

# Dangers Of Wealth And Comfort

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, perseverance, and staying true to God's Word. It warns against the dangers of wealth, comfort, and losing one's first love for Jesus. The examples of Balaam, David, and the church in Ephesus serve as cautionary tales of spiritual decline when humility is replaced by pride and love for money.*

**Scripture:** Romans 15:5, Matthew 11:28, Psalm 139:23, Mark 9:24, John 14:1, Acts 20:28, Psalms 73:25

**Topics:** "Humility", "Spiritual Decline"

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## Description

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## Transcript

It's a wonderful word we read in Romans in chapter 15 and verse 5 and 6. May the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus. So that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must always remember God in verse 5 as the one who gives us perseverance to endure unto the end no matter what may happen around us and who always encourages us to press on.

If you fall to get up and run again. If you fall 10 times to get up again. If you fall 100 times to get up and run again.

He gives us perseverance and encouragement. So none of us must ever feel discouraged or condemn ourselves. Never.

God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world. John 3 17. So we must never forget that because the devil would like us to forget that.

Many Christians live under the feeling that God is there to condemn them and so they get discouraged. Then it also says in verse 4. Whatever was written in earlier times, that is for us the Old Testament, was written for our instruction. Why? Should we read the Old Testament? Sure.

So that from their examples through perseverance and encouragement. The same two words in verse 5. Through perseverance and encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. So in verse 4 we get perseverance and encouragement through reading God's Word.

And verse 5 it says the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit gives us that perseverance and encouragement. And so there are lessons that we can learn from the Old Testament and I want to try and show you some of them this morning. Please turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 8. This is a wonderful chapter from the Old Testament.

And one of the main reasons being that this is the chapter where you read, man shall not live by bread alone. Verse 3, the last part. But by every word that proceeds out the mouth of the Lord, that's the first word that Jesus spoke in his ministry.

And the temptation. And that is from Deuteronomy chapter 8. And so this is a very important chapter. Jesus knew it in his mind.

He had read it, memorized it, meditated on it, and he could quote it immediately. So chapters like that are very important for us. And this was at the end of the 40-year wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness.

And Moses was recapitulating all that happened in those 40 years. And he was telling them in verse 1, when you go into possess the land, be careful to obey all the commandments that I'm commanding you today. And when you go there, don't forget, verse 2, the way the Lord led you for 40 years in the wilderness.

And you know, they suffered a lot in the wilderness with the heat and not much good food. And to just eat one piece of manna every day, that was their meal. Often thirsty, bitten by snakes, and walking through the rough desert for 40 years.

Why did the Lord lead his people through those very difficult paths? Why does he lead his people through difficult paths today? It says here, first of all, to humble you. God has to do many things to humble us. He humbles us through poverty.

He humbles us through sickness. He humbles us through disappointments, things we want that we don't get. He humbles us through failure and even sin.

That is a last resort. But in it all, what the Lord is testing, you need to understand what the Lord is testing. He's testing you, verse 2, to know what is in your heart.

Whether you will keep his commandments or not. That was the test which God gave Adam. Only one test.

Will you keep my commandments or not? And at the end of 40 years in the wilderness, Moses says, that's what the Lord's been testing you all these 40 years too. Will you keep his commandments or will you not keep his commandments? Or will you treat some of those commandments as trivial, unimportant? What did we read in Romans 15, verse 4, that all these things written in the Old Testament are to give us instructions so that we can also persevere and be encouraged. So, the example of the Israelites going through the wilderness.

But God is a merciful God. And even though they failed him so many times, it says 10 times, they rebelled against him. And that's why they were punished with 40 years in the wilderness.

But finally, he still took them in to the land. And he humbled you, verse 3, and let you be hungry to teach you that the most important thing is not food, but the word of God every day. Manna is not the best type of food to have every single day for 40 years.

It can be pretty boring, whatever it is. And there was nothing else. I mean, there were no curries or anything else.

It was just a little bit of manna. It was enough to sustain them, but not very comfortable. In other words, we can say that they were like believers who were living a very simple, rugged life.

They couldn't buy new clothes, same type of food every day. There are many poor families even today of believers who don't have much variety in the food they eat every day. Those who are rich can have a variety of meals, but those who are poor live on the same food like these people, the same clothes, the same food for 40 years.

But the Lord made sure that their clothing did not wear out in verse 4 and their feet did not swell. And thus you know that the Lord your God, verse 5, was disciplining you like a man disciplines his son. A good father will always discipline his children.

A father who does not discipline his children does not love his children. And the Lord your God was disciplining you. How was he disciplining them? By allowing them to be poor, allowing them to eat the same food every day.

They couldn't afford anything else. Like I said, many families today and no chance to buy new clothes or shoes or all the things that rich people and their children can say, I want this, I want that, I want the other thing, I want this, that, the other. I mean poor families even in the CFC churches in the villages can't afford that.

That's how God disciplines people. We got to face that. And therefore, remember it's not food or clothing.

Man shall not live by, you know, a lot of variety of food or by extra clothes or shoes or anything. Man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And if you have learned that lesson, then you have learned the most important lesson in the Christian life that life can come to us only if we listen and obey every word that comes from God's mouth.

That's why I say read the Bible regularly. That's why I've told you many times to get a copy of that commentary through the Bible and read three pages every day. I read three pages myself, you know, I wrote it.

I find I'm reminded of things in God's Word and I'm encouraged again to meditate further on the passages I've already, God's already spoken to me on. You never, the Bible is like a well that never runs dry. I would encourage you learn to live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth.

And then he says the Lord will not allow you to keep on like that. The Lord is going to bring you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs. It won't be like the wilderness flowing and a land of wheat, verse 8, and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates.

It was from poverty to plenty, from being poor to being very rich, a land where you will eat food without scarcity, in which you can have variety, no lack of anything. You have metals, you can have industries

there, you can dig copper. And when you have eaten and are satisfied, bless the Lord your God for the good land which he has given you.

And now comes the warning, which let me tell you here is a warning that everybody in CFC has to take. Because you don't have to go to the Old Testament to learn it. We look around at Christendom, the churches that have been here for so many years.

This is where they fail. So listen carefully, beware that when you become rich and you have plenty of money to throw around, you can buy what you like and live as you like, beware that you don't forget the Lord your God and you don't keep his commandments and his ordinances. Otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied and have built good houses and lived in them, and in today's language we can say in verse 13, when your business prospers, when your salary in your office increases, and you have a lot of savings in your bank accounts, and your children are healthy and strong, doing well, they're married perhaps, they've got good jobs, and then your heart becomes proud.

That danger was not there when they were poor, when they couldn't buy new clothes, when they had to eat the same simple food every day. That danger of becoming arrogant and proud comes especially to the next generation, to your children, when they become rich, when they get jobs where in one month they earn more than their parents earned in one year. Did you hear that? Where our children earn in one month more than the parents earned in one year.

When that happens, and that's happened, that is the time to be careful. Not in the years when you were struggling. Oh no, those years you cling to the Lord.

Those years you don't have time to watch movies, because life is a struggle. You probably don't have enough money to pay for the monthly internet. Maybe there was no internet, but now you're wealthy, you get what you want, and in the comfort of your home, with nobody watching except God, you can live as you like.

Beware, you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of a life of sin. There's a verse in 2nd Peter 1 which says, if you forget, let me paraphrase it, if you forget your past sinful life from which you were saved, you will become spiritually blind. Read that.

2nd Peter 1, I think it's verse 9 or somewhere there. If you forget at any time, the wretched sinful life that God saved you from, you will become spiritually blind. And that's happened to numerous people.

That brokenness is gone. That is an indication of pride. I've seen it in a number of young people, children of parents who are in CFC, children who grew up as babies from in CFC and where they are today.

But I thank God they're not all like that. I've also seen a few young people who grew up as children here, who are examples of humility and who are not taken up with their salaries and their wealth, who don't mingle only with the elite educated, but who are mingling with the poor and uneducated. Those of you who are in high jobs and your children can go to good schools, get a good education, I want to ask you, do your children mingle with the really poor people in CFC? In conference time, do your children go to talk to the poor people who come from the villages in Tamil Nadu? Ask yourself, do you want to save your children? Or do you want to raise an arrogant bunch of people who will only mingle with the elite, upper class Christians? I've seen it happen here.

They'd like to talk to the foreigners more than the poor villagers from Tamil Nadu. Okay, I don't go stopping it. I say we have preached enough in this church for people to know.

He only says, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. If you want to bring up your children that way, go right ahead. But I'll tell you this, the word of God does not change the way you bring up your child.

Mark my words, Proverbs 22.6, when he is old or she is old, they will not depart from it. And if you see children going astray, you can be sure you brought them up like that in childhood. If you see them not serious about spiritual things, and if the things of the world mean more to them now because you brought them up that way.

I'm not trying to bring you under condemnation. God is a God of encouragement. But if you repent, I've heard people come to me and say, Brother Zach, please pray for my children.

They're going astray. I say, fine, we'll do that. I believe God can work even with children who are not grown up, who grew up in CFC and are not wholehearted today.

God can still work with them, provided I tell those parents, you do one thing. First, kneel down before God and say, my children are not wholehearted today, Lord, because the Word of God is being fulfilled in Proverbs 22.6. That's the way I brought them up. And they became like that when they grew up.

It's my fault. It's our fault. We take the blame 100%.

Then you can ask God, Lord, please forgive us. Please make them radical, wholehearted disciples, at least now, and keep praying, you and your wife, until they change and you'll see a miracle happen. But it has to begin with honest acknowledgement of your failure and your sin.

As long as you say, no, it's like that. It happens like that. The world is bad and they've got bad friends and bad company and some children turn out like that.

Okay, I've got nothing more to say. What will you stand before the Lord and say in the final day? You can justify yourself for the next 50 years, but what do you tell the Lord in the final day? Nothing. Humble yourself.

Verse 15, Deuteronomy 8. He led you through the great and terrible wilderness with his fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty water. And those days you didn't backslide. He fed you with manna to humble you.

And now when you enter the land of Canaan and you have all this wealth, you say the power and strength of my hand made me this wealth. Do you say that, that I worked hard and I was intelligent and I made all this money? That's why the company gave me a promotion, because I'm smart. I'm not dumb like these other fellows in the company.

May God have mercy on you. You shall remember the Lord your God, verse 18. For it is he who gives you power to make wealth, because he loves you, because he wants to confirm his covenant with you.

And it shall come about, verse 19, if you ever forget the Lord your God and go after other gods. And today those other gods are money, pleasure, ease, comfort, laziness. And you serve them and worship them.

Moses says, I testify against you today. Whichever church you belong to, even if you're in CFC, you will surely perish. Like the churches before you that perished.

So you shall perish, because you would not listen to the voice of the Lord your God. It's a wonderful chapter. I take it very seriously.

I remember in my own life, my wife and I, the years when we struggled, when we couldn't get much, even our food was very, very simple. We couldn't get, buy hardly anything for our children or for ourselves. And we say, Lord, I never want to forget those days.

And I want to be devoted to you today, just like I was in those days. There must not be even the slightest drop in devotion to you. Because there are warnings in scripture of godly men.

Don't think because I'm a godly man and I've kept going till now, I'm okay. No. You know that the children of Israel, they went astray when comfort came or when relative comfort came.

Let me turn to Exodus in chapter 32. For 430 years, they had been slaves in Egypt. They never worshipped idols then.

Where was the time? Where was the money to make idols? Where was the time to worship idols? They'd go to work at six o'clock in the morning and come back at nine o'clock at night. They were slaves. And they clung to God.

They cried to God. The Bible says they sighed in Exodus chapter 2, the last word. They sighed and, Oh God, have mercy upon us.

They prayed. But then they got delivered. That was a tremendous.

And they saw miracles of the Red Sea splitting open and a pillar of cloud and fire leading them. And that, you know, when you experience a few answers to prayer and miracles, it can go to your head and you can begin to think that, Boy, I'm a special child of God. And that's what they felt.

Now, there was no slavery. They didn't have to get up at six o'clock in the morning and carry bricks and stones. There was nobody whipping them on the back saying, Come on, do your work.

They were free. And not only they were free, God had told them to get their wages from the Egyptians. The Egyptians had made them serve for 430 years without paying them.

And so before they left, God said, Go to every Egyptian and collect gold and silver from them. See, God didn't tell them to ask for money. He was saying, Give me a salary.

Give me my salary for 430 years in gold and silver. They were only collecting their salary. There's no sin in going to the office and saying, Can I collect my salary? That's all those Israelites were told to do.

Go to every Egyptian house and collect your salary, collect all the gold and silver. And they got it, 430 years of salary, which was not paid to them. And they came out.

And when they came out with all this gold, which they never had before, they were poor. But now they had so much gold. And Moses had just gone up.

They were scared as long as Moses was there. Oh, boy, he was a very strict man. But once he had gone away just for a little over a month, just one month.

And it says in Exodus 32, Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain. The people assembled to Aaron. Aaron was also a leader, but he was not of the same quality as Moses, not the same degree of strictness.

He was a God-appointed leader. Definitely God said Aaron is one of the leaders, but he was not like Moses. And they said to him, come, make us a God who will go before us.

Because this man Moses, I don't know what's happened to him. Okay, Aaron said quickly. He wants to be popular, you know, leaders who want to be popular.

He said, fine. Tear off the gold rings. Where did they get gold rings from? These slaves? They got it.

Suddenly they got 430 years salary and they became wealthy, bonus and everything else. And they put gold rings in the ears of their wives and their daughters and even in their sons. Amazing.

Tear it off and bring it to me. And the people tore off all the gold rings in the ears and brought it. And Aaron, listen to this.

He took it and with a graving tool, he melted all this. This is Aaron. And some people who helped him shaped it into a molten calf.

Can you imagine a leader doing this? Who had seen all the miracles they'd just seen from God? And Aaron tells them, this is your God. I just made it. Who brought you out from the land of this is your God.

And what is the name of this God, by the way? What is the name of this golden calf? Aaron said, I'll tell you. Tomorrow we're going to have a feast to this God. And verse 5, he's called Jehovah.

Tomorrow we'll have a feast for this calf, Jehovah. How quickly this backsliding came. So quickly.

They've hardly come out of Egypt and they're already backsliding. The next day they rose up and of course they went through the religious exercise of burnt offerings and peace offerings before this golden calf they call Jehovah. And then they sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

And the Lord said, go down Moses. The people have corrupted themselves. They've turned aside from the way.

They're worshipping a golden calf. And the Lord said, I've seen this people. Verse 9, they're an obstinate people.

Let me alone that I may destroy them. I'll make you a great nation. There you see Moses heart.

He says, Lord, I don't want to be a great man. This people descended from Abraham. Let it continue.

Let it never be said it descended from Moses. I don't want to be a great man. I don't want you to make me a great nation.

There you see the greatness and the humility of this godly man. He wanted nothing for himself. He only wanted for God's people.

That's the type of man you and I should be. That's the type of man God uses. Who will never seek anything for himself but is always concerned for God's people and the testimony of God.

And the Lord said, why have you, why do you burn, anger burn against them? You brought these people out of Egypt. Why should those worldly people say that there's corruption in the midst of your people? Why should those, what will the Egyptians say when they see all this? Please protect your testimony. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Verse 13. And verse 14, so the Lord changed his mind about the harm which he said he'd do to his people. Does God change his mind? He does.

He wanted to destroy them. But one man stood there between God and the people and said, forgive them Lord. The fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Because Moses is a righteous man, God heard his prayer and said, okay I won't destroy these people. And they were saved. It's amazing.

We read that God wanted to destroy Nineveh in Jonah's time. And it was the word of God. 40 days and I'll destroy this nation.

And 40 days later he didn't destroy them. Does God change his mind? Yes. He changes his mind when sometimes when he sees one man, at least one man, who stands up for him and who will stand in the gap for the land.

There's a verse I want to show you in Ezekiel chapter 22 and verse 30. This is much later. This is just before the Israelites went to Babylon in captivity.

God was very patient with the Israelites for a long time. But they had gone astray and the prophets, verse 28, were whitewashing all the sins. Ezekiel 22 verse 28.

The prophets were just whitewashing everything and covering it all up and making false visions. And the people of the land, verse 29, committed robbery and did all types of wrong things. And in the midst of all this corruption, their rulers, verse 27, were wolves tearing the prey.

And the priests did violence, verse 26. Priests, in verse 26. Princes, in verse 27.

Prophets, in verse 28. Ultimately the people also, in verse 29. And the whole Jing Bang lot.

And the Lord said, in all this crowd I searched for one man who would not compromise. You know what that very often God looks like that. He looks for one man who will build up the wall and stand in the gap before me so that I will not destroy it.

Moses stood in the gap there and said, Lord don't destroy these people. And so he didn't destroy them. But in this time, in Ezekiel's time, he says, I found none.

So I poured out my indignation on them. Jeremiah and Ezekiel lived around the same time. And the Lord said even to Jeremiah in chapter 5. They were contemporaries.

They lived around the same time. Jeremiah was also called by God. Forty years he preached to try and save Israel from going to Babylon.

And the Lord told Jeremiah in chapter 5 verse 1. Go through the streets of Jerusalem. Look now and take note. Seek in her open squares and see if you can find one man, one man who will do justice, who seeks

the truth without compromise.

And I will pardon her. In Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham prayed, Lord, if there are 10 people, will you spare the land? He said, okay, there are 10. I will spare the land.

The Lord was more merciful in Jerusalem. He said, if you can find one, I'll spare the land. I don't need 10.

One. But he couldn't find one. And that's why Israel went to Babylon.

God has raised up many churches through these 20 centuries. Many of them started like Jerusalem and ended in Babylon. Christian history is full of such stories.

Even in the first century, the apostles built churches that were holy before God like Jerusalem. But by the time it comes to the end of the first century, you read in Revelation chapter 2, chapter 3, so many of those churches have drifted away. They just got a name that they're alive.

They got the doctrine. They got the singing. But they don't have the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

They don't have purity and zeal for God, compromise. And the Lord says, I'll remove the lampstand from your midst. I'll derecognize you as a church.

He says, I'll spit you out of my mouth. I'll remove your name from the book of life. These are some of the warnings in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3. What type of churches? Churches founded by the apostles.

So it happens, you know. And when Moses came down, he saw all this. It says in verse 19 of Exodus 32.

Moses thought there's a war going on when he heard all that sound. And Exodus 32 and verse 19, Moses came near the camp and he saw the golden calf. They were worshipping money.

They were not worshipping money in Egypt. Now they started worshipping money and dancing. And Moses' anger burned.

And he took those tablets which God had written with his own hand. Ten commandments. And he shattered it at the foot of the mountain.

Saying, why should I give you these ten commandments? You bunch of people, you have no gratitude to God for what he's done for you. It's something like Jesus getting angry when he saw people in the temple worshipping money. And taking money from the poor, selling doves and sheep.

So he took the calf and burned it. Just see what he did. Moses was such a strong man.

He took the calf, verse 20, and burned it with fire. Ground it to powder. Scattered it on the water and said, now you children of Israel, drink this water.

This calf that you worshipped. Is that cruel? He was a man of God. And then Moses said to his co-worker, why did you do this? That you brought such a great sin upon them.

And Aaron said, don't get angry. The people said, make a God for us. And he puts the blame on others.

This is a habit of Adam. God asks him something, he points at his wife. Moses asks Aaron, he points at the people.

It's these people, not me. And I told them to the gold. And listen to this.

This is interesting. Verse 24, they gave me all the gold. Verse 24, middle.

And I threw it into the fire and out came this calf. Wow, what a miracle that is. As if he thought Moses would be so stupid to believe that.

I threw all the gold and out came a calf. This business of self-justification has been there from the time of Adam. Did you eat the tree? Lord, my wife gave it to me.

In Jesus' day, he said, you are those who justify yourself before men. But that is an abomination before God. Aaron was like that.

And the people were out of control. And then Moses said, is anybody here on the Lord's side? Anybody in this camp? And out of all those two million people, the sons of Levi said, yes, we are on the Lord's side. Then he called those sons of Levi and said, I want you to go into the camp and don't spare anybody.

Take your sword. Verse 27, idle worshippers must be killed. That's a law in those days.

Kill every man, even if it's your brother. Don't spare him. He may be your good friend.

Don't spare him. Every man his friend and every man his neighbor. Don't look at his face and be partial.

Take your sword and chop off his head. You think that was easy? Would you have done it if you were there? I mean, in the New Covenant, we don't do it, but that is Old Covenant. But if the Lord said, you got to go and do that.

Chop off the head of these people who worship the idols and purify the camp. Would you do it? Or would you be compassionate? No, let's be merciful, more merciful than God. That's been the tragedy of Christendom in 2000 years.

People don't know God. They don't know the holiness of God. And the sons of Eli did that.

And have you ever, and it says, verse 29, dedicate yourself to the Lord, that he may bestow a sons of Levi to be the priests. Have you ever wondered? That is the greatest honor out of the 12 tribes. He didn't just pick lots and say, okay, Levi.

No. In this moment of testing, only the tribe of Levi stood with the Lord. God said, okay, you guys will be the priests.

Throughout your generations, your children, grandchildren, they'll be blessed because you stood for the Lord and you did not compromise. You will be the priests. So remember that the priesthood was given not arbitrarily without any reason.

It was because they took a stand for the Lord. What we learned from that is, you know, this already happened once. They came out of Egypt and then they drifted away with all the gold.

That's why Moses warned them later on in Deuteronomy 8. But one very interesting thing we see, that after this one event, and because of this very strict action that Moses took, you know, chopping off people's heads, and a number of people died that day, for the rest of their wilderness journey, for nearly 40 years, they never worshipped idols. It's very interesting. One strict treatment, and they never worshipped idols again.

If Moses had been lenient here, they'd have been worshipping idols for the next 40 years. But now they were going to enter Canaan, and now it is going to be comfortable again. That's when Deuteronomy 8, he said, be careful.

Now this struggle and time of poverty and struggle is over, and you're going to come to a comfortable life, be careful. That's the time you will backslide. You see an example of that in Genesis in chapter 9. We read in Genesis about the flood, and at the end of the flood, you know, everybody was destroyed.

And then Noah came out, and as he came out of the ark, and it says in verse 8, chapter 8 verse 20, Noah built an altar. And then God blessed Noah, chapter 9 verse 1, be fruitful and multiply, he said, I will establish my covenant with you. And what a tremendous blessing, there was a rainbow, and I will establish my covenant with you, and your children will be blessed.

And then what happened, verse 20, chapter 9 verse 20, Noah began farming. Time of trouble, the flood is over. Now he had been preaching 120 years, opposed, opposed, persecuted, opposed, opposed, opposed, and he stood true to the Lord, built the ark single-handedly, just with his sons, true to the Lord.

But now the Lord had blessed him, and he built a vineyard. Then what happened, then he became drunk, and took off all his clothes, and lay naked in the tent. He never did that in all the 600 years before that.

He never did that when people were opposing him, and persecuting him for 120 years, when he preached in the wilderness. See what comfort, and ease, and the blessing of God does to a man, if he doesn't fall on his face before God, and say, Lord, I'm just dust and ashes. You blessed me, but I'm nobody, I'm nothing.

These are warnings, the things written in scripture are for us, brothers. As long as you're opposed, and persecuted, and you're struggling. Think how hard Noah would have worked in those days, getting up early in the morning, and working till late at night, building the ark, and preaching, going out preaching, and opposed by everybody.

He never got drunk in those days, but now the nobody's opposing him. He's popular, he's famous, the whole world is his, and God has blessed him, and rewarded him in so many ways, and made a covenant with him with a rainbow. He was a great man of God.

That's when he fell. These things are written for our instruction, that can happen again, and what is the result? It ends up in one of his grandchildren being cursed, because Ham, his son, came and saw his nakedness, verse 22, and reported it, and when Noah awoke, verse 24, he said, Ham's son was Canaan. Verse 25, cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.

That's how the Canaanites got cursed, and those are the people whom Israel drove out of the land of Canaan. That's here, it begins here. Curse that came upon them, because Ham had now come out, till then he was faithful, he helped in building the ark.

He helped in building the ark, and now see what's happened to him and his children. Yeah, that can happen. When ease and comfort come in, our children can go astray.

Unless there are strict fathers, who keep correcting them, even after they have grown up and got married. You don't have to control your married children, but if you're a father, you still got to warn them, when there's a danger. I keep doing that, my children are all married, but it doesn't mean I give up my right as a father.

I don't interfere in their life at all, but if I see them going astray, I don't care. I will tell them the truth. Not after they've gone completely astray, but I see a drift one degree off the straight path.

That's when I warn them. I hope you do. Love the Lord more than you love your children, if you want to be a disciple.

Maybe you started out like that. Are you still like that? Let me give you another example. We read in 2nd Samuel and chapter 11.

There was a particular season in the year, when war used to take place. It was probably the summertime. Winter is difficult to go and fight battles.

So this is the springtime. Chapter 11, verse 1. The land was getting warmer. That's the time when kings go out to battle.

It's consistent in that area of the world. And David, who was always the leader in the battle, you know, those days the kings would lead the army in battle. It was like that.

And this time David decided, I'm senior. I'm 50 years old. I don't have to go to battle now.

He was still healthy and strong. He said, hey, I've got servants and Joab. You go and fight.

I'm not coming this time. And David stayed at Jerusalem. One fatal mistake.

He did not go to war. He sent other people to war. You go and pray.

I've got other things to do right now. You fight the battle. I've got other things.

I've got to watch some movies today. And when evening came, David arose from his bed. He was even sleeping in the afternoon, as if the night's sleep was not enough.

He rose from his bed and no time to pray and all. Like the olden days, he used to be in the fields, poor boy, looking after sheep. He would write psalms.

There were days when he was running from cave to cave to cave. You know that it says in the psalms that this was written when David was running from this person to that person in some cave or when the Philistine king were trying to kill him. Those psalms were written when he was running for his life, when he was being chased to death.

He wrote psalms. He was in touch with God, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Now he was not writing psalms.

Now he had no time even to pray. I'm a big king. I've got a palace here.

I've made a lot of money. I got rid of Saul and I'm the king. Everybody here respects me.

As a man of God, I killed Goliath. He gets up from his bed and walks around the house. And you can be pretty sure God was not with him there.

And he saw a woman bathing in the next compound. That was foolish of that woman to bathe in a way that other people would see her. All these women nowadays who don't dress properly, exposing parts of their body are following Bathsheba.

You can blame David, sure, for falling. But what about Bathsheba who was exposing herself? What about the girls who exposed themselves today? You think they're not guilty? Sure they are. And of course God was not with David.

He just saw this woman and he kept on looking, kept on looking. She's very beautiful. And he finds out who it is.

He's somebody else's wife. David says, ah, it doesn't matter. I'm a king.

Go and bring her here. And he sleeps with her and she conceives. Verse 5. Now what to do? This is the great man of God who was called the man after God's own heart, who wrote Psalms when he was in poverty and struggling.

But now he's rich and he has plenty. Now what to do? Okay, let's put the blame on the wife. Let's put the blame on the husband.

He calls his husband has gone to war. Can you imagine the shamefulfulness of this? Someone is fighting a battle for your kingdom and you go and sleep with his wife? Anyway, let's put the blame on him. Call him back from war and tell him to go and sleep with his wife tonight so at least the blame will be on him for the child.

David said, go to Uriah. Go wash your feet and go to your house. But Uriah did not go to his house and slept at the door.

He was more faithful. He knew God more than his master David. Verse 9. He just slept at the door of the king's house and they said Uriah didn't go down.

And Uriah, look at Uriah saying, Lord, my fellow soldiers are all fighting. Verse 11. In the field.

How can I go and sleep with my wife when they are fighting in the field? I will not do it. So David didn't know what to do. He still is not convicted.

And so the next day he sends a message to the general. Make sure that Uriah is put in a very dangerous spot in the war. And when the people are attacking, all of you withdraw and leave Uriah there alone.

Verse 15. So that he will be killed. And so, Joab did that in verse 17.

Uriah died and Joab sent people to David. And you know, it says we had to run away. We were defeated by the enemy.

And when the king asks you, verse 20, why did you go so near to the city to the fight? Don't you know they'll shoot from the wall? Then just tell him one word. Verse 21, last part. Uriah also has died.

And David said, they told him Uriah is dead. Verse 24. Then David said, it's okay, don't worry.

Verse 25. You know, a sword kills one person and that person, so long as Uriah is dead, it's okay. Can you imagine a man of God descending to this level? It shows what happens when you're not struggling, when you're not poor, when wealth comes in, comfort comes in, fame.

You say, you will never descend to that level. Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. You may not use murder to cover up your sin, but you can sin against people and cover it up in so many ways.

Crooked. And you can say you're a believer from CFC. Let me give you one more warning.

The book of Numbers, chapter 22. You read about a man called Balaam. And he was known as some type of prophet in the land of Moab.

And when Israel came, this is when Israel was in the Israeli army, because he had heard the reputation these people are defeating so many enemies wherever they go. So he called his prophet Balaam. And he sent some people with a lot of money to Balaam and said, it says in verse 7, Numbers 22.7. The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian went with the fees for divination.

That means if you want a prophecy, you've got to pay money. Just like so-called Christian prophets today. If you want to hear from them, you've got to pay money.

So they knew there's a fees. So they went there and they came to Balaam and gave him the money and repeated Balaam's words. And Balaam said, hang on, I can't just do it.

I will seek the Lord, verse 8, Jehovah. That's the word there. L-O-R-D in capital letters means Jehovah.

I will seek Jehovah. And when he speaks to me, I will tell you what to do. And God came to Balaam.

Here was a man who was in touch with God. It was not the devil who came to Balaam. It was Almighty God Jehovah who came to Balaam and said, who are these people? Balak has sent them to curse the people of Israel.

And God said to Balaam, verse 12, don't go with them. Very clear. You shall not curse these people for they are blessed.

So Balaam arose in the morning and said, go back. The Lord has refused permission. So they went back to the king and said, he doesn't come.

And the king said, I know how to get these preachers. Just leave it to me. So he sent more honorable cabinet ministers to meet this preacher and more money, distinguished people, verse 15, and more money.

And he says, I'll give you a lot of money, verse 17. Please come and curse these people. And when Balaam, in a very spiritual language, see all these crooked preachers, they've got spiritual language.

Even if you give me a house full of silver and gold, I can only tell you what the Lord says. I cannot go against the command of Jehovah. Sounds very spiritual.

But stay here. I'll ask the Lord again. Why ask the Lord again? Hasn't he already told you not to go? These people are blessed.

How can you go and curse them? So he goes and says, I want to find out. And God said to him, listen to this, verse 20. Go with them, middle of verse 20.

And Balaam was delighted. God changed his mind. He didn't change his mind.

He knew this guy loved money. He said, go. Just like today, he sees so many preachers love money and go in some direction.

He says, go. You want to get a job in that church because you get a bigger salary there? Go, please go. And he can say, God told me to go.

Like a lot of preachers say, the Lord led me. But why does the Lord tell them to go? Listen to this verse in Psalm 106. It's a quite an interesting verse.

Psalm 106, it says in verse 14, it's talking about the Israelites in the wilderness. They craved in the wilderness. We want, we're not enough with manna.

We're not happy with manna. We want meat. We want non-vegetarian food.

All this vegetarian stuff is not good for us. And they craved intensely in the wilderness and tempted, tested God in the desert. And listen to this.

He gave them their request because they pestered him. But along with their answer to prayer, the margin of my Bible says, their soul became withered. Not the body.

The body became packed with non-vegetarian food. But the soul was withered. He sent leanness into their soul, the margin says, and a wasting disease among them.

But because they pestered him, he gave them their request. Those are words you must take as a warning. When you keep on pestering God, asking him for something, you know God doesn't want you to do that.

You know God doesn't want you to go there. You have a clear witness in your heart. But Lord, Lord, please, please.

God said, okay, go. There are many people who have gone like that. They thought God let them.

No. They craved for something and God said, okay, go. That's what he told Balaam.

He said, I know you love money. Why are you asking me? I know you're going there only for money. No other reason.

You're not seeking to go there. The Bible says, 1 Corinthians 10 31, whatever you do, do for the glory of God. But you're not going there for the glory of God.

You want money? Go right ahead. I won't stop you. Is that what the Lord is saying to you? Back to Numbers 22, we read there.

God told him, go. Verse 22, but God was angry because he was going. Can that happen? That God lets you go and then he's angry with you? Yes.

It happened before, it can happen again. Because you already know in your heart, God doesn't want you to do that. He doesn't want you to marry that girl or he doesn't want you to go in that direction.

But you keep pestering him, pestering him, pestering him, pestering him. God says, okay, go ahead. Do it.

Don't think that is God's leading. God said, you can go, but I'm angry with you. Don't let that ever happen.

And an angel of the Lord stood in the way. Even then God tried to stop him. See how good God is.

He tries to stop one more chance. Let me try and stop him. But he can't see.

Balaam could not see the angel. But the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way and the donkey turned off from the way. And when he turned that way, the angel of the Lord came there and the donkey again saw it and moved this way.

And then it moved the other direction and the donkey pressed against the wall and Balaam's foot got hurt. And the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn left or right, verse 26. And when the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she just sat down.

And Balaam got angry and hit the donkey with a stick. He couldn't see the angel. The Lord opened the mouth of the donkey and said, what have I done to you? That's the first time in the Bible you read someone speaking in tongues, by the way.

Speaking a language it had never learned. So don't think speaking in tongues is a great gift. It's a gift.

But the first one who spoke in tongues in the Bible is a donkey. Speaking a language it had never learned. And then Balaam said, you made a mockery of me.

Now what I want you to ask you is, how is it Balaam could not see the angel and the donkey could see it? I'll tell you. Listen carefully. Because the donkey did not love money.

One who loves money will not see many things God wants him to see. One may be stupid like a donkey. You may despise that brother.

Ah, he's dumb, but he doesn't love money like you. He will see visions of God that you never see. You got your cleverness, your intelligence, your capabilities.

But he will see God in a way you'll never see, because he doesn't love money. That's what I learned from this. These are all warnings, brothers and sisters, when it goes well with us, when we get more and more and more.

I want to show you one last passage and then close. Turn with me please to Acts of the Apostles in chapter 20. We read about a church in Ephesus where the Lord planted a wonderful church.

And Paul was the one whom God used to build that church. And I want to show you a little bit in chapter 19 of the revival that took place in Ephesus. Acts 19 verse 17.

You know, there was a fear that came upon the Greeks and Jews who lived in Ephesus because a demon-possessed man tore the clothes of seven sons of a chief priest in the previous verses. And the name of the Lord Jesus, verse 17, was magnified. Acts 19, 17.

And many people who believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing all their evil practices. And they brought all their magic books and it's like bringing all your rock music DVDs and CDs. And what did they do with it? They spent a lot of money buying all this.

They burnt it. And it was totaling 50,000 pieces of silver. That's a huge amount of money.

Millions of rupees. They burnt it. So we don't want all this.

They didn't sell it for other people to go and play those DVDs and read those books. No, they burnt it. This is dishonoring to God.

Destroyed it. And now, Paul stayed there for three years. He calls the elders in Ephesus in chapter 20, verse 17.

I'm sure these people were pretty proud of the great revival that took place and God's planted a new covenant church here. In the midst of all the opposition, God's done a work and we've planted a church. And three years went by and now Paul has to leave.

Paul is the only place that Paul stayed for three years. Otherwise he was always traveling. This was his base for three years.

And he called the elders of Ephesus in chapter 20, verse 17 and said to them, You know from the first day, verse 18, that I set foot in Asia, how I served the Lord with humility, tears and trials. Verse 33, I have never desired anyone's money. I never desired anybody to give me any clothes.

You know that I supported myself. Verse 34, I took care of, like if you had a family, he's saying I took care of my family. And I showed you like that to demonstrate the truth of what Jesus said.

Verse 35, it is more blessed to give than to receive. And now you guys are the elders. Verse 28, be on guard.

I told you the whole purpose of God. Verse 27, I told you the new covenant and the whole purpose of God. I proclaimed every commandment God has given and therefore I'm innocent of your blood.

Verse 26, but be on guard because the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God with his own blood. But because I know God has shown me, Paul says, that after I leave, savage wolves will come in and not spare the flock. Those wolves are waiting at the door and so we can't enter here as long as Paul is here.

He's not going to be here forever. He's going to go. We'll wait.

And the Lord showed that to Paul and they will not spare you and also there will be a lot of divisions among you elders. One will say this, one will say that and each will want their own group of disciples. Verse 30, it's sad.

A place where Paul labored so much, it ends up like this. And why is that? One simple word, God gives grace to the humble. And if people are humble, then a mark of humility is you judge yourself every day.

You never justify yourself. You are quick to judge yourself, quick to ask forgiveness, quick to set things right. That is a humble man.

God's grace will be upon him continuously. But when wealth comes and ease and comfort and blessing and revival and all types of things, then is the danger. Wolves will come in and it happened.

After Paul left, the same church, the Lord tells in Revelation chapter 2, you guys have drifted from your first love, you have taken up with numbers and all this type of stuff. I'm going to derecognize you as a church but I still give you a chance to repent. In Revelation chapter 2, the same church.

In Revelation chapter 2, I call it the second letter to the Ephesians. That was the first letter we read in Ephesians and now the second letter is very many good things in the church. Revelation 2. Your deeds, I know your deeds the Lord says, your hard work.

Revelation 2 verse 2, your perseverance, you do not tolerate sin, and all these false teachers, you don't allow any of them, you recognize them to be false, you have persevered, you have endured, you are not running after money. For my name's sake, you have been true, but, verse 4, that simple, fervent devotion that you had for me in the beginning, has gone. What is the mark that you love Jesus with all your heart? You spend time with him and the mark of a man who spends time with Jesus is his face will be in the dust.

He'll be the humblest man you can know, like Moses was. Because he's seeing the Lord all the time. He spends his life judging himself because he's before the Lord.

He sees Jesus. Please, my brothers and sisters, he who has years to hear, let him hear. Live before God's face.

Whatever else you don't do or do, love Jesus with all your heart. It doesn't matter if you can't accomplish great things for the Lord. Love him with all your heart, that's what he wants.

With all your perseverance, and I'm just reading from verse 23, perseverance and endurance and exposing false doubt, all that is worthless if you don't love Jesus with all your heart. He will de-recognize you. I'll take out the lampstand.

So that is what I say to all of you. Say what the psalmist said in Psalm 73, verse 25. Lord, whom have I in heaven but you? Wonderful verse.

It's the verse the Lord gave me when I was converted. I wrote it in the front page of my first Bible. Psalm 73, verse 25.

Lord, whom have I in heaven but you? And there's nothing and no one on earth I desire but you. I keep saying that to the Lord, even now. Lord, I don't desire money.

I don't desire honor. I don't desire a ministry. I don't even desire an anointing.

I just want to love you. There's nothing on earth I desire but you. When I get to heaven, I only want you.

I don't want anything else. You keep yourself in that place, my brothers and sisters, and you'll finish your Christian life in a glorious way, and you'll have a glorious ministry. God bless you.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, You are the God of encouragement and perseverance. You have written these things in Scripture for our warning.

Thank you. I thank you for the warnings I get, and I pray everybody here will be thankful for the warnings they get. We want to repent of past failures, and we want to put our face in the dust and say, have mercy upon us, O God.

Help us to be true to you, that the light of the Gospel which you have lit here will burn bright without dimming, that you will, like in the early days, you separated the light from the darkness, you'll keep on separating light from the darkness, and let the light burn brightly, that we shall go from glory to glory, individually, in our families, and in our church. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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