

# They Drank From the River, Died in the Wilderness, Part 1

by David Ravenhill

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*David Ravenhill's sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual longevity and the lessons learned from the Israelites' journey through the wilderness, highlighting Christ as the source of life.*

**Duration:** 44:38

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 10:1

**Topics:** "Overcoming", "Spiritual Longevity", "Self-Control"

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## Description

David Ravenhill emphasizes the importance of spiritual longevity over mere fervency in his sermon 'They Drank From the River, Died in the Wilderness, Part 1.' He reflects on the Israelites who experienced God's provision yet failed to reach their promised purpose, drawing parallels to the modern church's need for self-control and purpose. Ravenhill warns that drinking from the spiritual river does not guarantee success, urging believers to move from privilege to purpose. He highlights the necessity of discipline and self-control in the Christian race, reminding the congregation that it is not how one starts but how one finishes that matters.

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## Transcript

Welcome to this message from Living Word Church. We trust that as you meditate on God's preached Word, you will become a doer of His Word and not merely a hearer. According to James chapter 1 verse 25, God promises to bless us when we do His Word.

If you are interested in further messages from our church, please feel free to contact us. Now let's join the speaker for today's message. He said, if your church is a reflection of heaven, how many of you would really like to live there forever? It's quite a challenge, isn't it? Most of us can't wait to get out, you know, everybody puts on a sort of long face.

My father used to say, somebody observed people going into the house of God on one occasion and said, you know, they looked like they were going to the dentist. And an hour later when they came out, he was convinced that they didn't. We need to be careful about dentists, I forgot.

In other words, you know, the presence of God, again, is a place of joy. You know, when the prodigal came back, there was what? Music and dancing. It was a place of celebration.

So this was going on, again, the place was sort of electric and I stood up to minister that night. I was just there for one night and I said, you know, there's nothing I can do to add to your fervency. There's nothing I can do to add to your intensity.

But I do believe I can add to your longevity. And there's a big difference between fervency and intensity, as good as those things are, and longevity. I've lived long enough.

I've been, what, 30-something years in the ministry now. Nancy and I just celebrated our 34th wedding anniversary just two weeks ago. And I think it's 34, we've got a 32 year-old, so that always helps.

And so it was a couple of years we were married. And I've seen, you know, all these, what somebody termed shooting stars. I think it was Bob Mumford years ago that talked about shooting stars.

And shooting stars, he said, you know, you're outside, it's dark, you're out in the country, away from the city, you look up into the heavens and hear all the stars that you don't see in the city. And you're gazing about, you know, God's handiwork and looking up there and admiring again the majesty of the heavens. And all of a sudden there's a shooting star that just takes off and streaks across the heavens.

And all of a sudden all the other stars sort of lose their attraction for a moment. And somebody said, did you see that? And it sort of captivates you as you see it just streaking across the heavens. And he said, in the body of Christ, he said, there are shooting stars.

And I've lived long enough to hear about these shooting stars that all of a sudden capture the attention of the church. You know, everybody's into that particular teaching, that particular set of tapes. I think, you know, 20 years ago, there was tapes going all over the nation about the Illuminati.

Everybody was into this guy, can't think of his name now, possibly better that I don't. But, you know, there was sort of a buzz. Everybody was into this whole trilateral commission and the Illuminati and the, you know, bringing down of the government and so on.

And these tapes were going everywhere. And, you know, six months later, whatever happened to so-and-so? Nobody's ever heard of him since. You know, and other people that have sort of streaked across the heavens, captured everybody's attention, and then they're gone.

And it's one thing, again, to, you know, have that sort of intensity and fervency for a while, but then not to have any longevity as a result of it. And so I said to them, I believe that I can add to your longevity. Just prior to the meeting, I was sitting in the pastor's office, and I'd been traveling all day.

One of those, you know, long flights, three flights. In fact, I'd just completed a series of meetings down in Carlsbad in New Mexico, where there were four or five churches that came together. We'd had four meetings in the local high school in the evening, and then I'd taken a little commuter plane from Carlsbad over to Albuquerque, and then a normal flight from Albuquerque up to Salt Lake, from Salt Lake to San Francisco, or to Sacramento, being picked up by this individual.

I was on my way to another conference, a venue conference, and I just had one night. This man found out that I had one night free. He asked me to come and speak, and so here I was in this meeting.

But just prior to the meeting, he gave me a few minutes just to sit and sort of collect my thoughts, and I'm in the pastor's office, and sort of just meditating, and worshiping the Lord, and thinking to myself about

rivers. And I began with the first river that's mentioned in the Word of God there in Genesis, that river that flowed out of the presence, got out of the garden of Eden, and brought life, obviously, to the surrounding area. And then my mind went over into the Book of Ezekiel, again, the river there in Ezekiel, that flowed from the very throne of God, and those waters got deeper and deeper, and again, brought life.

It says everywhere that the river flowed, there was life, and it was a source of blessing, and a source of life. And then, of course, I went over to Revelation, the river again that issued forth from the throne of God, and from the Lamb, it says there in Revelation 21-22. And it brought life to the surrounding areas.

You've got the trees on either side of the river there, bringing healing to the nations, and everywhere that that river went, there was life. And so, I'm thinking about rivers, and the reason I was thinking about rivers, obviously, I was, you know, in these various circumferences, and the term river is the word that has been used more than anything else to describe what God is doing right now in the body of Christ. And you've experienced it, I've experienced it, and many, many others have.

And so, again, this thought of rivers was just running through my mind, and as I was thinking about these rivers, all of a sudden, the Holy Spirit said, what about 1 Corinthians 10? And I knew what that chapter was about, and I began saying to myself, they all drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. And it was just as soon as I said, they all drank from the same spiritual rock, the Holy Spirit just said to me, they all drank from the river. And then, I found out that I put the next verse, which comes immediately after that, but they died in the wilderness.

And this thought came to me, they drank from the river and died in the wilderness. And it was as though somebody had taken a sledgehammer and sort of hit me over the head with it. And I thought, God, is it possible, again, to drink from the river and die in the wilderness? And that set me on this particular journey that's beginning to study this whole chapter, and that's what I want to be looking at today, if you do have your Bibles, in 1 Corinthians 9 and 10.

And so, you know, I felt that it was a prophetic word, a prophetic word, first of all, to my own spirit, and then a prophetic word to the Church. And most of us know, of course, that the Word of God has got its historic application. This letter, obviously, was written to the Church in Corinth, it had relevance in its particular day, but then it's got a prophetic application.

The Word of God is written for all of us. The Word of God is inspired, it's profitable for teaching, we approve correction, and so on and so forth. And so, as I thought of this, it was as though the Holy Spirit was saying, David, there's something more than just the river.

Now, before I say anything else, let me say this, I am not in any way ridiculing what God is doing today around the world as far as the river is concerned. Again, what God is doing can be sort of capsulized by this expression, the river. We have river conferences, there are river CDs, and I've participated in some of those conferences, and seen the blessing of God, because there's been literally thousands and thousands, tens of thousands of people that have been touched by the River of God.

Toronto, Pensacola, other places around the nation, I've seen lives have been transformed week after week there in Pensacola, we have a baptismal service on a Friday night, it's just amazing to see the changes that are taking place in lives. Marriages have been restored, backsliders have been brought back into a vital relationship with the Lord, the saved, again, that have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, drug addicts, and the prostitutes, and all sorts of individuals, and the river has obviously made the

difference in their life. So, why don't we talk about the river? What's the purpose? Because, again, I believe there is a message here that the Holy Spirit has for us, and that it is a prophetic word, I believe.

Paul, again, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, draws our attention to these events for a reason, and I'll look at that in a minute, but he says, notice in verse 6, 1 Corinthians 10 verse 6, now these things happened as an example for us, that we should not crave evil things as they also craved. And then down in verse 11, now these things happened as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the age of come. And that's getting pretty close to home, upon whom the ends of the age of come.

So Paul says, these things were written for our instruction, here were things that took place, you know, 2,000 years ago, well, long before that, when Paul's writing, but, and he's saying, listen, all these things that happened way back there to our forefathers, to this nation of Israel, has a relevance for us today, and of course, likewise, to us who are at the end of the age. And so, he draws attention to this, and then, if that isn't enough, he goes on to say in verse 12, therefore, let him that thinks he stands, take heed, lest he falls. In other words, he drives this point home, and says, listen, if you don't think this is applicable to us, then, because you think, well, you know, I would never do those things, he says, listen, if you think you can stand, if you think you're secure, take heed, lest you fall.

Don't get overly confident. Don't begin to bask in your own abilities, and your own self-sufficiency, and your own, maybe, spiritual maturity, and so on, because it's possible, he says, for you to also to fall. So, what is Paul referring to there? In essence, what he's talking about in this whole portion of Scripture is this, it's not how you begin the matters, it's how you end the matters.

In other words, you can have an incredible beginning, and a terrible ending. There's a verse, I forget what it is now in the Old Testament, but there were two kings, remember, going out to battle, one against the other, and one king sent word to the other king, and he says, listen, it's not the one who puts on the armor that is the big shot, it's the one who's able to take it off at the end of the day. And I forget what that verse is, but some of you have read it.

In other words, you know, we can all sort of put on the armor, and sort of strut around and feel good, but at the end of the battle, it's the one that's able to take it off. The other one is possibly dead in his armor, you know, but it's the one that's able to take it off, he's won, he's victorious, he's plundered the opposing side, and so on. That's the guy that can brag, and likewise in our spiritual life, it's not the just putting on, it's what happens at the end of the day, at the end of the race.

And so, Paul uses, in this portion of Scripture, he uses the analogy of a race, and he tells the Corinthians, we are all in this race, and I'm going to sort of go through this in a little bit more detail, but let me begin there in 1 Corinthians 9, in verse 24, he says, do you not know that those who run in a race all run? One of Paul's favorite expressions, again, is this illustration of a race. He says, we're all involved in this race. You can underline the word all there, if you don't want to mark up your Bible, at least underline it in your mind, and let me say this right at the beginning, the chapter divisions were never inspired.

The chapter divisions were put in, you know, centuries later, and so this is all one thought, from verse 24, right down to verse 13 of chapter 10, it's all one thought. In fact, in my Bible, I've got, you know, bolder type, verse 24, and then bolder type again at verse 14, meaning that from verse 24 down to the end of verse 13, it's all one paragraph, it's all one thought. And so Paul begins, he says, listen, I don't want you to be unaware that we are all in a race, every single one of us, and then he includes himself in the race,

verse 26, I run in such a way as not without aim, and then he includes the nation of Israel, he says, Israel was also in a race, and you'll notice he uses the word all there, he follows through, we're all in a race, they were all under the cloud, all passed through the sea, we're all baptized into Moses, and so on, I'll come back to that in a moment.

And that he's, what he's saying here is, he's saying why Israel failed, and what are the lessons we can learn from it, in other words, they all started a race, you Corinthians need to realize you're running a race, but you also need to realize our forefathers were in a race too, and not many of them finished that race, and so these things happened as an example for us, so that we should complete what they failed to complete, so that we don't mess up the way they messed up. And how many of you learn, there's two ways of learning, you can learn by your mistakes, as well as, you know, watching somebody do it properly, and sometimes learning by somebody else's mistakes, just as valid as not, you know, you tell your kid not to mess with the electricity, a little five or six year old, and all of a sudden dad touches it, and sort of lights up, and the kid thinks, yeah, I'm not going to mess with that any longer, otherwise he's got to learn by experience, and Paul is using this again to teach the children of Israel about it. So, I want us to, I want to look at God's intention and purpose for Israel, and how they fell short of God's purpose, and also, if you like, the role that the river played in all of this, and let me say this, while I'm talking about the river, let me just make a few remarks about the river, then I want to go back and sort of start from the beginning.

First of all, Paul is not making light to the river, he is not making light to the river, he's not against the river, this is not a message knocking the river, this is not a message that is saying, listen, this whole thing that's happening in the church, you know, is out of order, and so on, this is not what that's all about. In fact, Paul makes it very, very clear that the river that they drank from was Christ himself. The source of that river was Christ himself.

There's no possible way that you can misconstrue that, and make it into something that is evil, make it into something that is perverted, or twisted, or distorted, or whatever. He makes it very clear that they all drank from the same spiritual drink, and they were drinking from a spiritual rock, and then he says, and that rock was Christ himself. So the source of that river was Christ himself.

We need to understand that. The second thing the scriptures reveal about the river, it was a source of life for them in the wilderness. In other words, it was the supernatural provision of God to the nation of Israel.

It satisfied the thirst of between one and three million people, depending on which sort of commentary you look at, but most will tell us that there was at least a million people that came out of Egypt, some go up to three million, and certainly way more than that if you include all the livestock and everything else that came out with them. There must have been five or ten million people, and sheep, and oxen, and donkeys, and everything else that needed this supply of life, and so it was a considerable river. Again, without it, it was impossible for them to survive, and so it was not only natural, but it was spiritual in its origin.

Obviously, it was natural water in one sense, but it had a supernatural source to it. And really it was, if you like, God's great object lesson to the nation of Israel, that the source of life was to be derived from God himself. The source of our life has to be derived from the rock, the rock being Christ, and you know, of course, if you've studied this, that the way in which this river began, it began by Moses striking the rock.

The children of Israel found themselves again in this dry and barren land, and they started complaining as they normally did, and they said, listen, you know, there's no water out here, and so on and so forth, and Moses cries out to God, and God says, take your rod and strike the rock, and he struck the rock, and of

course, striking the rock was typical, or typified, striking Christ. Christ was smitten on the cross, and as a result of his bruised and broken life, if you like, out of that came our life, and of course, out of that came the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was not yet given, why? Because Jesus was not yet smitten, or he wasn't glorified, that whole process of the atoning work, and so the river can also typify, if you like, the Holy Spirit.

And so I'm using the term river, even though this particular portion of scripture says they all drank from the same spiritual drink, I'm using the word river for this reason, because in the Old Testament it's referred to that way, let me just give you a reference here, Psalm 105 and verse 41. Psalm 105 and verse 41, it says, he opened the rock, and water flowed out, that ran in dry places like a river. Now Paul is speaking about the rock, and the Bible says he opened the rock, and out of it flowed a river, so we can say very, very clearly, based on the word of God, that there was a river that flowed out.

Now, let me give you one other scripture, Psalm 78, and verse 15 and 16, and it says, he split the rock in the wilderness, he gave them an abundance, or an abundant drink, like the ocean depths, he brought forth streams also from the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. And notice, all that has to do with the rock, he caused this rock to be broken, and he gave them an abundance of water, even like the ocean depths, this was not a little sort of source of water, this was like the ocean depths, this was a major river, as you would need a major river to gratify and satisfy the needs of millions or three million people, again with all the livestock, ten million people, that's looking after the needs of Chicago Plus, at least close to it. That's a good size water supply, this is not just a little stream, these are rivers that flowed out of the rock, and God always does things lavishly, isn't that true? You know, the prodigal, when he thought of going back to the father's house after sitting at the pigpen for a few weeks, he says, in the father's house there was what? Bread enough and a spare.

And when Jesus fed the multitude, they didn't just take the edge off their appetite, it says, they all ate and were satisfied, and they gathered up, again, twelve baskets, I think each disciple carried one, just as a proof that this really was a miracle, you know, they start off with just a handful of loaves and fishes, and at the end, here are the disciples each staggering with a basket full of leftovers, but everybody was totally satisfied, God never does things in just a sort of a minor way, he wants to satisfy, it's the ocean depths that God wants us to experience. And so the third lesson that we can learn from this passage is that drinking from the river does not guarantee necessarily future success, drinking from the river does not necessarily guarantee us future success, Israel failed despite, again, their supernatural surroundings, they drank in God's provision, but they died, again, in sin, they never advanced beyond the wilderness. And so whoever were recipients of all the blessings of God, and yet they never advanced any further, go to Paul Keynes, and you know that man's ministry, he has a saying, that very few people survived the anointing, very few people survived the anointing.

In other words, here are people anointed, they've got the river of God, they're basking in the river of God, they're drinking in the river of God, they've got all the privileges, and yet they don't survive the anointing. So in other words, they never moved, and the subtitle of this message is, they never moved from privilege to purpose. They never moved from privilege to purpose.

The series that I'm doing, as you received in your little brochure pamphlet, is moving from intimacy to revival. Another way of looking at that is privilege, intimacy, that relationship with God, of being intimate with God, of having God reach down and kiss your life, so to speak, of God touching you, and all the blessings that are sort of accrued to us in being in the presence of God. And yet, moving again from that into revival, into reaching into the purpose of God, and they never moved again from the place of privilege

into the place of purpose.

God had a purpose in mind for the nation of Israel. All right, let me begin that and sort of put this in perspective a little bit. First of all, Paul's privilege.

I'm going to be talking later on about Israel's privilege, but let me begin with Paul's privilege, because he ties in his own testimony here again in this thought. Paul had the privilege of being an apostle, and he was always conscious of that. He was always amazed at the fact that God reached down into his life.

He says, I was a blasphemer, a violent aggressor, I was a sinner, the chief of sinners, and so on. But God, in the richness of His grace and His mercy, again, He called me into the ministry. He chose to reveal His Son in me.

He said, I wasn't taught it by human wisdom or anything else, but He said the Spirit of God Himself taught me. And Paul is very, very conscious of that, that he was set apart from his mother's womb. And so he's got this incredible privilege of being called one of the apostles.

In fact, in the beginning of chapter 9, he says, am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work and the Lord? I mean, Paul is being privileged to be a part of what God is doing. He's received a personal revelation, again, of Jesus Christ. And so here is his privilege that he has.

He is very, very conscious of his privilege, number one. Number two, we have not only Paul's privilege, but Paul's passion. Paul has got one supreme passion, and that is to preach the gospel.

He's out there to win the lost. And again, he's got a vision, and that vision absolutely consumes him. That vision is that thing which drives him on.

Again, when he was converted there on the road to Damascus, he meets face to face, if you like, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the first words out of his mouth are these, Lord, what will you have me to do? And God says, I want you to get up from where you are, I want you to go into such and such a city, and I will tell you what I want you to do. And Paul, as he's testifying before King Agrippa later on there in Acts chapter 26, he says to King Agrippa, God appeared to me, and he appointed me as a messenger, as a minister of the gospel. He said to take people and tell people about the wonderful light that they can walk in, take people out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

And then he goes on to say, as he's testifying before Agrippa, he said that I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. In other words, Paul had a vision, it was heaven's vision, if you like. You can say it was heaven's vision for Paul's life, I think it's heaven's vision in a generic sense for everybody's life.

In other words, heaven has a vision, and Paul is able to get in on what that vision was, and he is a part of that vision. That vision is the heart of God to reach the lost. And Paul never loses sight of that.

Listen, God appeared to me, and he appointed me as a minister, he appointed me as a testimony, he appointed me as a witness, and so he's driven, if you like, by this all-consuming desire to preach the gospel. Here in 1 Corinthians 9, verse 16, he says, if I preach the gospel I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion, for woe is me. If I do not preach the gospel, woe is me.

He says, if I don't preach the gospel, I mean, Paul is totally constrained by the Holy Spirit to do what he's doing. He goes on in the latter part of those verses from verse 16 on to say that, you know, he wants to win the lost. To the Jews, he says, I became a Jew, that I might win the Jews.

To those under the law, I'm in law. And to those without the law, he says, has been without the law. But he says, in whatever I do, he says, I do it all for the gospel's sake.

To do the will and the purpose of God. Why? Because he's had a vision for his life. And then the third thing is Paul's picture.

Paul's picture, I've already touched on this, but this picture again of running a race. And he says, I am in a race. But he says, Corinthians, you also are in a race.

One of Paul's favorite analogies or illustrations is that of a race. He's always talking about races. When he's writing to Timothy there as a senior man, just about ready to die, he says, Timothy, I want you to know, I've finished the course and I've run the race.

Henceforth, there's laid up for me a crown of righteousness. Again, writing to Timothy, he says, you know, every athlete has to compete according to the rules if he's going to win. You've got it there in, let me give you these scriptures in 1 Timothy 2 and verse 5. He says, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.

And when Paul says, I've finished the course. Now notice, Paul, when he talks about the race, he always speaks in terms of finishing. He always speaks in terms of winning.

He doesn't just say, you know, isn't it wonderful to be a part of this race. No, there's something more that is gripping the life of Paul than just running in a race. He's determined to win.

He's determined to finish. I've finished my course. Every athlete, he says, again, will not win unless he competes according to the rules.

And so he's obsessed again with winning. Writing to the Hebrews, and we assume that Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews. Again, he uses the analogy of a race.

In Hebrews chapter 12, he says, let us run with patience a race that is set before us. Let's strip down, let's lay aside all the weight, all the encumbrances, all the things that hinder. I used to run the mile when I was in high school and did a little bit of cross-country.

Unfortunately, I've put on about 40 pounds since those days. So you can imagine, I was a beanpole, but I had a good, you know, sort of physique for running back then. I weighed about 128 to 30 pounds, something like that.

And, you know, you strip down. You're running a race. You don't want all these encumbrances.

You never see anybody running the mile or running cross-country with a backpack on and army boots on and, you know, carrying barbells. You know, that's not the way you run a race. You strip down.

You lay aside everything that will hold you back. And Paul is this sort of a runner. And he uses, again, this illustration all the time about running the race.

So there you have Paul's picture, and now Paul's prize, which I've always touched on. But again, he's exhorting the Corinthians, run in such a way that you may win. He says, run in such a way that you may win.

You've got it there in verse 24. Do you not know that those who run a race, everybody wins, or everybody runs rather, but only one receives the prize. Run in such a way that you may win.

Paul says, listen, go for the gold, basically. We would use that expression. Go for the gold.

In fact, he uses the same expression in his own sort of culture. And he says, they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we are imperishable. And that's what we're striving for.

It's not enough, he says, just to be in the race. We're all in the race. And we need to recognize this morning, again, that every single one of us in this room, from God's point of view, we're in the race.

Every single one of us. Old, young, whether you're saved, you know, two days, or you've been saved for 50 years, whatever the case may be, all of us, according to this verse, we are all in the race. We are all running.

And we should be running in such a way that we win. And this is Paul's design. Now, winning obviously means finishing.

There are no crowns or no wreaths given to those that ran. Otherwise, I would have a trophy cabinet full. You know, I never won a race.

We had a guy in our school called David Gormley, never forget him, and he was a state champion in the mile. And nobody else had a chance. This guy practiced and practiced and practiced.

He ran like, you know, 50 miles every weekend. He ran to school every day, something like 12 miles instead of taking the bus. I mean, he was a fanatic.

He went on to Colorado State and was going training for the Olympics and unfortunately was in a car accident and died. But here's a man, again, that ran in such a way that he would win. And wouldn't it be nice if everybody that ran got a prize? Again, you know, I'd have more cabinets full because I was in every, you know, all these races, but I never won.

And Paul is saying again, run in such a way that you may win. He uses another analogy writing to Timothy, and that is of a soldier. He says, Timothy, he says, as a good soldier, Jesus Christ, learn to please the one that enlisted you.

Learn to please your commanding officer. In other words, Paul is always wanting to stand one day and bring pleasure to God by finishing the race. And writing to Timothy again, he says, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.

I've finished the course. I know that I've won. And the wonderful thing, of course, about the Christian race, unlike the natural race, is we can all win.

In a natural race, only one, he says, receives the prize. But he's using that as an illustration. I don't know how many of you know, illustrations don't always fit in every single detail.

We've just got to take the basic illustration. But when it comes to the spiritual realm, we can all win. And so he's obviously exhorting them to do that.

Run in such a way that you may win. So that's the prize that Paul is after. He knows where he's going and he knows where he wants to take the Corinthians as well.

And then there's Paul's preparation. Paul's preparation. He says, I run as not without aim.

Notice here now he's including his own testimony in verse 26. Therefore I run in such a way as not without aim. In other words, Paul was not aimless.

Paul knew what he wanted. He knew where he was going. He had visions.

He had a goal. He had direction in his life. You know, one of the greatest tragedies, I think, in the house of God is the fact that we have so many believers that are aimless.

So many believers that are aimless. And Alan Redpath makes a statement in that devotional book, if you want a good devotional book, I assume it's still on the market, but it's called *Awake My Heart*. It's got real substance in it.

You know, they're not these little devotionals that are about four lines long. You know, that's not going to make it. But these are good, solid sort of messages.

But in one of these devotionals he makes the statement that you can have a saved soul and a lost life. You can have a saved soul and a lost life. In other words, you're saved by the redeeming grace of God.

And no effort on your own part, no striving and so on. It's a gift. But after that you can have a lost life.

In other words, you can get to heaven by the grace of God, by the blood of the Lamb, and stand there and have absolutely nothing to present to the Lord. Your whole life has been wasted. It's been consumed on, you know, your own, doing your own thing and so on and so forth.

And Paul says, listen, I'm not that way. I run in such a way, he says, as not without aim. I know where I'm going.

I've got direction. I've got vision. And he's encouraging, again, the Corinthians in the same way.

And so he says, therefore I discipline myself. I buffet my body. And I make my body a slave, he says.

Notice in verse 27, I buffet my body. That literally means, because some people read that, I buffet my body. But it literally means, in the Greek, to give your body a black eye, to strike below the eye.

It's the equivalent of what we would call a knockout blow. And I bring my body into total and complete surrender. Again, if you're boxing, and of course he switches illustrations here a little bit.

But he says, I buffet my body. And the Theorist says, it means to make your body full of bruises. I mean, that's how severe Paul was on his physical body.

And there is a reason for that. In a moment we'll look at it. In other words, he is not controlled or governed by his natural desires at all.

Those things have all been brought into subjection. All his bodily desires, his desire for food, his desire for sex, his desire for money, his desire for whatever it is, he has got under subjection. He's brought all those things under subjection.

Again, like a good athlete, he's disciplined. One of the things that I remember about the coach that we had in wrestling, I also wrestled for a little while, and my dad asked me to give it up. He didn't think it was a thing to do as a Christian.

But at least I made the A squad for a little while. But one of the things that we were told by our coach was that we had to keep our body under. And I remember him saying to us, listen, if I ever catch you at McDonald's, you're done for.

Because in wrestling, the whole thing is not only to be lean and mean, but it's to keep in the lowest weight class possible, because then you've got the greatest advantage. And if you put on a few pounds, then obviously you're in a different weight category, and that means that the guy you're up against may be a little stronger than you, and so on. And so he knew that all these fatty foods and so on would put on fat and flab, and so he disciplined us.

And we had a special pass in the cafeteria when we went through the cafeteria. We couldn't eat what everybody else had. They had a special athletic meal for all those that were in their various sports.

And it was salad, it was all these sort of proteins and various other things. But he was determined, again, that we were in good physical condition. And Paul is speaking here, obviously from the natural, but he's applying it spiritually.

He says we need to be in tip-top shape spiritually. And we've got to have all these bodily desires under control. And he says I work at buffeting my body.

All my fleshly desires, he says, I brought into slavery. Notice he says I buffet my body, I make it a slave. In other words, that slave serves my spirit.

I am not in servitude to the flesh. I'm not in servitude to my desires. I'm not in servitude to, you know, my body saying, well, it's time to sleep now, or it's time to eat, or it's time to do this, or it's time to do that.

It's my spirit that rules and says you're not going to sleep right now. You know, you're not going to eat right now. You're not going to do this right now.

Paul is so determined, again, in his Christian life to bring everything into a place of self-control. There's a reason for that. Notice he uses the word self-control to summarize sort of everything.

In verse 25 he says, everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. In other words, here are athletes that had to exercise self-control. And I remember reading years ago, my father used the illustration, that one of the great, one of the tricks during the Olympics, and of course most of the Olympics had to do, you know, not so much with gymnastics and this stuff as running.

Running was the number one game of the Olympics back in the time when Paul was riding. And most of these cities, in fact Corinth that he's riding to, their games were second only to the Olympics. They were well known throughout the whole region.

And one of the strategies was because you had cities and nations competing against each other, and provinces and so on. And what they would do, they would have these balls of solid gold. And of course gold, the weight of it, you know, it would just deter anybody.

But the gold itself was precious. And they'd have these long runs, these marathons for miles and miles and miles. And at certain places, they would have, number one, they would have beautiful women that would be there to try and distract the runners.

And then if that didn't work, they would roll these golden balls across the way, and of course the runner then would, I mean this is like, you know, handing out thousand dollar bills. And the runner would stoop down and try and pick up one of these golden balls that was worth maybe a year's wages or whatever. And he would try and run with that.

But it would allow one of the other competitors to get by if he picked it up. And so there had to be incredible self-control. I mean here is something that, I mean, you know, I can have a new house, I can have a new car, I can put in a swimming pool.

I mean, you know, everything here. But the self-control that was necessary to say no to that in order to win. And Paul's got that sort of self-control here as he's running.

And he's exhorting again the Corinthians to do the same thing. And the reason for that of course is that the nation of Israel, all these sins that we'll be looking at can be summed up under a lack of self-control. And of course the fruit of the Spirit is what? Self-control.

You see the gifts of the Spirit don't say a thing about us. They talk about the grace of God and the goodness of God. It's a gift.

It just talks about the giver more than the receiver. But the fruit is the outworking of the Spirit's activity in your life. It's the character and so on.

And self-control again is one of the evidences of the Spirit of God being a very vital part of your life. And so Paul again is concerned about disciplining his body. Now why is it that Paul is so obsessed again with this matter of self-control? Because again he is about to summarize the whole history of Israel in the wilderness under this one term, they lack self-control.

This is the thought as you read through and meditate. And so Paul himself again deprives himself of certain things. He's able to say, for instance, I've learned in whatever state I'm in to be content.

That's self-control. I'm not striving for this. I'm not striving for that.

I can be content. I know how to abound. I know how to be abased.

I am totally content. This previous chapter, if you want to read it sometime, he's arguing along the lines that every minister should be able to earn a living off the ministry. If he's laboring, which he is, he's laboring not in a physical sense but in a mental sense and so on, he should be able to derive his expenses from it.

But Paul goes on to say, listen, I'm not doing that. I am depriving myself of a right. Other people have done that, but I'm depriving myself of a right because people may take it wrongly, may criticize me and so on and so forth.

So everything about Paul's life was under this thing of self-control. He refused to allow certain things to control him, financially or whatever it may be. So he's emphasizing the importance of that.

The next thing is Paul's paranoia. I'm going to call it Paul's paranoia. In other words, Paul's greatest fear is not completing his mission.

This is the thing that drives Paul. This is the thing that consumes Paul. Not only is he consumed with reaching the lost, not only is he consumed with getting people saved and preaching the gospel, but he's also consumed with this fear of being a castaway, of being rejected.

Notice he says, verse 27, I buffet my body, I make it my slave, lest possibly after I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway, says in the King James. My translation says, lest I myself should be disqualified. Disqualified.

Again, the analogy of running a race and somehow finding out at the end of it that you disqualified yourself. You know, you've gone the wrong way or you've strayed over into somebody else's lane or whatever it may be, but the word he actually uses there is a word used for testing metals. And it means to put certain metals under a test only to find out that they don't measure up.

They are bad metals. They don't have the right mixture or right content or whatever. They break under stress and so on.

In other words, that metal then was rejected as being bad. It was worthless. It could not be used maybe as a sword or a spear or whatever because it was too brittle or it was too soft or whatever the case may be, but it's a word used for testing metals.

And it literally means sort of bad metals. And he says, I don't want to be rejected at the end and find out that I'm not usable any longer, that I'm too soft or I'm too brittle or whatever he's, you know, thinking that he's really sort of paranoid in a good sense about this. I don't want to be a castaway.

I don't want to miss out on completing the race. And so Paul, again, is talking about, you know, the fact that we're all tested. I think he's referring here to all the tests, you know, the test of integrity, the test of purity, the test of financial accountability, the test of carnality to ambition and pride and so on, the test of authority.

Am I controlling or am I truly a servant's heart? And all these tests, you know, if you read through all of Paul's writings, he's always aware of that. And then in Acts chapter 24 and verse 16, he makes a statement, I exercise myself, he says, and the word there means to labor or to train. I exercise or labor or train myself to maintain a conscience void of offense between God and man.

In other words, he says, every day I discipline my life so that I am not offensive to God and I'm not offensive to man. And if I'm going to be offensive because people are going to think, you know, the only reason I'm in the ministry is because I get a paycheck at the end of it, then I am going to choose, he said, to work rather than ask for offerings. I'm going to choose to do this.

I'm going to choose to do that. In other words, Paul's entire body, every appetite, every desire is brought into subjection. And he says, I exercise, I discipline myself on a daily basis to maintain a conscience void of offense.

I know I can look you in the face and say, listen, I am not in the ministry for what I can get out of it. I am not doing this for what I can get out of it. I am pure in the sight of God.

I am pure in the sight of man. That's quite a statement. Now, let's move on into 1 Corinthians chapter 10.

What sort of time do we have here? Why don't we just take a two minute break. We're going into the next chapter here. Just stand at least and stretch for a moment.

I don't know how long we've been going. You don't need to leave. You can turn around and just say hi to somebody for a second.

It's always hard once you take a break to get everybody back together again. We want to tie together now the latter part of 1 Corinthians 9 and the first part of 1 Corinthians 10. In other words, Paul is continuing on.

This is what we need to understand. This is one continuous illustration of a race. He's using this analogy again and he now brings Israel into it.

First of all, he says, Corinthians, all of you are involved in a race. Then he says, I am involved in a race. He makes it personal.

Now he says, everybody that ever represented God, if you like, going back to our forefathers, they also were in a race. Now let me just read it to you so you get the sort of drift of that from verse 24 down to chapter 10 and at least verse 5. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run? Underline again, all run. But only one receives the prize.

Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive the prize.

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