's store, that piece of jewelry. In other words, we become totally consumed with this thing, and it begins to dominate our life, and it becomes our focus rather than the spiritual realm. That's all that this really came down to.

It's like Esau. I suppose maybe one of the better illustrations I could use was Esau. Esau came in, he's famished at the end of the day, and he is consumed with satisfying his physical needs.

Now, he's not wanting to lust after somebody or anything else. All he wants is basically a bowl of chili. That red stuff, I imagine it was chili.

I don't know. It was just basically a bowl of chili. And he was willing to trade in what? His birthright, the spiritual, for the natural.

That was it. Again, he wasn't lusting after his neighbor's wife. He wasn't committing adultery or homosexuality or anything else.

But all of a sudden, he says, listen, if I don't get that, I'm going to die. I want that, and I will pay any price to satisfy my physical desires. What was ruling his life? His body was ruling his life.

His physical desires were ruling his life. Who was the slave? He was the slave, and his body was the master. My body wants to be satisfied.

You see, Paul learns something, and he says, no, body, you are in subjection. You do not get that bowl of chili right now. But in Esau's case, no, his bodily passions governed his life, so that he traded away the spiritual.

All the blessings of God, he forfeited. And then afterwards, when he realized what he'd done, again, he sought it, and the Bible says there was no repentance, even though he sought it with tears. It doesn't mean no repentance in the sense of salvation.

It's no repentance in the sense of privilege. God was not going to repent, because he'd already given his blessing to Jacob. And God said, there's no repentance, there's no turning back.

You've forfeited it now, I've given it to him, and you've lost it. And so, we've got to be, we've got to guard again this craving that we can have, whatever it may be. And it's different, I guess, for all of us, but it's just that desire for something that is outside the will of God, that begins to consume us, and we think, I can't live without it.

Paul writing to the Philippians, he puts it this way, he says, I'm writing to you, and he says, I've got tears flowing down my face, because he says, you are enemies of the cross who set your affections on, what, earthly things, or whose God is the belly. And Paul's weeping as he's writing that. That doesn't sound that bad.

He's not talking about, you know, again, adultery and fornication and so on, he's just talking about, you know, your God is your belly. In other words, what he's saying is you are consumed with satisfying the physical, and you're an enemy of the cross. You put the physical before the spiritual.

You put the carnal or the natural before the spiritual realm. And he says, I just weep as I think, listen, you have no understanding of what you're doing. The cross to you doesn't mean as much as satisfying your physical needs, that dress, that piece of jewelry, that car, that house, that position means more to you than serving God.

Now all of us, I mean, you know, this is the, in America, we're faced with this sort of thing constantly. All you got to do is go to the mall and, I mean, you know, you're consumed with satisfying, boy, wouldn't I look

nice in that? Wouldn't that tie look nice? Wouldn't this dress look nice? Wouldn't it be nice if I had that ring? You know, boy, if I only could drive a car like my neighbors, you know. You know, we get overwhelmed, and it begins to consume us.

We get another job in order to buy the car. We get another job in order to get that fancier house. We, you know, go out and get extra jobs so we can have the carpet we want or whatever it is.

And it begins to master our life and that thing consumes us more than the spiritual. The second thing was the sin of idolatry. In their case, obviously, it was the golden calf.

In our case, it can be anything. Idolatry is anything we worship or derive our life from more than God. Idolatry is anything that we substitute for God Himself.

Paul writing to Timothy says, listen, the last days are going to be perilous times that are going to come. And he says this, men will be lovers of money, lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God. You see, that's idolatry.

A lover, again, this intense longing, a lover of pleasure, a lover of money, rather than lovers of God. You can see how easy it is for us to lose out on the race. Oh, I'm saved.

I was saved by Billy Graham Crusader. I've been saved for 20 years now. I go to church every day and I pay my tithe and so on.

You know, I'm born again. But somehow, there's other things that have whittled away. I think Jesus put it so clearly there in the parable of the sower.

He talked about the seed being sown and the seed being the kingdom, not just salvation. Matthew makes it very clear. The seed is the word of the kingdom.

He was wanting to establish kingdom principles in the lives of those that were listening. He wanted to be king. He wanted to rule, reign over their lives and so on.

And so he sows the seed. And what happens? Some seed falls by the wayside. Birds of the air immediately remove it.

Some seed falls into the ground and springs up immediately. But there's persecution. There's ridicule, and after a while they can't stand it, even though there's life there and there's activity and there's evidence of something happening, but there's no root.

There's no, you know, depth. There's no devotional life, if you like. No studying the word, no getting into the things of God.

And so all of a sudden there's been this emotional sort of high and the pressures come and all of a sudden they go. But then the third category, it begins to grow. And it even begins to bring forth fruit, the Bible says, but it never brings the fruit to maturity.

Now the whole purpose in sowing seed is to get a harvest, is to get an increase. And Jesus said, the reason that it doesn't bring forth seed that is mature is because of what? The riches and the worries and the cares of this life. See, this really is sort of the idolatry.

They got involved, they were more concerned about riches, worries, cares of this life, that choked the seed, and so it never, if you like, finished the race. It never came to the harvest, if we liken the harvest to being the end of the race. So there's all sorts of illustrations in the Bible.

It was there, it had life. In other words, it was part of the race, it was part of the church. It didn't wilt under persecution, the birds of the air didn't get it, and it even tried to bring forth mature fruit, but it never did because it got choked.

And we need to guard against that. I need to do the same thing, you see. So idolatry again is anything that we allow to come into our life that replaces God Himself.

The Bible says in Colossians, covetousness, which is idolatry. Covetousness, which is idolatry. In other words, again, it's like this previous one there, it's that craving, it's that lusting, it's that coveting, I've got to have it.

I've got to have that thing, and after a thing, that thing becomes an idol to us, you see. That's the thing that we want above everything else. I'm going to pursue that thing, I'm going to go out this afternoon, I'm going to find that dress, I'm going to find that car, I'm going to find that chair that's going to just tie all the whole house together or whatever it is, but you know, that thing begins to overwhelm us.

I'm not saying those things are wrong, they've just got to be kept in the right perspective, but some people are consumed by that, they're driven by that. You know, just getting, I mean, their whole life revolves around it and becomes covetousness, which in the end is idolatry, or the Old Testament says in 1 Samuel 15, stubbornness, which is idolatry. And what is stubbornness? Stubbornness again is doing my own thing, it's having my own way as opposed to God's way.

I'm stubborn. I won't yield, I won't bend, I won't break, I'm going to get this thing, I don't care, I don't care how much opposition I have, this thing's going to be mine, and I'm not going to listen to you, and so on. It's a form of idolatry.

Why? Because we're putting ourselves before God. Matthew 10 says, He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. That's idolatry.

My love for my father, my love for my mother, my love for my brother, my sister, my wife, my children is greater than my love for God. So who do I worship the most? Obviously mother, father, brother, sister. And Jesus said, listen, it's not worthy of me.

He that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And Exodus, of course, the very first commandment, thou shalt have no other gods before me. And you see, we can have even religious things.

The Church of Ephesus, in Revelation 2, it says, I have this against you, you've left your first love. I've been replaced. You've got a new affection.

Now He doesn't scold them for any sin. He doesn't say, you know, Jezebel's in your midst and I'm really upset about that. Not with the Church of Ephesus He doesn't.

He doesn't say you've got the teaching of the Nicolaitans there, like He does with the other church. He doesn't say, you know, there's false doctrine here, the way of Balaam. He says, you guys are zealous.

You guys work to the point of toil. It means literally to sweat. You're so zealous for me.

He says, you've got church discipline in your ranks. You won't allow those to come in that call themselves apostles and they are not. You try them and so on and so forth.

And so they were a zealous church. I mean, they were the sort of church I would love to pastor. Talk about hard working.

You know, they were just zealous for God, laboring. But somehow, all that had consumed them and they were no longer in love with God. You see.

And He says, you've left your first love. Again, that's idolatry. So, idolatry is something that all of us need to begin to look at very, very carefully and say, God, I don't want to have any other gods before You.

I don't want my God to be my house, my car, my job, my family. I don't want anything to consume me. I want to be consumed with You.

Because otherwise, I'm going to be laid low in the wilderness. I'm going to miss out on what You have for me. Number three, the sin of immorality.

Now, obviously, this is a sort of a sin of sins these days. But notice, all of these sins have to do with one thing. Their inability to control themselves.

Self-control. See. They could not control their appetite.

They could not control their desires. Here, they could not control their sexual desires. And so, Paul, again, stresses the need for self-control.

And immorality, obviously, begins by sort of flirting with the world. It says there in the Old Testament, Psalm 106, it says they mingled with the nations. They learned their practices.

They began to bow down to their idols and so on. And it says, which became a snare to them. And the next thing you do, they're fully involved in everything that the nations round about are doing.

And, you know, the message that God has given to the church right now is a message of holiness. Come out from among them and be separate. When we mingle with the world in the wrong sense.

Now, we have to mingle with the world as far as being a light and as far as being a testimony. But when we mingle with the world in the sense of compromise, after a while, we learn their practices. Let me read that portion of Scripture.

It's always been a challenge to me. This, because it really sort of sums up the life of Israel here. Psalm 106 and verse 34.

They did not destroy the people as the Lord commanded them. God says, I want you to destroy them for this very reason. So that they can't have an influence upon you.

But they mingled with the nations. What happens when you mingle? It says in the next verse, they learn their practices. What happens then when you learn their practices? You begin to do what they do.

They serve their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrifice their sons and their daughters to demons. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters.

They sacrifice to the idols of Canaan. The land was polluted with the blood. They became unclean in their practices and played the harlot in their deeds.

But you'll notice, it all began with mingling. Compromise. And once you begin to compromise, you begin to get familiar with the way they do things.

And hey, why don't you have a drink? Ah, I don't really drink. But the more you hang around, well, maybe, okay, just one. You know, you learn their ways.

You begin to do what they do. And then gradually, over a period of time, you end up doing exactly what they're doing. And that's what happened to the nation of Israel.

This reference refers to the fact that Balaam tried to curse the nation of Israel. Remember, Balak hired him to curse the nation of Israel because they were a threat. And every time he went out to curse them, God says, listen, I'm going to bless them.

So there was blessing, blessing, blessing. What was it? Three or four or five times or something that Balaam did there. And finally, Balaam seems to disappear.

And you think, well, that's you know, obviously, poor old Balak, he spent all that money for nothing. The prophet didn't work the way he thought he would and so on. But then we find in Numbers chapter 25, that before Balaam left, he says, listen, there's one way that you can get the nation of Israel cursed.

God won't curse them, but they can bring a curse on themselves. And the way they'll bring a curse on themselves is you tell your people, the children of Moab, to invite them to come over to a barbecue, basically. And when they get over to this barbecue, you know, you can have a little bit of your type of music and some of your idols there and so on and so forth.

And gradually, they'll just fall right into your hands. And so that's what they did. They invited them to come over.

They mingled with the nations. And after a while, they began to get tempted by the women. And there was all sorts of immorality that happened as a result.

And then God had to bring judgment, because God has got to bring judgment on sin. He won't let somebody else curse them, but they brought a curse on themselves, you see. And the Bible talks about the way of Balaam.

And one of the things about the way of Balaam, if I just get off here for a moment, is this, that we can think we are so blessed of God, that sin will not hurt us. See, that's one of the subtleties of the way of Balaam that came into the church. I am blessed of God.

I'm a child of God. So I can get by with sin. It won't hurt me.

I'm secure. I'm secure. I'm a child of God.

And so therefore, a little bit of sin won't hurt me. Yes, it will. You know, no man may be able to take you out of his hands, but God will curse you because of sin.

God is righteous and just. He therefore has to bring punishment on sin. And if we do it, we can bring the consequences.

So anyway, the sin of immorality, and again it is rampant now in the body of Christ. Kids are sexually, as we call it, sexually active now at the age of 11 and 12 and 13, sleeping together is considered almost a normal part of dating, you know, in the world. I mean, now we hand out condoms like we hand out candy.

I mean, this generation which you and I live in is absolutely obsessed with sex. I mean, we sell everything. Ads and everything are all on the basis of sex.

There's ministers falling, left, right, and center. In fact, I just had a letter here. My wife put it on my desk here a few weeks ago from Focus on the Family, and he makes a statement here.

I kept it. We estimate that approximately 1,500 pastors leave their assignment each month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout, or contention within their local congregations. 1,500 a month.

And I don't know where he's getting these statistics from. I'm sure there are many, many, many that never, ever make it into, you know, his files or into his records that we could maybe triple there. The Assemblies of God just recently sent out a letter, a personal letter, to the ministry.

It was not sent to the churches, warning pastors about the temptation of the internet, sexual activity on the internet. As we know, there's almost anything and everything on the internet now. And one of the biggest problems facing ministers, because they're human like everybody else, again, just about every pastor, you know, has his own office and he has his own internet that he can sit there and very easily get addicted to the pornography on the internet.

I was just watching the news the other day. I think it was Good Morning America, one of those programs. It said that the subtlety now that you can, with this whole Monica Lewinsky thing, it said that you can type in White House, I think it was WhiteHouse.com, if I remember, but anyway, it was something about White House.

And all it was, was a pornographic site under the heading of White House. They're becoming more and more subtle. Everybody obviously is interested in the White House these days and the activity that's going on there.

And so you type in, and yet this was a porno channel under the guise, you know, of the White House. It's unbelievable what is available, the sexual activity. And ministers are getting sucked into this.

You see, you no longer have to hide your Playboy magazines and try and keep them out of the view of your wife or husband or whatever the case may be. Now all you've got to do is have your monitor in front of you and the door over there and the slightest movement and all you've got to do is click the mouse and you're gone. So easy.

And yet this was a personal letter by the head of the Assemblies of God to its ministers, warning them of the perils of the Internet. But pornography now is so prevalent. Immorality is, you know, we just got word the other day of a major figure that we know in New Zealand of a particular denomination who has just fallen.

And I said to the person, I said, was it just a sort of one night stand, that's bad enough? He said, no, there were multiple situations. Oh my goodness. I know this man.

This man had, you know, one of the greatest churches in New Zealand. This man was a man of passion. This man was, again, the head of a movement that changed this, turned this whole movement around.

It was sort of a sleepy little sort of denomination at least for many, many years. And this guy got in control and got a lot of young people inspired and built a major organization. He had one of the biggest churches in the country.

He was a seasoned man. And yet, you see, he started the race with incredible blessing. The biggest church.

I daresay it's the biggest church in New Zealand. And all of a sudden now he's gone. The tragedy was that the other biggest church was also in that city a number of years ago.

A man that was well known and the same thing happened to him. And I thought, here is a city now that's experienced two major men falling that were men that were men of godliness and holiness, preachers of the word of God, no compromising sort of men. And yet, somehow they missed out.

What? No self-control. No self-control. They could not say no to their fleshly desires.

That's why Paul is so paranoid about this thing. When I preach to others, I myself should be rejected. So I buffet my body.

I discipline my body. I knock my body out. I bruise my body every single day.

I give myself a black eye, it means in the Greek. Because I am not going to fail. And if you think you're going to stand, listen, consider a million people, two of them made it.

And yet they had every single privilege. They had the supernatural everywhere. They had the river that flowed.

They had the manna that came down. They had Moses as their leader. You know, they had this incredible deliverance.

They had all these things. And yet, look what happened. So, this is a challenging, at least there has been to me, a very challenging portion of Scripture.

Again, we've got Bill Clinton now as the moral leader in one sense of the nation. And imagine the floodgates that are going to open as a result of his sin. I remember John Wimber, John Wimber who was the head of the vineyard, and before he died a number of years ago, he said, I believe that as the leader of this movement, that when I release profanity in the pulpit, and by profanity he wasn't talking about extreme, but you know, using certain expressions, he said, I release it right through the vineyard.

He said, because I am the leader, people will follow and do what I do. And the leader of our nation, again, because of what he's done, it opens a floodgate of activity now. And so, you know, we're faced with this sin of immorality, again, that is rampant, and I don't need to go on any further about that.

Number four is the sin of rebellion. And the Bible says they tempted the Lord, or they tested the Lord. It means to put God on trial, basically.

God, can you do this? And can you do that? We don't believe that. We don't believe you can do this. We don't believe you can do that.

In other words, it was a form of rebellion. In fact, Psalm 78 and verse 18 uses the word rebellion. Let me just read it here.

Psalm 78 and verse 18. And in their heart, they put God to the test by asking food according to the desire. They spoke against God.

They said, can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out. Streams were overflowing. Can He give bread also? Will He provide meat for His people? Therefore the Lord heard and was full of wrath.

And fire was kindled against Jacob. Anger was mounted against Israel. Because they did not believe God.

They did not trust in His salvation. And there's another verse here. Okay, I've missed it.

But it had the word rebellion on it. But verse 41. Again and again, they tempted God.

They pained the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power. So here, really, they rebelled.

Can God do this? Can God do that? Can God satisfy our needs? Can God provide a table in the wilderness? Can God provide water? Can He provide meat? In other words, they were always putting God on trial. God, you're not capable of doing this. You're not capable of doing that.

And there was a rebellion that came into their spirit as a result of it. Numbers 21 and verse 14 or verse 4, it says the people became impatient because of the journey. And they spoke against God and against Moses.

Isn't it amazing that part of this, and this is the cross reference that it actually gives us in 1 Corinthians 10. They became impatient because of the journey. And it was really their fault.

It was nothing to do with God. God would have taken them on a far quicker route into His purposes.

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