

Starting Well But Finishing Badly

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining true godliness and power in our Christian walk, highlighting the dangers of having a form of godliness without the inner power to overcome sin and live a holy life. It draws parallels from the biblical examples of Saul, David, and the churches in Ephesus, showing how decline can happen even in the midst of outward success and religious activities. The message urges believers to be part of the remnant of overcomers who truly love God and live sacrificially for Him.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:1, Acts 20:17, Revelation 2:1, 2 Timothy 3:1

Topics: "True Godliness", "Overcoming Sin"

Description

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Transcript

Let's turn to 1 Corinthians in chapter 10. We know that the Corinthian Christians were quite a carnal lot. And the warning that Paul gives them is a warning from the Israelites in the Old Testament who did not enter the promised land.

He says in 1 Corinthians 10, I don't want you to be unaware, brethren. And we can read like this, that all our fathers were under the cloud, passed through the sea, were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink. Nevertheless, verse 5, God was not well-pleased with most of them.

And we know that all those things mentioned in the first four verses are pictures of redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, baptized in water, baptized in the Holy Spirit, eating on the word of God, drinking of the Holy Spirit, born-again people. But with most of them, God was not well-pleased. And that's written to Corinthian Christians who were born again, who were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and who were speaking in tongues, and who had a lot of knowledge and a lot of spiritual gifts.

Now, when Christians don't read the word of God carefully, they can imagine that if someone is baptized in the Holy Spirit and he's speaking in tongues and got gifts, of course, God must be delighted with him. But it's to such people that Paul writes, God was not well-pleased with these people. But they experienced many miracles.

In fact, there's no group of people in the world that experienced as many miracles as these people who came out of Egypt. For 40 years, they had bread coming from heaven and water coming out of the rock and supernatural healing. Amazing miracles.

Their clothes never wore out for 40 years. Their sandals never wore out for 40 years. Those are all amazing miracles.

And yet, God was not pleased with them, teaching us that you can experience answers to prayer that does not prove that God is happy with you. A lot of people, under that misunderstanding, God answered my prayer, so he must be happy with me. No.

God answered more prayers of these people than any of us have experienced. Imagine if you got bread from heaven, even one day in your life would be a miracle. These guys got it every day for 40 years.

They're the most amazing miracles anybody's ever experienced, not just once, but for 40 years, every day. And it is to such people, it says, God was not well-pleased with them. So if you turn to 1 Corinthians 1, you see what type of people the Corinthians were.

It says here in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 4, they had received the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Verse 5, they were enriched in Christ in all speech and all knowledge. They had tremendous knowledge of the truth.

Not only that, they could speak it. They were good preachers. And verse 7, they were not lacking in any gift.

They believed in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and they had all the gifts in their midst. And they were waiting for the coming of Christ, verse 7. But he also tells them, chapter 3, I could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, because I can only give you milk to drink. Milk means forgiveness of sins.

Because you are fleshly, verse 3, there's jealousy and strife among you. The closest church to the Corinthian church today is the Pentecostal church, because they have gifts of the Holy Spirit and knowledge and many things. But they are carnal.

Now, many Christians don't understand this, how people exercising the gifts of the Spirit can be carnal, fleshly, and are babies. It says, you're babies. You're infants, verse 1. Can a man be a spiritual baby and exercise gifts of the Holy Spirit? Yes.

And to such people, he warns in 1 Corinthians 10, I don't want you to be ignorant of that Old Testament example of people who put the blood outside the door, symbolizing the blood of Christ, who were baptized in water, symbolizing through the Red Sea, symbolizing water baptism, had the baptism of the cloud, symbolizing the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The cloud led them, protected them. The cloud of pillar of fire protected them at night.

Nevertheless, verse 5, God was not well-pleased. So think of all the things they had. Miracles every day for 40 years.

God was not happy with them. Well-pleased is a very important word in this. God was not well-pleased.

Verse 1 Corinthians 10, 6, this has happened as an example for us. Again in verse 11, these things happen to them as an example and are written for our instruction. What? The things that are written in the Old Testament about Israel are written for our instruction as an example for us that we should not act immorally.

Verse 8, don't be idolaters. Verse 7, that means today don't worship money. Verse 8, don't act immorally, which means in today's terms, don't watch pornography.

And let us not tempt the Lord. Verse 9, that means tempting the Lord is saying, yeah, even if I do all these things, God will forgive me. He'll take me to heaven.

That is sort of tempting God. So don't try it. Because they were destroyed.

Verse 10, and that is an example as a warning for you. So, verse 12, if any of you think you're standing, you've got to be careful that you don't fall away also. Because no temptation has come to you which cannot be overcome.

Every temptation God allows to come into our life can be overcome. Because God controls the intensity of that temptation depending on your spiritual level. He will not allow you to be tempted at the same level as He allows me to be tempted.

He did not allow me to be tempted the way I'm being tempted today. You know, 55 years ago, He didn't allow me to be tempted like that because I was not strong enough. Like saying, a first standard student does not get a 10th standard question paper.

God does not do it. No teacher does it and God doesn't do it either. You will be tempted.

Your examination will be at your level. You can be sure of that. You will never get a question paper that has some question that is not covered in the portion at your level of maturity.

You know you can, I mean if a person doesn't study, then he can fail in the first standard as well. But no question will come to you in your question paper in terms of God's temptation that you cannot overcome. In other words, every temptation you get, every question paper you get, you can get a 100%.

You can be sure of that. Never, never say like so many people write to me, this is too much for me, this temptation is too much for me or this trial that I'm facing in my home from my wife or my husband or my relatives or my boss is too much for me. The moment you say that, you're saying about God, He's unfaithful.

Because here it says in verse 13, God is faithful that He will not allow you to be tested by beyond your ability. Is there anybody sitting here who is saying these words? What I'm facing right now is too much for me to bear. Really? Or in other words, what you're saying is God is unfaithful? Really? Or do you believe the word of God which says, God will never allow you to be tested beyond your ability.

But you say, brother, I'm facing a fantastic test. Oh, then God must be having a very high confidence in you. That you're in a higher standard than you thought.

You thought you were in fifth standard and actually you're in 12th standard. Did you know that? So it's an honor when I'm tested with a very high level. Wow, God has such terrific confidence in me.

So don't look at a test as something to depress you, but as something to encourage you and say, hey, that's a really strong test. I've never faced anything like that in my life. Which means God must be having a very high degree of confidence in you.

And He will definitely, it says here, He'll make a way of escape. Verse 13. It is impossible for that word to fail.

I'll tell you, I've been a Christian for 59 years almost. And I can say that verse is true. I have never, never, never faced a trial or a temptation in my life.

And I've faced many, many, more than all of you. But never faced one which was too much for me to handle. Sometimes it went on for a long time.

Some trials went on for years. But there was always a way of escape. And the way of escape is to humble yourself.

Always a way of escape. To humble yourself because then you get grace. You don't humble yourself, you don't get grace.

And if you get grace, sin cannot have dominion over you. You'll overcome the temptation and you will overcome the test. So I thought I mentioned this word in verse 5. God was not well pleased.

And that is true today that God is not well pleased with many, many of his children. Because though they have come out of Egypt, though they are baptized in water, though they are baptized in the Holy Spirit, though they exercise different gifts, they are not walking in a way that is pleasing to God. They are experiencing answers to prayer, sure.

They know they've got knowledge, they've got gifts. Maybe they are even able to preach. God is not well pleased with them.

Don't ever think that because you have knowledge, because you have supernatural gifts, because God is using you, God is well pleased with you. No. Even if you experience a miracle, miraculous answer to prayer, it doesn't mean God is well pleased with you.

Maybe you waited for a long time to get a job and you got a job. It doesn't mean God is well pleased with you. Or you waited for a long time and you finally found a good house to live in.

It doesn't mean God is well pleased with you. These answers to prayer are not the evidence that God is well pleased with you. And that is what we have to learn from the history of the Israelites.

Every day they got an answer to prayer for 40 years. For food, for their shelter, for covering and needs, earthly needs. Even if you experience answers to prayer every day for 40 years for your earthly needs, it does not prove that God is well pleased with you.

Because I've seen particularly a lot of full-time Christian workers. I've heard their testimony through the years. God has provided all my financial needs good.

I believe it. I've experienced it myself. But I can't therefore say God is well pleased with me.

Because God provided all the material needs of these people for 40 years. And even if I serve the Lord for 40 years and I say God has provided all my needs without asking anyone, it all came from heaven, just like manna, it can still be that God is not well pleased with me. And I'm absolutely convinced that God meets the material needs of many, many full-time workers and others and God is not well pleased with them.

And this is written for our instruction. So what I want to say, my brothers and sisters, never, never satisfy yourself that God's given you a good house. He's given you a good job.

He's provided all your needs. He's educated all your children. All your children are happily married.

It proves zero that God is well pleased with you. If you look at these earthly blessings as the proof that God is well pleased with you, you haven't understood 1 Corinthians 10. You're being deceived just like those Israelites in the wilderness felt, oh, God must be very happy with me.

Oh, manna today too. And I got a snake bite and God healed me. Wow.

He must be really happy with me. I was thirsty and God split the rock and gave me water. God is not well pleased.

He was not well pleased. Every day what God was saying was, I'm not well pleased with you. I'm not well pleased with you.

I know I answered your prayer. I did supernatural things for you, but I'm not well pleased with you. Very, very important to understand.

What does it mean to be well pleasing to God? In the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes in chapter 5. This is the mark of a true man of God, 2 Corinthians 5. He says in verse 9, we have an ambition. It's good to have an ambition, provided your ambition is heavenly and not earthly. If you have an earthly ambition, to be highly educated, good job.

It's okay, but there's nothing spiritual about that. And even if you got it, it doesn't mean anything. We have an ambition, verse 9, 2 Corinthians 5.9, to be well pleasing to God.

See, if you really want to be well pleasing to God, you have to have an ambition for it. Just like these people in the world have an ambition. Somebody goes into business and he has an ambition to become a millionaire, for his business to prosper, to open many shops.

Or he has an ambition when he goes into athletics to win the gold medal at some games, or to represent the country in the Olympics. There's ambition, ambition. Everybody has an ambition.

People who study science or athletics or play cricket, or they want to get into the Indian cricket team. Ambition, ambition. Paul also says, I have an ambition too.

My ambition is not all these earthly things. I don't want to get into any football team or to take part in the Olympics. I want to be well pleasing to God.

Paul was a full-time Christian worker and his ambition was not, well, God should meet all my earthly needs, so that at the end of my life I can say, yes, I trust to the Lord, I never mentioned my needs to anybody, and God met all my earthly needs. That was not his ambition. That was just a by-product.

His ambition was at the end of my life, not that God has met all my earthly needs, but that I've been well pleasing to God. So that I stand before the Lord one day and he says to me, well done, good and faithful servant. Do you have that ambition? That was Paul's ambition.

Now I'll show you the example of somebody who was well pleasing to the Father. Turn with me to Matthew chapter 3. The same word you find, well pleasing, well pleasing to the Father. Matthew chapter 3, we read about Jesus coming to John the Baptist to be baptized.

And verse 16, after being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water, Matthew 3, 16, and the heavens are opened. In verse 17, a voice from heaven said, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. What did he say about the Israelites in the wilderness? I am not well pleased.

You see the contrast? And here, what did he say about Jesus? I am well pleased. He said that about the Israelites after 40 years in the wilderness. I'm not well pleased.

He said about Jesus after 30 years in Nazareth. I am well pleased. Now see the contrast.

The Israelites experienced supernatural miracles every single day for 40 years. Not well pleased, God says. Jesus experienced zero miracles for 30 years.

I am well pleased. How do you explain that? God is well pleased with a person who prayed. Jesus prayed every day, I'm sure.

He prayed for 30 years and never experienced one supernatural miracle, never healed one sick person, never spoke in tongues. In fact, in his whole life, he never spoke in tongues. Can God be well pleased with somebody who never speaks in tongues in his whole life? The Pentecostals will say no.

I say yes. Greatest example is Jesus. Can God be well pleased with a person who never once in his life had a supernatural answer to prayer? Yes, Jesus.

Now, if I were to ask you, have you had a supernatural answer to prayer? Even though you haven't, you will cook up something and say that was a supernatural answer because you want that testimony. I also got a supernatural answer. Why is there that lust to exaggerate some answer you got to prayer to make it sound supernatural? I'll tell you, because you feel in your heart that unless God does something supernatural, he's not happy with you.

Rubbish. Look at Jesus and compare him with the Israelites. Well pleased? Not well pleased.

Let's get this clearly in our mind because you'll never hear this in any other church and I'm showing it to you from scripture. Paul said, we have an ambition to be well pleasing to the Father and who was his example? Not the Israelites, but Jesus. So what was it that made Jesus well pleasing to the Father? Well, we know Hebrews 4.15, well known verse in CFC.

He was tempted in all points as we are, but he never sinned. What did the Israelites experience every day for 40 years? Supernatural experience. Manna from heaven.

Supernatural healing. Water from the rock. A cloud always protecting them from the sun in the desert.

You know, that was one of the functions of the pillar of cloud. It was like a big cloud that gave them a shade. And the terrible walking through a desert where there was always this shade.

And at night, a fire that lit up their compound all night. Boy, that's real protection. No wild animals would come near that.

Every day. Supernatural protection. What did Jesus have every day? Tempted, but did not sin.

Next day, tempted, but did not sin. Next year, tempted, but did not sin. 30 years.

Do you see the difference between Jesus and the Israelites? In one case, it was overcoming temptation every single day. In the other case, it was experiencing miracles every single day. Now I want to ask you, my dear brothers, tell me honestly, honestly, which do you want? If you're given a choice, God says, I will give you supernatural miracles every day, but you'll never get rid of your grumbling and complaining and murmuring and fear and anxiety and all.

But every day you will experience a miracle. Do you want that life? Or do you want a life where you'll never experience any miracle? No answers to prayer, but you'll overcome sin. You'll never grumble.

You'll never complain. You'll never watch pornography. You'll never lust after a woman.

You'll never lose your temper. You'll never love money. You will love your enemies.

You will be able to bless those who curse you, but you'll never experience a supernatural miracle. How many of you feel honestly from deep down in your heart and say, Lord, that's what I want? That proves what your ambition is. I'm just trying to show, give you a scan, a scan of your heart so that you don't deceive yourself that you're spiritual because you can have like the Corinthians have a lot of knowledge.

I'm pretty sure the Corinthians could sing well as well. They had knowledge. They had gifts to sing and they had gifts to do all types of things, but they were not pleasing to God.

I know what I want. I remember once when I read this about Jesus, the voice from heaven saying, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. And a great longing came in my heart and I said, Father in heaven, can you please say that about me? Can you look at my life and say, as you watch my life every day, every day, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.

Or if you're a girl, this is my beloved daughter on whom I'm well pleased. I tell you that such a terrific longing in my heart that I said, Lord, I don't care if I lose everything. I don't want money.

I don't want house. I don't want anything. I don't want even ability to speak.

I don't even want health. You can even make me dumb. You can make me paralyzed.

I only want that you should be able to look at my daily life and say, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. And I know that because that has become my ambition. God's begun to help me in that area.

I'll tell you honestly, I don't look for miracles. If God does them well and good, if he doesn't do it, that's fine. That's fine with me.

I don't want to be able to testify somewhere this thing happened and I had a supernatural healing. Maybe some of you experienced that. Good.

Do you boast about it? Bad. That's worse. What you experienced was good.

But the moment you began to speak too much about it, it ruined everything. Like I say, the miracle you got was a good chicken curry. But then you put a dead lizard into it by boasting about it.

And that was the end of it. You spoiled the whole thing. You should have left it as it is.

So many situations like that we see. If your passion in life is to be well pleasing to the Father, you will know God in such a that other Christians will never know. I guarantee you'll overcome anger.

Some of you have a problem with anger. Believe me, you will overcome it not 99%, but 100%. Some of you have a problem with grumbling, murmuring.

You will overcome it 100%. You have a problem with lusting, pornography. You will overcome it 100%.

100%. You look at a pretty girl and you'll want to not look at her again. 100%.

But you have to go to God and say, Lord, I don't want miracles. I want to be well pleasing to you. If God sees that deep down in your heart as a passion, like Paul says, an ambition.

Look at these people who want to participate in the marathon race in the Olympics, 40 kilometers. They, for four or eight years, they run and run every morning. So many times a day, they run 40 kilometers.

Run and run and improve their timing. Keep a stopwatch with them and see how much did I make today? How much time? Oh, I slowed down today. I've got to run faster.

Watch their diet. They don't eat anything they like. They eat what their trainers tell them is good for you to keep healthy to run.

So much of discipline they do in their life just to win an Olympic crown or a medal. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9, they do it to get an earthly medal. What about us? We want to get that word from heaven that says, I'm well pleased with you.

Can you say that you will be as or you are as earnest to get that commendation from the Lord as that marathon runner is to win an Olympic gold medal? How he trains every day. He sees food on the table which he likes to eat and he doesn't eat it. Because he says, this will just increase my weight and I won't be able to make that timing tomorrow.

I lose my timing. I'll never get to the Olympic Games if I just eat what I like. And no, he says, I've got to be disciplined.

That's the example that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 9. And says, we need to discipline ourselves. In the chapter just before the chapter I read just now, we need to discipline ourselves to be pleasing to the Lord. And in the Old Testament, I want to share with you how we read when Moses died.

Turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 34 and verse 9. Moses died and the whole nation of Israel were displeasing to the Lord in the wilderness. But there was one man called Joshua who was also in that crowd of 600,000. He was not displeasing to the Lord.

He and Caleb went into the land as spies and said, with God's help, we can overcome them. And God was so happy with them. With all the other 600,000, we read God was not well pleased.

That's why it says in 1 Corinthians 10, did you read it? With most of them, not with all of them, with most of them, God was not well pleased. Most of them means 600,000 minus two. With most of them, God was not well pleased.

But there were two with whom God was well pleased, Joshua and Caleb. And it's Joshua that's mentioned here in Deuteronomy 34, when Moses died. It says here that Moses appointed Joshua to take over from him.

And we read here in verse 9, Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. Moses laid his hands on Joshua and communicated something to Joshua of the anointing that was upon him. He couldn't just go and do that to anybody.

It had to be someone whom God had chosen. Moses had two sons, but he couldn't give it to them. God said, not your sons, sorry, Joshua.

And Moses laid his hands on Joshua. And then people recognized that Joshua is also a leader. And that's why you read in the book of Joshua and you read the whole book of Joshua, what a mighty leader he was.

You know, it was very difficult for him to step into the shoes of Moses, the mighty man of God who everybody respected. But the Lord told Joshua in Joshua chapter 1, verse 5, no man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, I will be with you.

I will not fail you. I will not forsake you. Only be strong, verse 7. And be careful to do everything according to the law which Moses commanded.

And we read that Joshua was faithful till the end of his life. We read in right up to the end of Joshua's life, he was faithful. He told the Israelites, you people can serve whomever you like.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And that's how he died. Then it comes to the book of Judges.

And I want you to see what happened after Joshua died. When Moses died, there was a Joshua to take over. When Joshua died, there was nobody.

Is it because God did not want a leader? Of course he did. When is it that God doesn't want someone to lead his people? Never, never, never. He always wants people, but there was nobody fit.

I don't know if Joshua had children, but they were not fit. So we read in Joshua chapter 2, sorry, Judges chapter 2. And now Joshua has died. Judges chapter 2 and verse 7. The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua.

They never drifted away. They didn't go after idols because Joshua was a very strict leader. And he had some influence on all the elders who were with him.

There were some elders who were under Joshua's leadership. They didn't have the same degree of anointing that Joshua had, but they had been influenced by Joshua's life and leadership. That there was some measure in which the blessing continued.

But then they served the Lord all the days of the elders, verse 7, who survived Joshua. But once those elders also died, verse 11, then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Beals and forsook the Lord who brought them out of Egypt. See how much was dependent on leaders.

How much was dependent? All those years with Joshua, they never dared to do anything like that. I think Joshua was in Canaan probably about 40 years. He was around 80 or so when he entered in and he was about 120 when he died.

So all those 40 years, Israelites never went after idols. And the elders beyond Joshua, I don't know how much longer they were, maybe a few years. And then they died and then the children of Israel went back to worshipping idols again.

You know, I told you the other day about how Moses and Aaron were the leaders. But when Moses went away just for 40 days to the mountain, they went to idolatry. Because Aaron was not such a strict person.

And these elders, I don't know whether they were very strict either. So gradually a drift came and they went into evil. But it never happened in Joshua's time.

And I think by the time Joshua died and the elders were there, I think a decline must have started with the death of Joshua. And though externally, as it says, they were Joshua 2, Judges 2, 7. They followed the Lord, but it was only external. But inwardly decline came and as soon as those elders also died, finished.

What was inside came out and they started worshipping idols again. What did we read in 1 Corinthians 10? These things are written for our instruction. This is what has always happened throughout the Old Testament.

I want to give you another example. In 1 Samuel, we read about another leader. Israel always had a prophet and a high priest to lead them because God was their king.

All the other nations had kings. God told Israel, I am your king. But the people of Israel came to Samuel in 1 Samuel chapter 8 and said to him in verse 5, 1 Samuel 8 verse 5, Appoint a king for us because you're old now and your sons are all backslidden.

By the way, Samuel's sons were all backslidden and taking bribes. Just like the sons of Eli, you read about that in verse 3, 1 Samuel 8 verse 3. The sons of Samuel were dishonest and took bribes. And so the elders came to Samuel and said, Hey, listen, Samuel, your sons are all wayward.

They're not like you. So best is you appoint a king like all the other nations have kings and give us a king to judge us. And the Lord said to Samuel, okay, verse 7, listen to them because they have rejected me, verse 7, from being king over them.

They don't want me as their king anymore. I was their king till now. I appointed prophets and leaders, but I was their king.

But now they want to follow all the nations of the world and have a king. And so they had to select a king. And the Lord told Samuel in chapter 9, verse 16, Tomorrow I'll send you a man from the land of Benjamin and you can appoint him as king.

So he met Saul and then Samuel said, Let's take lots so it doesn't look as if I have selected a king. Actually, God had told him, this is the man. Now Samuel could have told people, hey, listen, God told me

Saul is the king, so you better accept him.

But he didn't want it to look as if he was being partial to some friend of mine. So he said, listen, best is let's cast lots and see whom God chooses. Samuel had faith that if he cast lots, God will still choose Saul.

So you read here, chapter 10, verse 17, Samuel called all the people together and he said, Now you come before me, verse 19, last part, by your tribes, one by one. And there are 12 tribes, let me cast lots and see which tribe is chosen. And verse 21, Samuel 10, 20, He took lots and the tribe of Benjamin was chosen.

Okay, he says, now let's cast lots for all the families in Benjamin. Verse 21, cast lots and the family of the Matriarch family was chosen, verse 21. And then he cast lots for all the different families there, different people there, and Saul's name came up.

That was the sovereignty of God. There's a verse in Proverbs which says, The Lord determines the result of the Lord. This is Old Testament.

And the last time it was done was before the day of Pentecost, when the 11 apostles decided to cast lots to pick out which of these two shall be the 12th apostle with us. That was not God's choice. I don't know whether you remember that place in Acts chapter 1. They cast lots.

They selected two names to replace Judas Iscariot and Peter and the others cast lots and they picked out one. And they said, okay, but that was Old Testament way of finding God's will. Actually, the 12th person to replace Judas Iscariot was Paul, who came much later.

That was God's will. But they didn't know that. They had waited and said, Lord, we won't cast lots.

You show us who's your will. God said, hang on. In a few years, I'll show you who has to replace Judas Iscariot.

That's Paul. I believe Judas Iscariot was the cleverest among all the apostles. And he was the one who was supposed to write the epistles.

But Paul got his crown. Like it says in Revelation 3, take heed that no one take your crown. Paul got the crown of Judas Iscariot.

But here they cast lots and Saul was taken. Now, Samuel had already told Saul. And earlier when he came to him, he had anointed him and said, you're the king.

So he should have been just coming up there and say, hey, listen, by the way, fellas, I'm the one. But it says here, they looked for Saul, verse 21, and they couldn't find him. Put yourself in Saul's place.

Supposing Samuel had one day anointed you and said, hey, you're going to be the king. And then you find all these lots being taken. And you're not disturbed because you know that lot will come in your name.

I'm sure you'll be hanging around there waiting to be show yourself. But he wasn't there. You see what a humble man Saul was when he started? He went and hid himself.

And you know where he hid himself? He was hiding under some suitcases. No, I'm not joking. You read that in verse 22.

He found some suitcases somewhere and he hid between those suitcases that nobody would find him. Because he was a very tall man. And if he stood in the crowd, he would stand out.

So he went and hid among some suitcases there, some people's luggage. And they looked and looked and looked and found, they found this guy hiding in the suitcases and pulled him out and said, come here, you've been selected. Selected, and when he stood there, it says in verse 23, he was taller than all the people from his shoulder upwards.

That means the tallest person in Israel came only up to Saul's shoulder. When a thousand people stood there, you could see Saul's head standing up there, showing that that guy lived by his head. And that's why he fell away later as well.

He lived by his intelligence and his knowledge. But he was a very humble person. And you read some interesting things there in the beginning, how he did not take any revenge on those who did not fight with him.

He just forgave them. And it's very interesting to see how it was right up to chapter 11, chapter 12. Such a humble, God-fearing man.

But he was getting victories. The Philistines were being defeated. And we read here in 1 Samuel 13, that Saul went to fight with the Philistines.

And he was always defeating the Philistines. Verse 4, Israel heard the news. Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines.

And then see what he did. It happens to many people when God blesses them in one ministry. They suddenly go outside their boundary into another ministry that God has not called them for.

Samuel had told Saul, listen, you wait. I will come and offer a sacrifice to the Lord because I am a priest. You're not a priest.

You're a king. Verse 8, 1 Samuel 13, verse 8. He waited seven days according to the appointed time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come.

That was a test for Saul. What is Saul going to do? Samuel told him to wait seven days. I'll come and offer the sacrifice.

Saul said, I have done so many wonderful things on the battlefield. I'm anointed to be king. I'm sure I can be a priest as well.

He said, bring me the peace offerings and the burnt offerings. And as a priest, verse 9, he offered the burnt offering. This is an example of a man mightily blessed by God in his area going outside his boundary into another area which God had never called him to go into.

He was a king, not a priest. And there was a reason for that. Nobody in the Old Testament was allowed to be a king and a priest.

You read later on in Chronicles about another king of Judah who wanted to become a priest and he got leprosy because the first king priest was to be Jesus Christ. It was reserved for Jesus Christ and anybody who took that position was violating God's law. Anyway, as soon as Saul finished offering the burnt

offering, Samuel came.

When Samuel said, I'll come in seven days, he keeps his word. Only thing, he didn't come in the morning. He came in the afternoon.

But Saul got impatient in the morning and offered the sacrifice. And Samuel said to Saul, what have you done? How dare you offer a sacrifice? You're really a king, man. And Saul, you know, he's always great at making excuses.

I saw the people scattering away and all that. And Samuel said to Saul, you have acted foolishly. Verse 13, you have not kept the commandment of the Lord.

And now, verse 14, your kingdom will not endure. You say, Lord, are you so strict with a man who has been so faithful just because he slipped up once? I tell you, most Christians have no idea about the strictness of God. I've seen that with many churches and CFC churches in some places.

With elders who go outside their boundary or who are not strict. And I've seen what is the end of that church. It's always wishy-washy calamity.

Because they say, yeah, yeah, it's okay. God has blessed me here. I can do this also.

No, you can't. You have to stay within your boundary, brother, sister. And look at the punishment.

Your kingdom will not endure. You say, Lord, just for a small thing like this, you take away the kingdom? Many people can't understand God's ways. I've heard people tell me, Brother Zach, you're too strict.

Okay. I hope you know God better than me. They may have told Samuel that also.

What Samuel? You're so strict with Saul just for a little thing like this? Was it a little thing? The Lord is now looking for a man, not who's got a big head, but who's got a good heart. Verse 14. You know the difference in head and heart.

And that man after God's heart was David. And I don't think he was even born at that time. Because he was much younger then.

David was 30 years old when he became king. And here in chapter 13, verse 1, we read that Saul reigned for 40 years in Israel. So if Saul reigned for 40 years in Israel, then David was born 10 years after Saul became king.

Simple arithmetic. Because David became king when he was 30. So God says, I haven't got the man yet, but I'm looking for a man after my own heart.

And he found one in David. Saul, you've got your head above everybody else. David's got a heart.

And that's what I'm looking for. The Lord has already appointed him. Imagine saying that before the little child was born, or maybe he was a little boy then.

The Lord has already appointed him ruler. Because you did not keep what the Lord commanded. And that is the example of Saul.

Now let's go to David. Turn to 1 Samuel chapter 16. You see how this very humble Saul lost the kingdom.

And later on, he disobeyed also, we read in 1 Samuel 15. Now in chapter 16, the Lord said to Samuel, okay, stop grieving over Saul. I'm going to send you.

I've chosen the son of Jesse to be the next king. Chapter 16, verse 1. And if you want to know how much Jesse, the father, despised David, read this. Read carefully.

Samuel came to Bethlehem. And verse 4, and the elders were trembling. Because if a prophet comes somewhere, that means something is wrong.

And they said, are you coming in peace? He said, yeah, I've come in peace. Nothing's wrong. I've come to please call the sons of Jesse and his sons to sacrifice.

And so Jesse brought his sons. Because Samuel had told Jesse, one of your sons has got to be the king. And then Eliab, the eldest, verse 6, came before Samuel.

And Samuel saw his height and his smartness and his good looks. And surely this must be the anointed king. The Lord said, no, don't look at his height.

And here is that beautiful Old Testament verse. It comes here. 1 Samuel 16, 7. God does not see the way man sees.

Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Okay, not Eliab. Let's try the next one.

Abinadab. No, not him. Third, verse 9. Shammah, not him.

Like that, Jesse, verse 10, made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. You know, he had told Jesse, bring all your sons here. And he brought seven of them.

And even the seventh one, God said no. And Samuel was confused. Hey, Lord, you said one of the sons of Jesse is going to be king.

And he's brought all his seven sons here. And you say no, no, no, no, no to each of them. Then Samuel said, listen, do you have any other sons? He said, yeah, we've got a young guy.

He's the youngest. He's always playing the guitar and singing songs to God. So we just told him to look after the sheep.

And he's not fit to be the king. Samuel said, bring him here. And they brought David.

Just to show you how much his father despised him. He thought, this guy, he can't be him. King means not him.

Definitely not him. Sometimes the people who we think are useless are the ones God picks up. I'll tell you that.

I've seen that so many times. People whom man despises because God sees in their heart a devotion and a love for him. You know that David was writing Psalms before he was 30 years old.

Imagine writing inspired scripture in the Bible before he was 30 years old. And as soon as he came, the Lord said in verse 12, last part, this is him. I'm sure Jesse got the surprise of his life.

And Samuel immediately anointed him. See, Samuel was a man with discernment. These Old Testament prophets were called seers.

S-E-E-R-S. You know the meaning of seers? One who can see. One who can see what other people cannot see.

One who can look into the future and see something which others can't see. One who can look at a person and see what his heart is like. Which others can't see.

Others just look at the outward appearance or his cleverness. But a seer could see something. And that's how when he saw all the other seven sons of Jesse, God said, no, no, no, no, no.

And as soon as he saw David, God said, yes. Very important requirement. And I believe as you grow spiritually, it's one of the things you must long for.

You can see things which God shows you because then you won't be deceived by people. Very important qualification for an elder to be a seer. Who doesn't have his own prejudices.

You see, the thing is, so many elders in the world have got partiality. They love their own relatives or some special favorites in the church. They can never be seers.

In a hundred years they won't be because they've got partiality. They look at somebody who's smart or clever or who does some service for them or something like that. But the seer is completely free from partiality.

He doesn't look at outward appearance and he doesn't see whether a man is intelligent or not. He sees the heart. And who can show you the heart? Only God.

So God showed Samuel David's heart and said, that's the man. And he anointed him. And it says in verse 13, the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day.

So it's not just Samuel pouring some oil on him and laying his hand on him. The spirit of God backed it up and said, this is my man. And you see how wonderfully David was throughout his life.

And then we read in 2 Samuel chapter 11. After David had been king for about 20 years, this wonderful man of God who wrote scripture, anointed by God, he had seen what happened to Samuel's children. He had seen what happened to Saul.

He had heard what happened to Eli. But he thought, no, no, no, it won't happen to me. I'm a man after God's own heart.

And 20 years he had won so many battles, mightily anointed by God, writing scripture that he began to relax. That's when danger sets in. When you've been faithful to the Lord for many years and God has blessed you, blessed your family, and you suddenly begin to think, oh, I'm a sort of a senior brother.

I'm a senior elder. That's the time danger comes in. Not that you will go and kill somebody, but the sharpness of discernment goes away.

You don't hear God so clearly as you did 30 years ago. That's what happened to David. He was about 50 years old now, and he couldn't hear God as clearly as he did 20 years earlier.

When he was 30, he heard God so clearly, he could write it down and God put it in the Bible. Amazing words. But now, you know, those days the kings were the leaders in the battle.

Kings used to be the generals who would lead the army to battle and they never had any battles in wintertime, it was too cold. But when spring came and the kings go out to battle, 2 Samuel 11 verse 1, David was supposed to lead the army. But he said, well, I'm senior now, I can sit back.

And he said to Joab, who was his sister's son, who was a general, you go fight the battle. Joab was the general. And David stayed at Jerusalem.

We read once when Moses sent Joshua to the battle in, I think it's Exodus chapter 17. Moses went up to the mountain and lifted up his hands and said, Oh God, please help Joshua when he's fighting the Amalekites. And God answered Moses' prayer and they would defeat them.

And when Moses' hands got tired, the Amalekites would win. And then Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands and he kept it up like that. The Amalekites were defeated thoroughly.

That's what Moses did when he sent Aaron to battle. What did David do? He should have been doing that when he sent Joab to battle. He should have been praying.

Instead of that, he was sleeping. And he was sleeping right up till the evening, verse 2. Can you imagine that? In the evening, and most of us get up in the morning. In the evening, well, he was a king.

He could do what he liked. He arose from his bed, no prayer, nothing. I hope when you get out of your bed, the first thing you do is pray.

I hope it is. You don't have to be on your knees. But I hope as soon as you come out of bed, you think of Jesus.

First thing in the morning. A lesson here. If David had got out of bed, had knelt down first and said, Father, I'm thinking of Joab now, fighting the battle.

Please help him to win the victory. It would have been a different story. But he got up and relaxed and he said, Let me go for a stroll on the roof of my house.

And he looks over the wall and he sees a woman bathing. Of course, it was absolutely stupid of Bathsheba to be bathing out there and open, knowing that people from the terrace in the opposite house can see me. Crazy.

Not only David is guilty, Bathsheba is equally guilty. It's all these women who, she provoked David. You think it's only the men are guilty who look at a woman and lust? What about the women who wear these tight-fitting clothes? Aren't they guilty just like Bathsheba? What about these women who expose more and more of their body? They may not be bathing naked, but they're doing something like that when they make their pants so tight and don't cover the joints of their legs and make their upper part of their dress so tight and expose more and more of their hands and legs and all that and stomachs more and more.

Are they guilty or not? Was Bathsheba guilty? She should have had some sense. And all these girls who dress like that should have some sense. Okay.

And David said, who's that? And they told him, that's the wife. That's somebody else's wife. You know, those days kings just married whom they like, but definitely not somebody else's wife.

He already had six or seven wives. And David said, ah, it doesn't matter if he's somebody else's wife. Bring him in.

Bring her in here. And he had sex with her and she conceived. Now what to do? Somehow put the blame on her husband.

He called her husband back from the battlefield. Send me Uriah the Hittite, verse 6. And Uriah came and David told Uriah, go down to your house, verse 8. So that he could go and sleep with his wife. And at least he'll think the child was his.

But Uriah would not go to his house. Imagine what an upright man Uriah was. He slept at the door of the king's house, verse 9. And David said to Uriah, you didn't go to your house, verse 10.

Listen to Uriah. How can I go to my house when my fellow soldiers are out in the open field, verse 11, battling out there? They're battling out there, my fellow soldiers. And you mean I should go and sleep with my wife? No.

By your life, verse 11, by your soul, I will not do such a thing. Who was more upright here? David or Uriah. Sometimes those so-called leaders or those who imagine themselves to be godly and spiritual, God's people are much worse than some of the younger believers who have more uprightness.

And then God called him. He called him one day and made him drunk, verse 13. He was trying every possible trick.

But he still would not go down to his house. What a man. And then David had only one solution.

I don't want to get caught. So he wrote a letter to Joab, verse 14, and said, tomorrow in the battle, make sure you put Uriah right in front. And when the battle is really thick, verse 15, all of you withdraw.

So that he'll be killed. This is another form of hiring. You know, they hire murderers nowadays.

Go and kill that fellow. David was hiring a murderer. And so it happened that that happened and Uriah was killed.

And you read in the 17, Uriah died. And so they had to send a report to the king. What happened in the battle.

And Joab sent a report to the king saying, sorry, we lost the battle. And when the king says, why in the world did you lose the battle? Don't you know that you should have, did not have gone so close to the wall? Verse 20, just whisper in his ear, by the way, Uriah is also dead. That'll calm David.

So the messenger reported and told David, we lost in the battle. And David says, and he told him, by the way, Uriah is also dead. Oh, David says, and it's okay.

Sometimes people die in battle, we can't help it. And then he tells Bathsheba to come, I'm going to marry you. This is the great David, who started out as a man after God's own heart.

Who wrote scripture. I'm just trying to show you how godly men decline as time goes on. Turn to 1 Kings chapter 1. David was now an old man.

1 Kings 1 verse 1. And we read here that one of his sons, he said, my father is going to die now. And David had a number of sons. And Adonijah, he had a number of sons through many wives.

I think David had about eight wives. And each of the sons said, I want to be the next king. And 1 Kings 1 verse 5. Adonijah, the son of Haggith, exalted himself and said, I'll be the king.

And why did this son of David become so rebellious? Listen to the story. All fathers, please listen carefully now. We've seen David's failure as a husband, as a king.

Now you see his failure as a father. David, his father, had never crossed him. That means the margin, it says, never given him any pain.

He never gave him any pain by strong words. Why do you do that? No, no, no. He never spoke like that to Adonijah.

He never spanked him. He never caused him any pain, it says in the margin of my Bible. And he also never asked him a question.

Why did you do that? No, no, no. Why? Because this boy, Adonijah, verse 6, was a very handsome man. You have a good looking kid, better looking than all the other children, or a good looking daughter, better than all the others, and she's your favorite.

Or he's your favorite. And you don't want to pain him or her. See what happened to that boy when he grew up.

Finally, he had to be killed. You read the rest of the story. These are warnings.

These things are written for our instruction. Now let's come to the New Testament. We read in Acts of the Apostles, chapter 20.

Paul was in Ephesus. He planted churches in many places, but he never stayed long in any place. But in Ephesus, he stayed a long time.

Then he had to leave. Acts chapter 20, from verse 17, he called the elders of the church of Ephesus to a place called Miletus. He said, I want to talk to you.

And he told them, verse 31, remember Acts 20, 31, that night and day, for a period of three years, I kept on preaching to you with tears. I used to weep while I was preaching. And those are not artificial tears.

Like some people have got the ability to produce artificial tears to move people to compassion. That's all rubbish. They're actors.

Paul was not an actor. He was genuinely concerned that these people should take sin seriously. And that's why he wept for them.

Like Jeremiah once said, if you don't listen to me, I'll go alone and weep for you people. Paul was a bit like that himself. He admonished them with tears.

You know, God gives his word to those who have compassion for his people. Very often, God does not give his word to many of his servants because they don't love his people. They only know how to rebuke them and correct them.

Yeah, Paul spoke strong words, but he loved them. He had tremendous compassion for God's people. That's why Paul was a prophet who always had a word.

And he says night and day for three years. Have you calculated that? He used to preach early in the morning and he used to preach at night. John Wesley used to be like that in the 1700s.

He used to go out at five o'clock in the morning to preach to people before they went to work. And people listened to him. They had to go off to work by six o'clock and he preached to them and come back.

Imagine a preacher who goes at five o'clock in the morning before people go to work. Imagine the people who are willing to come together at five o'clock in the morning to listen to a message before they go to work. Do you find such people today? No.

And then in the evening, again, after they finished work and he'd say, let's have a meeting. He preached morning and evening in one day, in one year, that is 730 messages. And in three years, that is nearly 2,200 messages, let's say.

Imagine listening to 2,200 sermons. Imagine if you had 2,200 videotapes of Paul's message. I would have loved to listen to all of them.

That's what he preached. In Ephesus, 2,000 sermons with tears. And he said in verse 33, I never wanted anybody's money.

I never wanted any of you to give me a shirt or a pant or any such thing. I was not interested in any of these things. I worked with my own hands and took care of my own needs.

Verse 34, I showed you like that, that it is, verse 35, it is more blessed to give than to receive. And he says to the elders, I, verse 27, I declared to you the whole purpose of God. I never withheld anything from you.

I was willing to offend you, correct you. I told you everything. Now please take care of the flock.

But I know, verse 29, that after I leave you, these wolves who've been waiting outside the door will walk right in. They are scared to come in as long as I'm here. But the moment I'm gone, they'll come in.

I know that, Paul says. And not only that, some of you, I don't know, maybe there were five elders sitting there or six or seven. I don't know how big the church was.

From among you, there'll be a division among you. You won't agree with each other. You're all agreed with each other now, but Paul says, because I'm here.

But once I go, not only the wolves will come in, you fellows will start having your own opinions and having your own little groups. See, draw away disciples after them does not necessarily mean that they all left the church and start another church. Five elders started five churches.

No, no, no, no, no. Within the church, the elders had their own favorites. These are the people who are my favorites, and the other elder had my favorites, and the third elder had his favorites, and the fourth elder

had his favorites, and the fifth elder had his favorites.

They were his disciples. He would listen to them, and this man would listen to them, and this man listened to them. Best way to destroy a church.

That's what happened. But outwardly, it was one church. The church in Ephesus, founded by the apostle Paul.

It has not split in 30, 40 years. Great. But see what the Lord says to the church in Ephesus, 40 years later.

2nd Revelation chapter 2. This is about 40 years or so after Paul spoke those words in Acts 20. To the leader, messenger, the word angel can mean messenger, to the messenger of the church in Ephesus, write this. Yeah, there are many good things in you.

Paul has taught you so many things that you still keep. You have your conferences. You have your singing, and you have your choir practices, and you have your Sunday school, and you have this, and you have all these things, your deeds.

And you're also doing many, many good things. You're working hard, and you're upright, and you don't tolerate evil people. No, you're still preaching against sin.

And if any false teacher comes in, you turn him out, verse 2. You've endured for my name's sake. You're still true to the Lord. But you have left your first love, verse 4. You don't love me as you did at the beginning.

And because of that, you don't love one another as you did at the beginning. You got your favorites. You got your special favorites.

You and you got your favorites. You got your favorites. Exactly like Paul said.

But outwardly, it was one church. You have left your first love. Is that serious, Lord? Yes, verse 5. It is so serious.

You have fallen. And if you don't repent of it, I will remove the lampstand. I will de-recognize you as a church.

But, verse 7. There are some in your midst who are overcomers. And let them hear what the Holy Spirit is saying. So in this church, even though the elders had backslidden and had their favorites, God had some younger people who didn't have much influence, but they were living an overcoming life.

They were free from their overcome temptation. They overcome free from partiality and seeking to live in love and humility and purity. And the Lord says, I'll recognize you.

What was the threat in verse 5? I will remove the lampstand, meaning I will go away from your church. So supposing if you don't repent, verse 5. Now supposing those elders had not repented, the Lord would have gone away from that church. What would the overcomers have done? What does the bride do in the wedding reception if the bridegroom is going away? The bride doesn't stay.

If the bridegroom is going away, I'm going with the bridegroom. But all these people are not the bride. It's only the overcomers who are the bride.

And they sense the Lord's not here anymore. That anointing that was here in the olden days is gone. And they see the Lord has left.

And they would have moved out, maybe 10 of them. And they'd have started another church in Ephesus. And the big 600-member church would have despised them.

Look at that group, those rebels they've left here. God's curse is upon them. But the Lord was there.

This has happened again and again and again. See, that group of 10 people, despised, rejected, really with the Lord's presence. The first group is like Saul, started well in Paul's time.

But like Saul, declined, thrown out. Then David comes up, small group, starts well. And you know what happened to David.

This group of 10 gradually becomes 500. And they also go the same way. And the Lord leaves them.

But there are some overcomers in the second church. They go out and start the third church in Ephesus. And like that through the centuries.

That is how all these churches have started in 2000 years. Some people were fed up with the decline. So we want to be true to the Lord.

And that's how all these denominations have started. Great movements, like when you think of the movement that Martin Luther started 500 years ago. It was tremendous.

He stood against the entire Catholic Church. And what a movement it was. People were really born again.

But go and sit in a Lutheran church today. If Martin Luther came to the world today, he will not join the Lutheran church. In the 1700s, there was this man John Wesley.

He was in the church which Martin Luther started, which was called the Anglican Church in England those days. And he began to preach about being born again and a holy life. And they would not let him preach.

They threw him out. So he would stand in the open air and preach. And gradually people came that started what is known as the Methodist Church.

And he had little, little groups. Godly men. Some of the most godly men on earth at that time were in England in the Methodist Church.

But go and sit in some Methodist churches today. 250 years later. If John Wesley were to come to earth today, he will not join the Methodist Church.

Then God brings out some other group like the Brethren or different groups. And there were the so-called Anabaptists also. Always there were a group of people despised by others, stood up for the truth of God, persecuted.

Some were killed. And in the early Pentecostal movement, if you read about the early days of the Pentecostal movement, 1900s, 118 years ago, they were poor, poor people. One of their main leaders was a black man with one eye blind.

His pulpit was an old shoebox on a broken table. And when they all prayed, he hid his head inside that shoebox. And all poor people sitting there filled with the Holy Spirit.

That's how the movement started. But over a period of time, it became rich with plenty of money. That's what happened to Saul.

He became rich. That's what happened to the Israelites in Joshua's time. They had all this land and possessions and they drifted.

That's what happened to David. He became a king with a palace. He was not just out in the fields looking after sheep.

And that's what happened to all these movements. They were poor when they began, but they became big and famous and rich. And they drifted away from God.

And it's happened to every movement within 50 to 70 years, it's gone. But that doesn't mean God's work dies out. No.

There will always be some overcomers in every generation in these 2000 years. God has always had a few humble, God-fearing, who don't spend their time criticizing others, but judging themselves, who want to be well-pleasing to the Father, whose ambition is to be well-pleasing to the Father. Even if they don't see miracles, they want to be like Jesus, who never did a miracle, but about whom the Father could say, this is my Son, whom I'm well-pleased.

We have come to almost the closing years of the church age. And Christ is going to come pretty soon. And the Bible says, let me read this verse finally, 2nd Timothy and chapter 3. In the last days, it will be very difficult to be a Christian, 2nd Timothy chapter 3. Because, verse 5, men will have a form of godliness without the power.

They won't give up the form of godliness. They will talk the right language, they'll talk about justification by faith, they'll talk about baptism in the Holy Spirit, they'll talk about holiness, they will even talk about new covenant, they'll talk about the new and living way, they'll talk about taking up the cross. Oh, you think they're the holiest people on earth, but no, they don't have the power to overcome sin.

Look at the way they live at home, with all this language of overcoming sin and holiness and new covenant and baptism in the Holy Spirit and all this other thing. Just see how they behave at home with their wives and husbands. See how they bring up their children.

Form of godliness without the power. But they sit in a good church which talks about new covenant and victory over sin. All the way beyond the new, we don't have pastors, we have elders, and we don't take money from people.

All the right language, form of godliness is there. But the inner power to be pure, to be humble, to love, to be without partiality, gone. But they will have a form of godliness.

But underneath that form of godliness, verse 2, they love themselves. They won't believe in sacrificing for the Lord's sake. They'll always think of themselves, they'll be lovers of money.

They'll always think, how can I make more and more money for myself? And they'll always think, what is the minimum I have to do for the church? Are you like that? What is the minimum I must do to be

recognized as a good brother? Minimum, minimum, minimum. Those are not the people God uses. People God uses are those who say, I will never offer to God that which costs me nothing.

Those are willing to sacrifice their own convenience, sacrifice time with their own families, sacrifice their energy, sacrifice their money, sacrifice their life. Like it says about Jesus, he loved the church and gave himself for it. Yeah, that is those who have the power of godliness.

But it'll be very difficult to be a Christian, it says. That's how the Living Bible paraphrases the first verse of 2 Timothy 3. It'll be very difficult to be a Christian in the last days because all these people will have the form of godliness, sitting in the same church. But underneath that, they'll be loving themselves, they'll be loving money, they'll be boastful, they'll be arrogant, they'll be disobedient to their parents at home.

They're ungrateful for all that the church has done for them. They'll be malicious gossips, verse 3. But they'll come and break bread. These malicious gossips will come and break bread.

These boastful, arrogant people who can't get along with each other, they love pleasure, verse 4, more than they love God. They'll be watching movies and some dirty ones, they'll come and break bread. Oh, Lord, thank you for this bread.

Thank you for this cup, Lord. What are they going to do after that? Watch pornography or watch some dirty, suggestive movie. It'll be very difficult to be a Christian in the last days because the church will be a mixture of all these people.

In the midst of it, there will be a remnant of overcomers. And my message to you, my brothers and sisters, is be in that remnant. You'll never find a pure church anywhere in the world, not even in CFC churches.

But you can be an overcomer. That's my call to you. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your word that warns us, corrects us, guides us along the right path. Help us to take heed to what you have to say. Pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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