

02-06-23a Revelation

As we continue our worship this morning, let's take a moment at the outset to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God's Spirit. It's always important for us throughout the day to stop in the middle of what we're doing, to stop just before we begin a new task, and try to dedicate ourselves to the mission for which we have been detailed to live on this planet. We are not our own, we don't belong to ourselves, we have been bought with a price.

We're going to see this morning that in the same way that Paul, the apostle, begins many of his epistles by saying, Paul, a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the word is *doulos*, which means bond slave. There's been a lot said about slavery in our country in the last 100, actually more like 200 years, but slavery is a biblical concept. I'm not advocating slavery, I'm not saying we should have slaves, I'm saying slavery is a biblical concept.

The law of Moses gives commands to masters and gives commands to slaves. The New Testament gives commands to servants and gives commands to masters, and accepts slavery as a fact of life and as a status quo. And if you look around today, there is slavery in the world, whether it's called that or not, because we are obligated, we are under obligation.

We get paid a wage in some cases, and that obligates us, but slavery is unique. People say, well, I'm a slave to my job, or I'm a slave to my spouse, or I'm a slave to my circumstances, or I'm a slave to whatever. But the biblical concept of slavery is that you have been purchased out of the slave market, and in Israel, masters were to be beneficent and were to take care of their slaves.

They purchased them out of a bad place and bring them into a good place. To be a slave in Israel was to come into the place of the presence of God, to come into the place of blessing, to come into a place where in a pagan land you could never learn about God and about salvation and about blessing and eternal life. So, the idea of slavery is one of being purchased, and the Bible says you are not your own, you are bought with a price.

What is the price that was paid that purchased us? It's the precious blood of Christ. It tells us how much God loves us, and it also tells us what our level of obligation is, not to live to ourselves, but to live to God. So, at the outset of every task, in the midst of a task, I think the pattern that we saw last week, where both David and Daniel are particular notable examples of evening and morning and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud to remind ourselves at the beginning of something, in the middle of something, and at the end of something, that we live our lives to the Lord.

Paul says of Christ, the death he died, he died to sin. He left sin behind. He went through a valley and came into another place and left sin back at the origin point.

In the destination, sin has been left behind. The death he died, he died to sin. The life he lives, he lives to God, and he is our example.

He is the author, he is the beginner and ender of our faith. So, there is no more important function that we fulfilled than to take in nourishment for our souls. The manna from heaven, the eternal word of God that is one half of what we need to have God's power active in our lives.

The other half being the ministry and the witness of God the Holy Spirit in our souls. So, we ask God's blessing as we engage in this, one of many things that we are enjoined to do as believers. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf.

The full embodiment of your character and your deity in bodily form. The fullness of expression of your love and your grace and your mercy toward us. We thank you for the witness of your word and of God the Holy Spirit so that we can come to know our Lord and Savior.

We thank you for the power that you have made available to us. The supernatural peace, the supernatural patience, the supernatural endurance. All of the fruit of the Spirit that can be ours, not by our own strength, not by our own effort, but through what you grant us in Christ.

And we pray that as we seek to find nourishment for our souls in your word this morning, that God the Holy Spirit will find ready and willing hearts. That we will be pliant and teachable. That the things we see in your word will be meaningful to us, not only as we hear them, but also as we seek to live our lives in a way that pleases you and glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray for those who have the rule over us. We pray for those in government who make decisions with regard to our international policy and our domestic policy. We know that there are great movements both abroad and at home that would limit our freedom, that would endanger those who belong to you.

We pray that an environment that is conducive to the communication of the gospel and the communication of your word will continue to exist in all those places where there are those who have an ear to hear and a heart that seeks to know your word and your will. We ask your blessing on us as we worship and fellowship together. In Jesus name.

Amen. For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 9. 1 Corinthians chapter 9. The bulk of our reading will be in chapter 10, but we're going to begin this morning in 1 Corinthians 9.24. One of the principles that all red-blooded Americans understand is competition. We love competition so much that this past week or two, as the American soccer team has been playing off in the World Cup championships in Korea or some place on the other side of the planet, people have had watch parties and stayed up all night in sports bars and things, painting their faces red, white, and blue and cheering the television set, watching a live game as they went through the quarterfinals.

I didn't hear if they've gotten any further, but people love to be a fan. You have a hard time getting in a group without somebody talking about being a sports fan, of the Packers or the Cowboys or the Redskins or some football team. And now in the younger generation, because a lot of people played it in school, people are getting infected with an enthusiasm for soccer, football in Europe.

And we love competition. We like to see the struggle. We like to see somebody win.

We often root for the underdog. We see where the bookmakers in Las Vegas have said, oh, this team doesn't have a prayer. And so we root for them.

We want to see them upset. We want to see people surprised. We want to see the overconfident people get the air let out of their balloon and so on.

Well, Paul understands this facet of not just our nature, but human nature in general. And our scripture reading uses that as a starting point to teach us a deeper spiritual truth. 1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate. That means self-controlled in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

Therefore I run thus, not with uncertainty. Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters, as were some of them. As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did. And in one day twenty-three thousand fell. Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents.

Nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.

No temptation has overtaken you, except such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. Well, this section of scripture is particularly meaningful for us, as we begin our special study this morning, of the letters to the seven churches of Asia, that are found in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3. The reason for that will become clear as we get underway in that study.

But before we leave 1 Corinthians, let me just point out a couple of quick ideas here, because they pertain to what we are going to see in Revelation 2 and 3. First of all, we are striving toward a goal. There is a finish line, and Paul uses the picture of a race. He says there are many who run, but not everyone finishes.

Not everyone wins the prize. There is nothing more despicable in the military than to be out there for the three mile run, in the Marine Corps especially. I don't know about the other services so much, but I know in the Marine Corps, part of the physical fitness test, the PFT, you have pull-ups, and the maximum is 20 dead hang pull-ups.

You have to hang there with no kip and no knee jerking. Your body from the chest down is limp and useless, and you pull yourself by might and main until your chin rises above the bar. You can do that, I think you have to do at least six to pass, and the maximum is 20.

And you have sit-ups. At least when I was in, I don't know if they have changed it, but you have a two minute time limit, and the maximum in that two minutes is 80. You do 80 sit-ups in two minutes.

Then, after you've done those, and while your muscles are still burning and useless, then you walk over to the line and you run the three mile run. Ideally, the maximum is 18 minutes. Three six minute miles is what you get to max the PFT.

So, most bases where I've been have a mile and a half stretch, and there's a turnaround point, so you run out a mile and a half and you run back. Well, if you are a squad leader or a platoon commander, if you're an officer, you're a lieutenant, you've got a platoon, you want your men to pass the PFT. You don't want people going on remedial, you don't want them failing to qualify to be deployable, and there's a lot of things that hinge on passing.

So, you have to set an example. You have to have a good, worthy score. Ideally, officers like to try to max the PFT if they can.

You notice I'm not saying if I ever did or not, but then after you've run yours, you go back, and if you've got your Pillsbury doughboys or your guys that for whatever reason are struggling, usually it's because of weight. Usually guys are trying to get under the weight standards. Try tying a 50 or 75-pound sack of fertilizer on your back and then go do your sit-ups and your pull-ups and your three-mile run.

Some of these people are packing a lot of extra weight. So, what do you do? You run along with them and try to encourage them. You've already done your stuff, and under normal circumstances if nobody was looking, you'd either go collapse or hit the showers or something.

But you want to root somebody else along. Try to push them and encourage them and get them down there and get them back under the wire, and you're exhorting and cursing and swearing and belittling and whatever you can do to try to scare them, motivate them, whatever you can do to get them across the line. Well, the idea is some people just, no matter what you do, they have not prepared.

They've not consistently spent time doing sit-ups, doing pull-ups, and doing the run, so that when the annual physical fitness test comes along, they are not ready to pass it. You cannot summon some hidden well of energy into your body and pass if you have not been working out and doing it consistently. So, what Paul says here, when he says run this race in such a way that you can win it, he's not saying, here we are in this race that began at the starting line and we're going to the finish line.

He's saying you've got to train for the race. There are many races that we run. We have a race every day.

Sometimes we have races in several different areas. You've got a work race. You've got a marriage race.

You've got a family race. You've got a friend over the neighbor's back fence race. You've got a race in your own soul when it comes to self-discipline or time management or motivation or reining in your sense of the tongue or whatever it might be.

There are many, many races that we run. How do you run a race in such a way that you win it? Conditioning. Consistency.

You have to be consistent. You can't go out once a year and say, well, now I'm going to run this race. You can't get tested in the area of patients, but you've not spent any time building yourself up in the area of patients and then you wonder why, gee, I sure didn't finish the race.

But what my initial remark is, you cannot think of anything as more disgusting than to be out there and you've already killed yourself running your PFT and now you're running along with some other guy trying to get him down to the mile and a half mark and trying to get him back, sitting on his feet, trying to get him to do one more sit-up, and he obviously doesn't have what it takes because he has not cared about it enough to condition and to be ready. And so other people are trying to infuse energy from the outside to get this bag of doorknobs down there and back to pass because there's an average for the unit. This stuff gets sliced and diced all different kinds of ways.

And it's just very frustrating and very discouraging to see someone who won't care enough to run the race in such a way as to complete it, as to finish it. Well, how much more so? I doubt that anybody could turn up any of my PFT scores for my entire 12 or 13 years of taking the thing. Who knows what they are now? But there is a score that is indelibly imprinted in the books in heaven and that's our spiritual fitness test scores.

These race results are marked down. Every day, every area of life, we are believers and we are not here for ourselves. We have been purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ.

We're not allowed to have the arrogance to get self-centered and think about ourselves and what we want. We have been bought with a price. We have been purchased and we are slaves.

We are douloi. The plebes at the Air Force Academy are called doulois and it's from this word. It means you're a bond slave.

And it doesn't matter. You know, the Marine who can't finish the physical fitness test, it's a long, agonizing process to get him out of the Marine Corps. He's a Marine.

He's got to be dealt with. And guess what? Whether we like it or not, we're believers. How could you not like it? I mean, if you want to contemplate eternity in a lake of fire.

But because we are believers, we're not going to be deep-sixed. We're not going to be 4-F'd out. We're not going to be code-H'd.

We're not going to be excommunicated. We belong to Christ. And so there is one option for us and that is to run the race in such a way that we can obtain this imperishable crown.

I was really tickled one time because on lunch breaks, I used to throw darts. This was when I was chief of the enlisted instruction branch. And we had a really busy morning.

We had a really busy afternoon. But there was an hour between class scheduling when all the troops were at chow, and a lot of times there wasn't enough time to really go do anything. So there was a dart board in the building there.

And so a lot of the staff sergeants, gunnery sergeants, we would throw darts. And actually, just over time, I developed enough of an ability. And one time I was out in town in Lawton, and they had a tournament.

And it was a \$25 prize, and it was a team thing. And my partner and I won, and I got a trophy. This is my whole point.

I got a trophy with these three little darts, and it checked for \$25. And I thought, well, this is pretty neat. But my trophy, it was a dart board with three little darts, plastic darts.

And by the time I had moved a couple of times, the little darts were all bent every which way. And the thing, it was a cheap trophy, and it started coming loose. And the plaque came off that they had stuck on the front, you know, first prize in darts at somebody's barn grill or whatever.

It was cheap, and it chipped, and it came apart. And the little darts melted and went every which way. And the gold on the plastic, it just started looking terrible.

I finally had to pitch it out. Paul says, we have perishable crowns. Now that's an absurd example.

But there are a lot of crowns that we push for. We want people to notice us. We want people to approve of us.

Denominational churches like to be, people like to be acknowledged from the pulpit. Oh, we want to thank dear sister so-and-so because she painted the nursery last week. Or somebody knocked themselves out on vacation at Bible school or painted the lines in the parking lot, whatever it might be.

Somebody has done something, and that acknowledgment warms the cockles of our heart. These are perishable crowns. They are trophies that deteriorate and vanish away.

Paul says, look, you've got the chance to run this race, and you've got the chance to win a trophy that will never perish. It is an eternal crown. Now what are you working on right now? What am I working on right now that we can truly say this thing that I'm killing myself over will last forever? What have we got going that will last forever? After the heavens and the earth are rolled up like a scroll, the elements melt with a fervent heat, God brings down the new heavens and the new earth.

What have you got? What are you painting? What are you polishing? What are you saluting that is going to last forever? It's sort of a trick question because potentially everything that we do can be in that category. It's why we do what we do. If we engage in these mundane daily activities as slaves of Jesus Christ and do what we do heartily as unto the Lord, if we stop at the beginning, if we stop in the middle, if we stop in the end and dedicate ourselves and our efforts to pleasing God, trying to find a way to do what we do in a manner that reflects His glory, guess what? It builds up an eternal weight of glory.

That's what Paul is talking about. Do you not know that you're running in a race? Everybody is running, but there are a lot of us that are not going to win the prize. We're flaking out.

We're not conditioning ourselves. We're not dedicating ourselves to finishing the race. He says, run.

And this is a command of Scripture. This is an imperative. This is the Word of God talking to us.

Run in such a way that you win the race. Everyone who competes has self-control in all things. Those of us who have gone out and run, I don't care how long you've been running.

You often have a little thought that crosses your mind. You know, my ankle is kind of hurting. My knee is popping.

I could walk this. I could walk this backside. It's hot today.

I'm sweating. I might get heat stroke. I'd better stop and slow down.

There's always the pull to stop running, to stop continuing, to give up and quit. And we have to dedicate ourselves to finishing what we start. That's why he says, the ones who compete with their eye on the prize do so with self-control.

They're temperate. Temperate means you've got self-discipline. Self-discipline means you're consistent.

It means you condition yourself. They do it. People knock themselves out.

These Olympic athletes that spend four, six, eight hours a day learning to skate or do high bar or whatever. Paul says they're going for a perishable crown. We have the opportunity for an imperishable crown.

Why strut and fret to try to grab hold of things that we can't keep anyway when we have the opportunity to gain things that we can never lose? It's an investment strategy. The wise person will invest in that eternal future. Therefore I run thus, not with uncertainty.

Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air. Whenever I see this passage, and I've told you this story before, but I just can't help it. I have such a vivid image in my mind of being in boxing class at the Naval Academy.

I never did have any boxing. I didn't have a lot of upper body strength. There were a lot of things I was really miserable at.

When it came to swimming, I had negative buoyancy. I had to kill myself to pass all these different strokes and things they were teaching us. I never had to go on sub-squad, which was the remedial super bad guy thing.

But I really had to work just to stay afloat and complete these distances. You had to get across the pool in so many strokes. But there was only one area of physical endeavor where I really did well, and you can't believe what it was.

It was boxing. I couldn't believe it either. And part of the reason, it wasn't that I was, you know, cash is clay with white skin.

It was because my partner had shorter arms than I did. And so in my semester of boxing, they matched us up by weight. Well, I was tall and very thin.

I was as tall as I am now, and I weighed 135 pounds when I was at the Naval Academy. I was 6'1", 135 pounds. So they matched me up with a 135-pound guy, but he was normal.

And so his arms were, you know, two inches shorter than mine. And so when we went to boxing, you put the little leather padded thing on your head, and you get the gloves laced up, and they're all sweaty inside because, you know, two other periods of boxing already used them. You know, I bet they could cut the disease rate in half if they would just get more equipment and not have people reuse what was used before.

But anyway, we get in there, and so then they would say, okay, you know, here's a hook. Here's a cross. Here's an uppercut.

Here's this and the other. They teach you all the things. They say, all right, now we're going to box three one-minute rounds.

You know, you can't believe. You think you watch boxing and these big, long rounds and how many they have. I will never understand how guys can go that long because I will tell you, unless you've ever done it, a one-minute round of boxing, after the first one-minute round, for me, my shoulders were just gone.

It's like there are no muscles past your pecs. Your arm is just limp, and the boxing glove is like it weighs 500 pounds, and you're trying to raise, and your elbow won't bend, and you can't get, and so you start out, you're all full of vim and vigor, and you've got your, you know, the coach is saying, keep your guard up, keep your guard up, and you're doing that, and then you jab and cross and uppercut and everything, and people keep blocking your blows, and after about 30 to 45 seconds, pretty soon, when you aim a jab at his nose, it winds up actually flying at his knees, and, you know, your arms just don't go where you tell them to. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weakened, so then, you know, the second and third is just ridiculous, but over time, you finally get to where you can box these three one-minute rounds.

Well, my poor partner, I, you know, once you learn to keep your guard up and all, and then you use your jab to keep the guy at a distance.

Well, I thought, you know, this is great, because my reach, I can keep him two inches beyond him even being able to hit me, and the poor guy, after when we first started getting into these three one-minute rounds, I just mushed his nose, and I forget how many times we had boxing, once or twice a week, but just about the time his nose would heal up, we'd have these three one-minute rounds, and in the first round, after about 15, 20 seconds, he'd let his guard down, I'd mash his nose, and then after that, he was all discouraged, and he couldn't reach me, and he was beating the air, all of his blows, and he was trying, you know, he was trying so hard to do what the boxing coach told him to do, uppercuts and crosses and jabs and everything, but he was just beating the air, because he was, every time he got too close, his nose got mushed, and so I got an A in boxing, and I must have picked something up, because we were supposed to take it for a second semester, and the boxing coach, who was a pretty famous guy, he coached the varsity, but he came up and he said, he said, Mr. Hall, your boxing skills are as good as they're ever going to get, I'm not real sure what he meant by that, but he said, you know, you've learned all you're going to learn from this, you don't have to come back for the second semester of boxing, I sort of validated the second semester, and I got a much needed period of study and rest, when

everybody else had to go to the second semester of boxing, so it was the only one of the few bright spots in my early midshipman career.

But every time I see this verse, I think about that poor guy, he got his nose mushed, and ever after he was just beating the air, if he could have kept his guard up and come in and down where he was supposed to, he could have killed me, I was not that good a boxer, but he was beating the air, his blows did not land, and what a tragedy for us as believers, to strut and fret our hour on the stage, and put in a bunch of effort, and none of our blows land, we do not earn the crown.

I discipline my body, I bring it into subjection, this takes an effort, now they always say, Christianity is not a crutch, it is a stretcher, God will carry us with his groove, we are just going to lay there, dormant, and we are going to get carried to glory and perseverance of the saints and all that, Paul says, I discipline my body, he does not say God disciplines my body, he says, I bring my body into subjection, I have to control myself, I have to stop, I have to overcome my urge to quit, I have to overcome my urge to do something different, I discipline my body, I bring my body into subjection, lest, when I have told everybody else about this great opportunity to earn an imperishable crown, I myself do not earn it, what a tragedy.

And it is a funny thing, because this can happen, it scares me, there are pastors who are preaching the word of God, and there are believers who are learning that, and who are making progress toward the goal, and the pastor who taught them it is not going to be there, because he was a vessel that carried the truth, but he did not internalize it himself, and it is a scary thing, and there is a special category of divine discipline on teachers who teach without learning themselves.

But even a teacher who does not learn what he is teaching his own self, you cannot diminish the power of the word of God, you can write the word of God on the bathroom wall, and it is going to have its power, and this brings up a second important principle that we are going to see this morning, which is, it is not the man, it is the message, the man does not add anything to the message, and the man cannot take anything away from the message.

A lot of people look and they say, Oh you know, you have got these people and they have got all of these problems, they have got this and the other, and you find all kinds of problems with the messenger, look at the message, if the message reflects the word of God, it is going to have power, and it is going to have authority, the authority of a message does not come from the messenger, it does not come from the pastor, it does not come from the author, it comes from the word of God.

To the extent that any sermon, any teaching session, anything that purports to address the word of God, to the extent that it reflects the truth of the word of God, it has God's authority and it has God's power, now this ought to free you up, turn on your Christian radio from time to time, and sample a few of the people that are on there, don't think, Oh that guy is charismatic, I can't learn a thing from him, yes you can, because even charismatics get into the word of God.

If you say, Oh well, he is a Calvinist, he is reformed, so I can't learn anything from him, yes you can, to the extent, filter out the Calvinism, filter out the charisma and the temporary gifts aspect, and listen for insights into the rest of the word of God, all of us have strong areas and weak areas, all of us have places where we understand the word of God better, and other places where we don't understand it well, don't take one item, and dismiss everything somebody says,

because you found one thing wrong, if you did, nobody could ever learn anything, because there is none of us that get it right 100% of the time, it's very discouraging to me, but nobody gets it right all the time.

So the first time you hear someone call it wrong, or make a mistake, or something doesn't jive with what you understand, if you dismiss them, then you've got nobody left to teach the word of God, so the point is, it is the word of God that carries it's own authority.

Now how do you know, if all communicators are subject to error, how do you know if you're getting the right thing or not? That's why you have the Spirit, you don't depend on me, or on Swindall, or Stanley, or MacArthur, or anybody else on the radio, or in the Christian world, any other pastor, to give you the truth, you listen to people who teach the word of God, and God the Holy Spirit will confirm it in your soul.

That's what John talks about, he says, you don't have need that any man teach you in the sense of confirming it and making it real in your soul, because you've got God the Holy Spirit, and He will lead us into all truth, and you'll have a sense of reserve, you'll hear something and it just will not make sense to you at the time, it doesn't have the ring of authenticity, and I'll tell you something that will raise your eyebrows, it may even be something that's right, someone may teach something from the word of God that is absolutely correct, but we're not ready for it, it's not for us, maybe it's for someone else, some other listener.

Typically when we hear the teaching of the word of God, there are people at all different levels, some people are new believers, some people are young in the faith, they're at the place where they need milk and not solid food, there are other people who have had plenty of milk and they're chewing on solid food, they're intermediate.

John in his epistle, he says, I write to you young men, he says, I write to you fathers, I write to you, he addresses different levels of people in the congregation and he gives different reasons, he writes the very same book to these different categories of people and he says, I write to you because you have seen the Father, I write to you because your sins have been forgiven, I write to you others for this other reason, so sometimes even when we hear something and it's right, we don't have the framework or the structure to understand it and God the Holy Spirit is not going to minister that particular truth to our particular soul.

Well, relax, listen for the things that He is able to minister, every message ought to have milk, every message ought to have intermediate food, every teaching of the word of God ought to have solid food, so if you are in the milk or the intermediate food stage, well, just put the other on hold and come back to it another time and God the Holy Spirit, it will make sense, if you are in the solid food stage and you get in a period where somebody is going over the milk or the intermediate stuff, well, bear with, pay attention, you might have something refreshed in your soul, you might have something that is back in the archives brought forward that you hadn't thought about in a while, that you are going to need in an upcoming hour.

All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, why? So that we can be complete and so that we can be thoroughly equipped for every good work, that is why we are here, we are servants of God, we have been created unto good works, we are supposed to do good things in God's sight.

So, when you get to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, Brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our

Fathers were under the cloud. These are the Old Testament saints that left Egypt. This is the cloud, the pillar of cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night. Everybody got the same guidance.

Now think about this. Every single Israelite, everybody in the mixed multitude, the couple of million people that participated in the exodus and left Egypt were redeemed out of bondage by the blood of the Passover lamb. All got the exact same guidance. They all got the pillar of cloud by day. They all had the pillar of fire by night. They all had Moses up there with the rod. They all eventually had the Levites. They all were under the cloud. They all passed through the sea. The sea was the dividing line that forever left Egypt behind.

Remember the armies of Egypt came all the way up to the Red Sea, the Red Sea, trying to bring them back, but once they crossed that sea, and the armies of Egypt were drowned, that's the point of no return. That is committed salvation. There's no going back into bondage, and it's a picture of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We are baptized out of the things that are death and slavery and bondage to the power of sin, and we're baptized into life that has hope and has a goal.

God did not say, "You know, I feel so sorry for you Israelites, you're in bondage, you're in Egypt, you're being oppressed, you have the taskmasters whipping you and killing your first born male children. I'm going to come down and deliver you. I'm going to send my servant Moses, put him in the plagues, here you go, you're delivered from bondage, I've wiped out the Egyptians, they don't even have an army left to pursue you, open up the Red Sea, part you across, close the Red Sea, there you go." And then what? What are they going to do? Wander around in the Sinai and say, "Well, it's sure good to not be a slave anymore, but what do I do now? I'm just out here twisting slowly in the wind"?

That's not what God did. We have not just been saved from something. We have been saved for something. There is a purpose to our salvation. There is a goal. God made a promise. He said, "I'm going to glorify myself in you, not just by delivering you out of bondage and out of sin and out of your lost, hopeless, helpless, useless condition. I am delivering you into a land flowing with milk and honey. I'm going to drive out the enemies before you. I'm going to give you victory over the Hivites and the Archites and the Hittites and the Girgashites and all the other ites that live in the land, the Canaanites. I'm going to drive them out before you. I'm going to give you victory over the giants who are larger and more powerful than you."

Remember the spies went in and said, we're like gravity, we're like grasshoppers in their sight, brought back these big clusters of grapes, took two men to put a cluster of grapes on a pole and carry it back in, they were so heavy, they said, boy the land is great, look at all the blessings, but there are giants in the land, we're like grasshoppers in their sight, we can't go in.

There is weeping and wailing, and they didn't have the self-discipline, they didn't have the faith to believe that the God that delivered them out of bondage would also deliver them into the land of promise, and what happened to those people? Did they finish the race? They did not, and they didn't have the self-discipline.

What does he say here in 10? I do not want you to be unaware, don't forget, pay attention, our fathers were all under the cloud, same guidance, all passed through the sea, same deliverance, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, God gave them a prophet to lead them, to teach them, to make decisions for them, to set policy for them, to bring the law down from Mount Sinai for them, all ate the same spiritual food, everyone had the same potential.

This reminds you of the race, everybody lines up at the starting line, don't they? In the really fancy races, they've got the little blocks, have you ever seen those sprinters, they've got the blocks that you set, you can adjust it a little bit, you get your feet in the blocks, you put your fingers down, they don't use the palms of their hands, they get up on their fingers, like three fingers, they get in a stance and they wait for the gun to go off. Everybody is at the starting line, everybody has the same distance to run, everybody's got the same shoes, the same nourishment, the same opportunity.

They all ate the same spiritual food and they all drank the same spiritual drink, very profound comment here, they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them and that rock was Christ, it's Christ foreshadowed in the law of Moses, the rock that Moses struck with the rod, speaking of Christ, stricken on the cross, to provide salvation, the rock that Moses was supposed to speak to the second time that water came forth, because Moses was Christ is only stricken once, you don't strike him twice for the same thing, his work was sufficient the first time, now you speak to the rock.

This is 1st John 1.9, this is claiming the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us from all sin by acknowledging our sin and acknowledging our place in God's plan, walking in the light and all that, so that rock that followed them is the truth about Christ, it's truth that looks forward to Christ, pictured in the law, the Levitical sacrifices and all of the symbolism in the tabernacle and later on in the temple.

They all ate the same spiritual food, they drank the same spiritual drink, it was Christ, we have the enhanced diet, we have got this in spades, we have got not only the complete Old Testament, those people in the wilderness didn't have the books of poetry, they didn't have the books of history, they didn't have the books of prophecy, all they had, initially they didn't even have all the five books of Moses, we have 39 books of the Old Testament, we have 27 books of the New Testament, we have the an incredible banquet feast of spiritual nourishment in Christ.

But look, with most of them God was not well pleased and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now how could this happen? Everybody started with the same assets, how many of this generation went into the land? Out of the two million that left Egypt, how many went into the land? Two, Caleb and Joshua, Moses himself, remember I told you about the messenger, can fail, even though he brought down the law, but he was denied access because he struck the rock, not supposed to strike the rock, and from those to whom much is given, much is required.

Moses saw the glory of God as few men have ever seen it, remember when God caused his glory to pass by, Moses' face glowed in the dark when he came down, it scared everybody, he came down and his face was like a night light, and people said put a sack over your head, you're scared, and Moses had to walk around with a bag over his head for several weeks until the glory faded, that's how close Moses got to God. Well much was required of him, and when he went up there and said, shall we bring forth water for you from this rock, and he turned around and

whacked it with the stick, God says, Moses, for that, it's going to be a while before you get into the land.

So he climbed up Mount Pisgah, and he looked across the Jordan and he saw the land, and God said, you get the far away view, but that's as far as you can get buried out there. But the great thing is that all is not lost, God did that symbolically, because look how much attention that drew to the rock, the rock that symbolizes Christ, if Moses had done it right, we probably wouldn't pay near as much attention to that first rock and second rock as we do, so God even used Moses error to communicate truth.

But the thing that really makes me smile is thinking about the transfiguration, because the Mount of Transfiguration is in the land, and so Moses died on Pisgah, looking across the Jordan, and the next thing he sees, he's on the Mount of Transfiguration with Elijah and the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the Bible says the Old Testament saints, many of them longed to see Jesus day, longed for it, wished they could see the face of the Savior, and guess what, Moses got to see his face even before us, we're going to be resurrected before Moses and the rest of the Old Testament saints, but Moses and Elijah got a privilege that very few Old Testament saints got, they got to see the Savior in his first advent, and he was in the land on the Mount of Transfiguration.

So I think that's a great thing, but here's the point, everybody had the same assets, very few, remember Jesus, wide is the way and broad is the gate that leads to destruction, and a lot of people are on it. Those people are believers, because destruction is not the lake of fire, destruction is the loss of opportunity, it's the loss of accomplishment, it is failing to be a good servant, we are stewards of the things that belong to God, he has entrusted them to our care while he's away, what do we do with them?

Jesus is saying, if you start acting like the master of the house and deciding that everything belongs to you, he says if you eat and drink like you're the master and you beat your fellow servants and forget about the master, what's going to happen when he comes back? That servant is going to be beaten with many stripes, he's going to be cut in half and his lot, his inheritance is going to be that of the hypocrites, which is nothing, it's the smoke that descends from the lake of fire.

Broad is the way, wide is the gate that leads to destruction, and most of us as believers are on that road. We have the chance if we hear, if we have an ear to hear what the Lord says to us in these scriptures, to pay attention, to dedicate the things that we do in the day, we don't have to be a missionary, we don't have to be an evangelist, we don't have to be quoting scripture and singing psalms all day long, we just have to remember who we are and why we're here, the God that we serve, and dedicate each thing that we do to him, to do it in a way that is well pleasing.

Like it says up here on the wall, whatsoever things are pure and noble and lovely, think on these things, think on the Lord, dedicate ourselves, do what we do heartily is unto the Lord, we can do the same things but suddenly we've transformed them into an imperishable crown.

Look at verse 6, these things became our examples to the intent that we should not desire evil things. What was the big crime that they committed in Israel that caused them to drop in the wilderness? They wanted the food, they missed the food from Egypt, they said, oh you know, we used to have food that was seasoned with garlic and onions and stuff back in Egypt, and now

we're eating this manna, it's the same stuff, it's the same thing every day. I remember the food used to be, now you think about it, they're bond slaves threshing straw into bricks, but once you get away, it's like Barbara Streisand, what's too painful to remember, we choose to forget, and after they've been out in the wilderness trudging around for a few months, they say, boy, you know, that chow was sure good back in Egypt, boy, you know, they grew those leeks and garlies and those Egyptians really knew how to cook.

We don't have any leeks out here, babe, get the leeks, I want some garlic for my, oh, we don't have any? Oh, we don't have any? Oh, man, let's go back to Egypt, this is too hard out here. How myopic, how majoring in the minors can you get to look at a problem like no garlic in the cabinet and miss the fact that you've been delivered from bondage? You are headed for the promised land flowing with milk and honey, God has promised things beyond what you can ask or think, but oh, you know what, we ran out of spices for the chow, let's throw it over and go back. It's ridiculous, but these things are our examples to the intent that we should not be distracted by things that we want.

That's what this says, to the intent that we should not want things the way they wanted them. And do not become idolaters. Paul says in another place that covetousness is idolatry.

It's wanting things. We look around and we want things. We look over and we see somebody else and we say, I want what they have, I want that life, or I want that possession, or I want that situation, I want that job, I want that house, I want that car, I want that situation, I want that circumstance, I want that circumstance.

Succumbing to that puts us on the broad road and we're going to drop off that cliff.