

The Wilderness Journey

Part 2

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[00:00:01] I heart three portions of the scriptures tonight, two of the New Testament and one of the Old Testament. Let's turn first to first Corinthians 10.

First Corinthians 10, verse 1. Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that [00:01:05] followed them, and that rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them. As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensembles, and they are written for our admonition, [00:02:06] upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he stands, take heed, lest he fall. There has no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. So far, this moment.

When we started last month, in March, our meditations on this trip from Egypt to Canaan, we took first up our situation, the situation of the people of Israel, and then applied to us, [00:03:02] as we have seen in this scripture, we will talk more on that, how the history of the people of Israel has been given to our instruction. And as we will see, God has arranged this history, the fact that they were in Egypt, God has arranged these things to instruct us. In other words, what happened to the people of Israel, it happened with us in view. God had us in view. That's what the Bible is saying here in chapter 10. All what happened in the past, the history of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, the wilderness journey, it all happened for us. Not first of all for them, it all happened for us, and it has been written for us. Now we have seen that they were in Egypt, under bondage, and we have seen that this speaks of the power of Satan, power of sin, the power of death. And so we have seen the need of everyone. Everyone who listens to God's voice [00:04:05] comes to that conclusion that he is in bondage. Somebody who is born again will realize I'm in bondage, and he will try to deliver himself, but no way. And we have seen that God introduces his deliverer, Moses, which speaks of our Lord Jesus. So we have seen the need for deliverance, and how God introduced the deliverer. We have seen the basis of the deliverance in chapter 12, the Passover land. It's a wonderful book, a wonderful chapter really to read and to study. And then we have seen how God delivered them actually from the power of

Pharaoh. And then, you know, we have read in Exodus in the beginning, not this evening, but then in March, that God wanted to have his people for himself, and he wanted to bring them into the land, the land of his promise, the land of his purpose, the land of his counsel, the land which he had [00:05:03] in his heart to give to his people. And this speaks for us of the heavenly land, where the Lord Jesus is. The Lord Jesus is the man of God's purpose. You can read it in Ephesians 3, and there you find in Ephesians 1 and 3 that God had a counsel for us, a purpose in his heart, eternal purpose, before the foundation of the world. There is where God wants to have us, with a view of sharing this inheritance with us. He called us in time, and he took us out of this world. But you would say, but I'm still in this world. Exactly. There we find a wilderness. The wilderness comes in there. I'm in the wilderness. Why? Because God wants to teach us. He uses the wilderness to form us. And we have seen the facts of the wilderness journey, just briefly, as a bird's eye view, as it [00:06:06] were, yesterday evening. But then we come to the lessons of the wilderness now. And a few of these lessons we find in chapter 10, 1 Corinthians. And tomorrow, Lord willing, we will see what is the fruit of these lessons, what is the result for God of this wilderness journey. You know what is the result? That a people is ready to enter the land. The moment we leave Egypt, the moment God has delivered us from the power of Satan, from the power of sin, we could enter into the land. But the Lord God wants to form us, that we will be morally suitable to enter this heavenly land. The moment the Lord Jesus will come to take us, there is a work of God accomplished in us. And yesterday evening a brother was reminding me of that verse in Philippians, the one who started work in you will accomplish, he will achieve it. He will finish this work. And that is to make us conform to Christ. [00:07:06] That is where the wilderness is for. The wilderness is not a part of God's counsel. God didn't plan to have his people in the wilderness. He planned to have his people in the land, in a promised land. But he uses the wilderness to teach his people to form them in order to have them in his land with him. Now we will find many negative things in connection to the wilderness. What we will find, and we have seen that yesterday already a little bit, is that there is no room for the flesh. In the wilderness we see that nothing of man can remain in the presence of God. And we have seen the wilderness is the place where God speaks. Of course God speaks in the sanctuary. God speaks from heaven. But in the wilderness we realize that where there is nothing else, where we are alone [00:08:01] with God so to speak. Sometimes the wilderness for you can be prison. For another it may be illness.

It may be another circumstance. I remember a brother who used to say that he had his university training in Leningrad. It was seven years of training. It was seven years in camp or in prison. That was his university training. That is God's school. So I could put it in another way. The wilderness is God's school to teach us, to form us. But he has this in view, this end in view.

We will see that in Deuteronomy 8, to introduce us into the land. That we will enjoy really what God has in his heart. Now our brother said, asked in his prayer that the Lord will bless us. You know sometimes things which are not so pleasant may be a blessing. I think of Jacob when he blessed [00:09:04] his sons. When you read Genesis 49, you don't read many blessings. But you read the truth about them.

And that's a blessing. When God tells us the truth about ourselves, it's a blessing. And so even when we hear many negative things, as we hear in first Corinthians 10, God gives them with a view to bless us, with a view to correct us, as our brother said in his prayer. And these things are given to correct us, to train us, to teach us, to admonish us, to encourage us. Now let's just short enter into these verses we have read. In chapter 8, we see that the Apostle Paul was speaking about the subject which occupied the Corinthians very much, in connection with the sacrifices to the [00:10:06] idols, if they could eat that meat. And he takes that up, and he continues then in chapter 9, to present his

liberty. That he at one hand would do everything for his brother, not to make him stumble. But at the other hand, he maintained his Christian liberty. But the question comes, I can boast in my liberty, I can abuse my liberty in a way that it is against God. And so he comes to this conclusion in chapter 9 verse 27, but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away. In other words, Paul is saying, I will be put to the test. I'm preaching, but now God will put me to the test. And what happens then? You know the wilderness is a place where our profession, our confession, and we hope [00:11:08] to see that in Hebrews 3, is tested. And we could say, nothing of the flesh can be maintained. God will take away everything which is of man, everything which is of the flesh. So Paul says, when I preach, I better take care of what I'm saying. If the situation was this, at that time, the people who were playing these Olympic games, they were themselves the ones who announced the games to the people in that area. And they had a hard training. And people everywhere, they saw these men go, and they listened to the invitation, and they saw these sportsmen. And then he said, now all these people come to these games, and then all of a sudden, they see me running, and they see [00:12:04] I'm failing. I'm a castaway. I'm disapproved, disqualified. What a shame, you know. Now, this is what happened in a collective sense in chapter 10 with the people of Israel. They were the people of God. They had a profession to be the people of God. And what a shame, total failure. They were disqualified. They could not enter into the land. God had a land in view to give to them, but he could not enter. They were disqualified. Shoot, could it happen to you? Could it happen to me? That's the point tonight. So, in other words, we find here in this chapter hindrances which we have to overcome.

And just a general remark, this epistle places us in the wilderness. I said yesterday, when you [00:13:01] take the Romans, it's a wilderness epistle. And 1 Corinthians is, too, a wilderness epistle, which places us here in this world. And therefore, you could well compare it with the book of Numbers. There are many, many parallels with the book of Numbers, where we have seen the testimony of God in this world. Just this as a general remark. Now we come to this point that Paul places before our hearts the history of Israel, what happened to them. He first brings out five privileges they had, you know. He reminds his brethren, he says, moreover brethren, I would not that he should be ignorant. When I'm not mistaken, Paul says this about six times in his epistles. And every time, it is a very important point. And every time we see that exactly there, the people of God failed. When he speaks about the coming again of the Lord, he doesn't want that we should be ignorant [00:14:04] about the coming again of the Lord. And what happened in the history of the Church? Exactly at that point, they forgot. And so, every time when Paul says, moreover brethren, I would not that he should be ignorant, we may be sure there is failure. Exactly in connection with that point. But let us take heed and listen what he's saying. He says, all our fathers were under the cloud. That's the first lesson. It means that God was for them. You remember when they left Egypt, the cloud immediately was there to protect them, to direct them, to give them light and so on, shelter. God was for them. That's our privilege. The people called by God, God is for us.

The second point, all passed through the sea. You know who really passed through the sea?

[00:15:01] It is the Lord Jesus. We have seen in the Red Sea that the Red Sea speaks of the death of the Lord for us. That's what you get in Romans 6. You find the Red Sea. And we pass through the Red Sea, but not through the waters as the Lord Jesus did. He went through the waters of death, literally. But we pass on dry land. The people of Israel, they pass through death, actually, but on dry ground. That was very sure. It was the walls of water we have seen yesterday in the slide. They pass through the Red Sea, but it was dry land. So this is what it means for us. The death of the Lord Jesus

for us gives us the possibility to go to the other side of the Red Sea and to be in another place under his authority. That's the third point we find now. We're all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in [00:16:01] the sea. They were associated with a new leader. Instead of being under Pharaoh's authority, they were brought under the authority of Moses. Instead of having to do with somebody who had the power of death, so to speak, over them, they were now associated with the one who speaks of resurrection. The other side of the Red Sea, we find the Lord Jesus in resurrection. That's what we find. We are associated with the risen one. Again, Romans 6 and 7. A new leader, and also on new ground, so to speak.

Pharaoh couldn't do nothing there. He was dead. He had no authority over them whatsoever. They were on a new ground, so to speak. That's our situation. That's our privilege, to belong to the risen Lord and to be placed on new ground, so to speak, where we confess his authority. We are [00:17:01] still living in this world where his authority is rejected, but we do not longer belong to this world. We belong to the Lord Jesus. We belong to the world of resurrection. We belong to God's world, and we confess this. When we are baptized, we confess this, Romans 10, and we submit to his lordship, a new leader. What a privilege! And then, that is their position, you could say, these three privileges, but then Paul gives them two other points, and they all eat the same spiritual food, and they all drink the same spiritual drink. Does that mean that this food was spiritual, that you could not see it? No. It was literal manna. We have seen that yesterday, how the manna came down from heaven. It speaks of heavenly resources, heavenly supplies. It speaks of the Lord Jesus, who came from heaven, John 6. You find it seven times that the Lord came down from heaven. It speaks of the [00:18:05] man who did always God's will, John 4, verse 34, a beautiful verse to remember, that his food was to do God's will. You find seven times in John's gospel that he came, or at least God's will is mentioned in connection with the Lord. That is the one you find in the manna, who was always dependent on God. He never lost his dependence. He was always obedient, and just in between, you know, the Lord Jesus didn't need the lessons of the book of Numbers. The Lord never, as it were, went through Numbers. We do. We need Numbers, but the Lord was in the wilderness too, but he took in the lessons from Deuteronomy, as we will see in Deuteronomy 8. The Lord never failed, and we have this food available for us to feed on him, as it were. That's what you find in John 6. And then also spiritual drink. That is the water from the rock. The rock is Christ, and Christ was with them. The rock [00:19:06] followed them. Now the rock was there, and the water was following them, as it were. Always these supplies were available, every day. And so this is the grace of God, as we have seen yesterday, who gives these supplies every day, always available. But now the big question comes. Do we appreciate these blessings?

Do we appreciate these privileges? What we find here, the conclusion is, in verse 5, but with many, and it is, yeah, with the majority of them, God was not pleased. And then they were scattered in the desert, or overthrown, or they fall in the desert. What a terrible situation. You know, here you find the wilderness. The wilderness is real testing ground. [00:20:01] They belong to the people of God. They had a good profession, so to speak, with these five points, and they used this food. I would like to say a few words on that. It was literal food, as we have seen, but it had a spiritual meaning. This manna has a spiritual meaning, and this water has a spiritual meaning. And so we find also food for the Christians. When we speak about the Lord's Supper, there you find food too. It speaks of his body. So it is little bread that you have on the table. It's bread, and the bread is not changed physically, but it receives a spiritual meaning, and so it becomes spiritual food.

So this bread we have from the Lord is normal bread. There is no physical change, but it receives, on the basis of the word of God, a spiritual meaning. It is my body, the Lord says. [00:21:06] And this

water, this drink we receive, it speaks of the Lord, how he gives us to drink.

Now, there are many professing Christians who belong to the people of God. They use this food, they drink this drink, and nevertheless they fall down in the wilderness. There is no reality.

Now we come to this question. When we confess something, when we profess to be the people of God, when we take part of these privileges, when we take part in the Lord's Supper, is there reality? Is it only an outward form? Is it only a habit, or is there reality?

That's what the wilderness is going to show you. That is what God is going to show us. So you see, this is a very serious subject to study. Tomorrow night, Lord willing, we would see [00:22:08] the results of the wilderness journey. That is more positive. The result is fruit for God. But the way is very difficult. Or, as you could put it, in the school of God, the lessons are hard. It's a hard training, but we have a good master. The end result, as we will see in Deuteronomy 8, is very good. But here we find this testing ground. So, to conclude this section, outward participation in certain privileges God gives is not a guarantee that you will enter into the land. As we have seen yesterday in the history of Israel, it was only a form. And so, how important is this for us to take this in, that a form in itself, an outward participation in itself, without real fellowship with God, [00:23:04] is not enough. And so the wilderness would show this. Now to go on with verse 6, there we have the explanation how these things apply to us. Now these things were our examples, or we should read in a new translation, but these things happened as types of us, that we should not be lusters after evil things as they also lust it. Now we come to the reasons why there was failure. We have seen in verse 5 there was failure. They were strewed in the desert. We have seen they had five privileges, and now in these verses which follow we find that there are five points of failure. They failed in the responsibility. They failed in the appreciation of these privileges. That's [00:24:02] the point. So the question comes to us now, do we really appreciate the blessings God gives us? And then from verse 6 on we see that they didn't. They did not really appreciate what God gave. They used these things in a wrong way. And that is what Paul for himself was afraid of, that he would have a beautiful profession, but use these things for his own glory. Like the Corinthians, they had many blessings from the Lord, they had many gifts. First Corinthians 1, they were enriched with all these gifts, but they used these gifts for themselves. Can that stand? No, it cannot. They were going to fall in the desert when they would continue on this path. And why? Because there was first of all this lust, verse 6, to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lust it. There is the principle of evil lust. We have seen it yesterday in Exodus and in Numbers. But what does that mean?

[00:25:05] It means that I am not satisfied with what God gives. That's what it means. When I lust after other things, here it's called evil things, it shows that I'm not satisfied with what God gave. And that's what happened with Israel. They lusted after the things of Egypt. They wanted to go back to Egypt. So there was not real appreciation of the gift of God. The manna was despised. And by the way, you find this is a principle in the scriptures, this evil lust. In 2 Peter 1, you find that the whole world system is running according to this principle of lust. Satan uses this to keep the whole world in bondage. And we find in 1 John 2, that this principle was used already in the fall. Eve, we find these three aspects of lust.

[00:26:04] And there are other passages. I'm thinking now of James 1, how the devil would use lust to make us fall. So this is the first deviation. It starts in my heart. I want other things. And that's what we find in the law, the tenth commandment. Paul said, I would not know that that is wrong to have lust, to have other desires, to have something from my neighbour, his wife or his goods and so on. He said, I

didn't know that that is wrong if the law wouldn't say it. But here you find that this principle is the first deviation, lust. And the other points which follow now are given in a moral order. It is not necessarily a historical order. It is a moral order. So the first point, [00:27:02] keep in mind, is there a lust in my heart for other things? Am I satisfied with what the Lord gives? Heavenly resources, the manna, water from the rock. We have seen the Holy Spirit who came down, who dwells in us, who supplies all his glories from heaven, Exodus 17. We have just briefly thought of that yesterday. Am I satisfied with these supplies? Am I satisfied with the Lord Jesus, my Lord, as the leader under whose authority I am placed, or not? That's the point. Do I want something else? What's the consequence if I want something else? The consequence is verse 2. Neither be you idolaters. Here you find the principle of idolatry. Where is the principle of idolatry introduced? When there is something placed between the Lord and myself. Even good things you can use and become idolatry. You find it already with Noah that he used the [00:28:08] wine in a wrong way. That's, in essence, idolatry. That you use blessings God gives for your own, not in fellowship with God. That's the principle of idolatry. So things which God has given in his creation, like the stars, the moon, the sun, were used as object in themselves to adore. And so you can adore your money, you can adore your wife, you can adore your children, you can adore your job, or whatever. It becomes idolatry because it is used in a wrong way. It's not used in fellowship with God. It's not used in a proper way. That's idolatry. And so it becomes something between God and myself. It places itself between God and myself as an object of worship. It takes [00:29:01] the affections away. Instead of looking to the Lord, using these things in fellowship with him, I use them for myself. I use them for my system, or whatever. That's idolatry. How serious this is. And this came in in the history of the church, you know. This is not only the history of the people of Israel, it is the history of the church. And it can be the history of my own soul, when I'm not satisfied with the Lord. It will happen. Idolatry will be introduced. How serious this is. We have seen this in Exodus 32. They were not, they didn't know where Moses was. Do the Christians know where the Lord Jesus is? You can ask them. Nine out of ten, they don't know. Do they know that there is a man in the glory? Do they know about the Lord Jesus, who is seated at God's right hand, crowned with glory and honour? They don't know about him. Nothing. They want to see something. Are they satisfied with the leading of the Holy Spirit, invisible person? No, they aren't. They want something for the eyes. Sometimes we do too, you see. That's idolatry. There is where idolatry comes [00:30:06] in. And the consequence is, as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. They had forgotten all about Moses. Christians forgot all about the Lord Jesus. Matthew 24, the slave, he said in his heart, my master, tarryest to come. He forgot about his master. Consequence was that he sat down with those from the world. And then we come to the next point in verse 8. Neither let us commit fornication. Both go together. You can read in Revelation 2, where this point of idolatry was introduced, and it is connected right away with fornication, the links with the world, associations with this world. They go close together, idolatry and associations with the world, the world which crucified my Lord. How can that be? It is terrible. How did Paul train the Church to be a chaste virgin, to be ready for [00:31:12] the bridegroom? And what has become out of the Church? A great war. So we see what the history of the Church is, and it looks similar like the history of Israel. What was the consequence? We have seen yesterday in numbers that God always answers in two ways. In judgment, but in those who are faithful, in grace. He introduces Christ, as you will see in verse 13 also of this chapter. God always uses failure to introduce Christ, who never failed. Now here he comes in in judgment, and on one day 23,000 people fell. You can read about these things more in detail, of course, in the book of Numbers. In Numbers 25 we have seen this fornication with the daughters of Moab and [00:32:03] the Midianites. We find that this was a plan of Balaam, who could not curse the people of God and use this way to make them fall. You find it in the New Testament back, the ways of Balaam. So this is a very important point we find here, and you could say this is the seductive power of the world. The power of the world was used to subdue the Christians, to

persecute them, but when that did not help, the power of the world was used to seduce them. That is what you get under constant degrade in the beginning of the third century, when the church became world church, when the church started to reign over the world. Then actually the world was in the church, and the world ruled the church. And the consequence is death. There is no longer fellowship with God, there is death. So this is a very important point, and we have to keep in mind that we come [00:33:05] to that when there is this evil lust, this lust after evil things, when we are not satisfied with what God gives. When the Lord has no longer his supreme place in our hearts.

By the way, we find in Exodus 33 that God gave a solution, even in this situation. The tent of meeting was placed outside the camp. So that is what I said, on the one hand judgment, on the other hand God always gives a solution for the faithful. And in this third instance, it is Phinehas who was faithful, who showed this jealousy to maintain the rights of the Lord, and Phinehas was blessed very much later on, as we find in the Old Testament. Now we come to the fourth point, in verse 9, [00:34:01] neither let us tempt the Christ, as some of them tempted and perished by serpents. As I said, it is not necessarily the historical order, but it is a moral order. When we have got this lust, this idolatry and fornication, the third point is tempting of Christ. And this is a very serious matter. They doubted the presence of the Lord among his people. They defied him, as it were. And this happened twice in the history of Israel.

It happened in Exodus 17, and it happened in Numbers 20. We went through these chapters yesterday, and there you find that Meribah was twice in their history. So you see, this is not a historical order, but it shows how there is a climax, a growing of evil. It is becoming worse and worse.

And in the end, in Numbers 20, God takes this very seriously. He said, neither let us tempt Christ.

[00:35:08] It was a lack of confidence, and on the other hand, pretension that goes hand in hand. And it was after 38 years of God's grace. And I think there is a verse in Deuteronomy, just read it, verse 16, he shall not tempt Jehovah your God as he tempted him in Massa. And this is one of the verses the Lord Jesus used when the devil tempted him in Luke 4 and Matthew 4. You find that the Lord refers to this verse, you shall not tempt the Lord your God. The Lord, he was always faithful, and he maintained God's rights. So this was the fourth point in the history of Israel, and we can see that back in the history of the Church. We find at the end of the wilderness journey then, [00:36:02] that the serpents came as a judgment of this, and were destroyed of serpents, verse 9 at the end. So that is, we could say this, evil came in, and so it came in in the Church. The devil used to introduce doctrines, wrong doctrines, doctrines of demons, as 1 Timothy 4 says. What is the consequence? They are destroyed by the serpents, power of Satan. You see today, in some movements where the power of the devil is evident, and people, they are destroyed by this power. It's terrible. The fifth point is then apostasy, I would say. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. This refers back to the despising of the land. They despised the good land. You can read it in number 13 and 14. God had in his [00:37:04] heart to give the good land, what he has in his heart, the best thing he could give to his people. They despised it. They rejected it completely. And what was the consequence? They were destroyed by the destroyer. Now you can find this back in Psalm 90, where Moses speaks in his prayer about this, that the whole people was passing away. For all our days pass away in thy wrath. We spend our years as a passing thought. Verse 7, for we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy fury are we troubled. You know, they were destroyed in the wilderness. That was the consequence of the fact that they had despised the land. They were destroyed. That's what you find in Psalm 90. By the way, then you find in Psalm 91, the

true men of God, the Lord Jesus, and you find this back [00:38:03] in Caleb and Joshua, who were faithful amidst this situation. The Lord kept them, and the Lord later on brought them into the good land, as we find in Psalm 92. So here we find the destroyer as an answer of the unfaithfulness of the people and how they despised the good land. This is the end of the story. Five times failure, and the end is that they were totally rejected.

This is a very sad picture, and I said, in itself you cannot say that it is a blessing, but it is God's truth. God reveals what is in our hearts, because now we have to come to the point. We are not better than they were. We have exactly the same tendencies in our heart. I have the tendency for this evil lust. I have the tendency for idolatry and fornication. I have the tendency to tempt the Lord, or to use his presence for my own purpose, or whatever, or even to despise the [00:39:06] good land with God, the purpose of God in his own heart, to despise these things, lack of love, lack of faith. So this we have to learn, and then it becomes a blessing, because then we will realize how we are dependent on the Lord. Then we will become part of the new generation who were born in the wilderness, who were raised in the wilderness, and that's what we will see tomorrow, Lord willing. The fruit of all this is something for the glory of God, but nothing of the flesh, nothing of man can be maintained in God's presence. How serious this is. Verse 11, again, Paul comes to this conclusion that all these things happened to them as types or examples for us, and have been written for our admonition. You see, all these things happened to them, yes, but for whom, actually, for whom? It happened to them for us. So God arranged the whole situation, [00:40:06] to stay from Egypt, the wilderness journey, to bring them into the land, to teach you and me how great this is, that all this happened to them with us in view. So God thought already then of you and me, to instruct you and me, and God arranged these things that he could instruct today, you and me, not to fall in these pitfalls. That's then the conclusion in verse 11, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. You could say, in a sense, all the testings are done. We have come to a time when God has tested what is in man. He has shown completely what is in man, and that comes out at the cross, not only the wilderness journey, but when you want to see really what is in man's heart, you go to the cross, and there you will find out what is in man's heart. Then in verse 12, the conclusion, so that let him that thinks that he stands take [00:41:07] heed lest he fall. That's the point, when there is pretension, when there is a profession but in pretension, you will fall. The Lord will allow this. So in this way, the Corinthians were using God's gift, but they were pretending to use them for God, but they were using them for themselves. Now God cannot, he's a jealous God, he cannot accept it. They were using the Lord's supper for their own selves. Can it be called the Lord's supper anymore then? So all these things happened among them, and Paul says, take heed lest you fall. So we are warned, and somebody who is warned counts for two, so let us take heed of these things. And then in verse 13, that's a word of encouragement, because you could say, but my, when that happened to them, I'm going to fall, I will never reach the end, never. But then he says in verse 13, to encourage us. I don't want to take [00:42:05] away anything of the seriousness of these examples, but there is at the same time encouragement for the faithful. No temptation has taken you, but such as is according to man's nature. And God is faithful. You know, when you read in James 1, it's a wonderful verse, in James 1, verse 2, you read, count it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into various temptations, knowing that the proving of your faith works endurance. But let endurance have its perfect work, that he may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Now that is what God wants. God wants to bring out what he has formed in you and me. That's what we hope to see tomorrow. There will be fruit for God through all these experiences. God uses these circumstances, this difficult journey through the wilderness, to bring out something which he has formed in you and me. That is a reason [00:43:06] to joy, for joy. It's a reason to be glad that we know that God is working at the same time, and that through all this there will be something which is perfect, which will be complete, lacking in nothing. And when we lack, we realize our shortcomings,

there is a resource, we can pray. So you know, from God's side, everything is in order, all is okay. And I would just remind you of another verse to underline this. In Romans 8, verse 28, we have this well-known verse which says that, but we do know, we that is the Christians, know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose. We are called out of this world to enter into the land, but we are not allowed to do that. We are not allowed to do that.

[00:44:24] He tests it. These are testings. So these temptations have the character of testing, whereas the temptations which come from Satan, they appeal to the flesh, and he wants us to fall down, and to hinder us in our walk. Does God want to hinder us on our way to the land? Not at all. He wants to encourage us that we would reach the land. But God wants to test his material. He wants to have good material. When we come into the land, he wants to have good material. So with the temptation, he will give the issue. What is the issue? It's Christ. [00:45:06] When I see that God wants to introduce Christ in a very practical way in my situation. I remember a story of a brother in Russia. He was taken by police officers and he was bound after their car, and then he was so drawn through the whole city, behind the car. Terrible situation, imagine. And he said, I never realised the nearness of the Lord as then. In other words, the issue was there.

Even this temptation the Lord allowed, but he never realised the presence of the Lord so close in his life as at that time. That is the issue. The issue is that Christ is introduced in a practical way. We know it intellectually that the Lord is with us. Matthew 28, verse 20, I am with you always, every day. But here you see it practically. You realise it, you experience it, [00:46:08] so that you should be able to bear it. And this morning we were discussing Matthew 11, verse 29, take my yoke. Then we find he is carrying the yoke. We can bear it because he is with us. He takes sides with us. He is identifying himself with us. What a gracious God that he would use these circumstances to introduce Christ in a very practical way. Now when you read the book of Numbers, you keep this in mind, every situation when they were faced with new evil, God had in view to introduce Christ in that very situation. We can be in difficult situations, but it is God's intention to introduce Christ in a very practical way, that we may realise our dependence on him, that it is not only a pretension, that we are going on in pretension, but that we are going on in reality. God wants real material to introduce into the land. And now briefly, [00:47:06] on these other passages in Deuteronomy 8, a few verses, and then a few verses in Hebrews 3 to close this. Just a conclusion in connection with 1 Corinthians 10, I have here a note in my Bible that says, on the ground of the first man before God, all responsibility is owed. We see that on the ground of responsibility, all fails. But then we have seen it is God's intention to introduce Christ in a practical way. Christ never failed. And this is what God has in mind, to introduce Christ in our lives, that Christ will be seen in a practical way. Not the old nature, [00:48:01] not the old Adam, but Christ may be seen. That is God's goal, God's aim. Now in Deuteronomy 8, we'll just read verse 1 to 6, where we have again the ways of God. We have seen the ways of God bring us into the enjoyment of his purpose, bring us into the land. That's what you get in Deuteronomy 8. Every commandment which I command thee this day shall ye take heed to do, that ye may live and multiply and enter in and possess the land. That's the aim which Jehovah saw unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee. So all the way Jehovah thy God led thee these 40 years in the wilderness. Why? To humble you. To humble thee [00:49:06] and to prove thee to know what was in thy heart, whether thou would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger and fed thee with the manna which thou hadst not known, in which thy fathers knew not, that he might make thee know that man does not live by bread alone. So a second verse which is quoted by the Lord in Luke 4, but by everything that goes out of the mouth of Jehovah does man live. Verse 4, thy closing grew not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these 40 years.

And know in thy heart that as a man chasteneth his son, so Jehovah thy God chasteneth thee. And thou shalt keep the commandment of Jehovah thy God to walk in his ways and to fear him. Verse 7, for Jehovah thy God brings thee into a good land. Verse [00:50:13] 14, in the middle of the verse, thy God who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, who led thee through the great and terrible wilderness, a wilderness of fiery serpents and scorpions and draught, where there is no water, who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint, who fed thee in the wilderness with manna which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee and that he might prove thee to do thee good at thy letter end. To do thee good at thy letter end. What is that, to do thee good at thy letter end?

That is to bring you into the good land, which we have in verse 7. That's God's purpose, to bring his people into the good land. Now this is a subject, Lord willing, which we will take up [00:51:07] another time, the land, but this is, in the meantime, God's ways. God's ways, as we find here, the conclusion in Deuteronomy 8, are necessary to bring us into the land in the way he wants us to have there. Humble, God-fearing, as we find in verse 6. Let's just go over a few details. So it is in verse 1 clear that it's God's intention to bring them into the land which he swore unto your fathers. That's the basis. It's not because of their works, not because of how faithful they were, it is because of God's promise and oath to the fathers. Then verse 2, thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee these 40 years in the wilderness. So even when we have seen in numbers 13 and 14 that it was because of their facelessness, and because of their rejection of [00:52:01] God's land, that he had to stay in the wilderness for 40 years. But God is now speaking to this new generation. They had to learn the same lessons, but they were in the good of these lessons. They were not thrown in the desert, they were in the good of these lessons, and they had to remember all these things. Why? To humble, to be humble. So God allowed these things to humble them.

A brother once said to me, people in Egypt, there are no Egyptian brothers here, I see, are very proud people. Now it's not only Egyptians who are very proud, it's every man who is proud. But anyway, so we need the ones who come from Egypt have to be humbled. Now we came out of Egypt too, so we need this lesson too, to be humbled. And he says to prove thee, I would just remind you again of this verse in James 1 verse 2, these testings of the Lord are necessary. [00:53:01] And then to know what was in thy heart. You know, that is very healthy, to realize what's in our heart, because then we see that is only God's sovereign grace. There is nothing in myself, there is nothing I did I can boast on, which would give me the guarantee to enter into the land. It is very clear, but it is important to realize this. So God brings out, in other words, he uses the wilderness to bring out what is in my heart. And he wants to change this heart. You find a heart many times in this chapter. You find it many times in Proverbs, for example, where you find this chastening, you find the importance of what is in our heart. The issues of life come from the heart, Solomon said. And so if my heart is right before God, my ways will be right. I will go through the wilderness in the right way. So to know what is in thy heart, the Lord allows them to show what's in [00:54:03] my heart. The moment I receive the Lord Jesus, I don't know what's in my heart. I think I know, but I really don't know. I am attracted to the glory of the Lord Jesus. Maybe the little boys here, they haven't heard about the Lord Jesus, and you start to love the Lord Jesus. And when you have received the Lord Jesus, later on in your life you find out how bad we are. But God knew that before. But he wants to show this. He wants to show, after our conversion, how bad we are. And he uses the wilderness to show us this. But not only that, he shows also what is in his heart. That's the great difference. When it was only to show what's in our heart, that would be very negative. But he uses these needs then, which are created. The moment I realize that I have nothing, there is a need. I'm hungry. The Lord allows this. But then I expect something from him. I open my [00:55:04] heart to receive heavenly resources. I'm not despising these

resources because I see the need. You know, God brings out then at the same time what is in his heart. Love for his people, full supply for his people. So we never forget God's ways. And then in verse 3, and he humbled thee.

As I said, this is one of the conditions to be in the land. God wants to dwell with his people, but he can only dwell with them who are of a contrite heart, as you find in Isaiah 57, for example. God cannot dwell with us when we are proudful, when we are boasting ourselves and our works or whatever. He dwells with the humble, with the meek. And then in verse 3 we find, and he suffered thee to hunger. He makes us realize our needs. Then we will appreciate his provisions. [00:56:05] And then he brings out something which the fathers didn't know. You know, tradition may be very good, but it's not sufficient to go through the wilderness. We may have good traditions, and we may say my father did it that way, my grandfather did it that way, but it will not help me to go through the wilderness. We need fresh supplies from heaven. And then in verse 3 at the end, that he might make thee know. Here we are at God's school. We are instructed. You can read the Psalms of instruction beside this. There you see how God wants to instruct us. You find the wise in the book of Daniel at the end of the dispensation, and now God's looking for wise women, wise brothers, wise men, wise women among us. If we took in these lessons, then we become wise. That you might know that man does not live by bread [00:57:06] alone. This is God's instructions, God's school, God's discipline, God's ways, but by everything that goes out of the mouth of Jehovah. You see, that's the resource. We come to the conclusion that everything has to come from him, from his mouth. And again I said wilderness is the place where God speaks. Literally, Midbar, wilderness means place of speaking. Now here you get it.

God opened his mouth, God speaks, and he supplies our needs. And in another place, I think in Nehemiah, it says that he gave food for their mouth. So it comes out of his mouth, and we receive it in our mouth. That is fellowship. Then you have real fellowship with God. That is what God wants, even in the wilderness, to have real fellowship with us. Then in verse 4, we find... [00:58:03] Okay, just one thing about verse 3. You find here the utter dependence, as you find in the Lord Jesus. The manna, again, speaks of how he was relying on every word which came out of the mouth of Jehovah, of the mouth of the Lord, to do this. Utter dependence. Then in verse 4, thy closing grew not old upon thee. Excuse me. There we find again God's faithfulness, how he brought the people through the whole wilderness. We said yesterday, for one day food they needed at least 15 train wagons. Now and then, when you think of this, that God preserved their clothes during these 40 years, it's a mystery. But there you see how great God's grace is. He has given us clothes, now it just applies to us, which never grow old. When you think of the Lord Jesus, who is the one with whom God closed us, never grows old. It's good enough to go through the whole wilderness journey. It's his [00:59:05] work. And then thy foot did not swell. He gives grace from step to step. He will take care of every step in the wilderness, that our foot will not swell. And then in verse 5, and know in thy heart that, again our heart, as a man chasteneth his son. That is the point. Why does God allow these things? Why even the rod, when it is necessary? Because he loves us. It's because he loves me, that he chastens me. There is one exception, again with the Lord. As I said, the Lord did not need the lessons of numbers, and the Lord didn't need to be chastened. The Lord was perfect, a perfect son of God's delight, of God's pleasure. But you know, God wants to have sons now. He wants to have you and me to be a son of his delight, to be a son of his pleasure, as it were. And therefore he chastens us, therefore he is [01:00:02] teaching us. You can find it in Hebrews 12. You can find in many other places how God is teaching us and chastening us to instructors, to have us as sons. God wants to share the land with you and me. God wants to share what is in his heart. Do you share the deepest secrets of your heart with a little baby, or with somebody who is unfaithful? No, God wants to have sons, and he

is now preparing us to be sons, in order to introduce us into the land that he can share all these blessings with us. That is what we find here. So Jehovah thy God chastens thee. So this is really the goal. God wants to share his inheritance with us. And then verse 6. Thou shalt keep the commandments of Jehovah thy God to walk in his ways and to fear him. To enter into the land, as I said, you need to be humble. And the second condition here is to fear God. That is holy reverence. And when you read the [01:01:05] book of Job 28, verse 28, you find in chapter 28 many people who were digging in the ground and they were trying to find gold and silver and so on. And you know what Job's conclusion is? The biggest treasure you can find is to fear God. He says, behold the fear of the Lord, that is knowledge. And unto man, he said, lo, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. It's not only knowledge, it's wisdom. Knowledge applied in a practical way. It is through the fear of the Lord. And to depart from evil is understanding. So this is the secret. To enter into God's thoughts, we need this fear. We need this wisdom, as we have seen in verse 3. And so then we see that it is God's intention to bring his people into the land. In verse 14, we see the review of the wilderness journey. So we find actually in this chapter the three things together. [01:02:02] They were in Egypt, the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. Then God led them out of that land. They brought them in the wilderness. But he did not only bring them in the wilderness, he led them through. That is, he directed them. They would have divine guidance. He led them through the great and terrible wilderness. We said, there is no way to go in the wilderness, but Christ is the way. And then he reminds us of all these dangers. Fiery serpents, scorpions, draught. In all the situations, there is a perfect answer in Christ. So it's in God's heart to do us good. Let us not forget that. And then just briefly, in Hebrews 3, we find the failure of the people. But again, this is to help us to realize why God has called us and where God is going to bring us. In Hebrews 3, [01:03:05] we read in verse 7, Therefore, as the Holy Ghost says, today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of temptation, in the wilderness, when you are found in the wilderness.

When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

Wherefore, I was grieved with that generation and said, they do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the [01:04:06] deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. While it is said, today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke, howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swear he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Here we find it is God's purpose to bring us into his rest. And of course, the moment we have peace with God, we have received rest. That is the rest of Matthew 11 verse 28. Come unto me. Maybe there is somebody who needs it right now. Come unto me, all ye which are burdened and heavy laden, [01:05:06] and I shall give you rest. And then the Lord speaks of rest in verse 29. Rest in connection with our circumstances. Rest in connection with this way we have to follow. But God has another rest. It is his rest. And he wants to bring us into that rest. In a sense, this is future. But through the Holy Spirit, we may enjoy this rest already now, when we give heed to these instructions. So, we find here the privilege that we are sons. You know, I said in Deuteronomy 8, God wants to have sons, and he wants to train us to be true sons. And here in Hebrews 3, in verse 14, we are called to be partakers of Christ. So, those who share with Christ. What a privilege that we may have

the same things as Christ has. Now, in verse 7, we find the warning.

[01:06:07] Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost says today, if you will hear his voice. You know, in verse 1 to 6, he gives the picture. He gives our calling that we belong to the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. But then, the fact that it is a confession, a profession, God wants reality. And that's the wilderness. All the ifs we find here and in Colossians speak, and other places, speak of the fact that we are in the wilderness. Romans, so many ifs. These are the wilderness, the ways of God in the wilderness, to test us. We profess, we confess that we belong to the Apostle and High Priest. God allows these trials to bring out what is real, what he has worked in us.

And so, let us give heed to the language of the Holy Spirit. It's God himself who speaks. [01:07:01] It refers here to Psalm 95. And then he says, harden not your hearts. Now, you see the whole story. You see the failure of Israel. What I'm going to do is that. Am I going to accept these instructions, or am I going to harden my heart? That's the point. And we find here ten failures in this chapter. We find here hardening. We find here provocation in verse 8. They provoked God. They tempted God.

They were proving him, as we have in verse 9, when your fathers tempted me, proved me. You know, that's what we had in Numbers 20, for example. Then they were erring in their hearts, verse 10. They did not know my ways. What a terrible picture. There was unbelief in verse 12.

[01:08:01] He calls us, take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. There was departing from God's thoughts. There was deceitfulness in verse 13. Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. There was disobedience, as you find in the last verse we have read. Unbelief, excuse me, there is this unbelief, but there is also disobedience in these verses, or in chapter 4. Anyway, we find here at least ten references to their failures. And we are not better than they are. We have to face the facts. So, we have to place ourselves in God's light to see if my heart is hardening against God. Am I provoking God? Am I tempting, proving him? Am I erring on my ways? Am I full of unbelief? Do I not know God's ways and so on?

[01:09:09] These are all real tests. And so, in these testings, it will come out if there is something of the Lord, or is there something of the flesh which we have to judge. In other words, the conclusion is, let us judge what is of the flesh. Let us judge what is wrong. God wants us to introduce into his rest, but he can only have us there if all what is of the flesh is judged, is put away. So, to encourage us then, Paul says, but exhort one another. We need to be exhorted. I think of the children, how many times they need to be exhorted, even at home. But we need it also, as brothers and sisters, to be exhorted, and how difficult this is sometimes to say a word, to exhort, in the right way, not to blame somebody or to offence, but to encourage [01:10:03] that we would go on our way in the wilderness journey, to enter into the land. So, these are on the one hand real testings, but on the other hand, when we realise that we are God's sons, that we are partakers of Christ. Now, God wants us to have with him, to share all these things, but we are on our way to that rest. And so, this passage can help us very much to realise the solemnity of the situation, to realise our weakness, to realise that there is no strength in ourselves, that all has to come from God. But there is a responsibility. I have to listen. We were talking this morning and we said, when we do what we can, God will do what we cannot do. In other words, when I listen to these instructions, [01:11:02] God is going to take care of me, to introduce me into the land. Whereas, when I refuse to listen, God cannot bring me into that land. It's really here a matter of our responsibility. But of course, when we are there, when we are introduced in the land, we see it is God's sovereign grace. It's the same with raising children. When our children accept the Lord, when they walk in his path, is it because of our efforts? Is it because we did so good a job? It is

true, we are responsible, but it is his sovereign grace. So, these two things go together and the scriptures are very clear to maintain our responsibility. Here is the line of our responsibility and God doesn't take away anything of that. But at the other hand, there is God's sovereign grace and all our resources come from him. But he wants to help us to walk this path, he maintains our responsibility, but he comes in to help us, to answer. [01:12:07] That's responsibility. And I want to close with this thought. God wants to have a response. Responsibility is sometimes a very negative word, but when you think about it, responsibility implies response, and that's what God wants. He wants a response. Now, that's where the people of Israel failed in 1 Corinthians 10. They failed to give this response, therefore they failed in the responsibility. When we give this response out of our heart, full of love to the Lord, he will help us to go the way, he will help us that we will not fail in connection with our responsibility. So, let us give this good response, let us encourage each other to give this response, and then we will be worshippers. When God instructs us, when we see that [01:13:07] everything comes from him, it is to bring these things back to him. When God supplies, is it only to fulfil our needs? Not only. It is that he may receive something back. That is response. Response means that he will receive something back, what he gave before, but he receives it back from a thankful heart, and not only from a thankful heart, he receives it back from a worshipping heart. Now, there is nothing greater for the heart of God to receive something back from a worshipping heart. When a little child brings something to his father or mother as a little present, I don't know if you ever did it, but that is a token of thankfulness, it's a proof of happiness, it's a proof of a response. Now, that is what God is looking for. He has supplied all these wonderful gifts, all this superabundance of grace, now he is looking for a response, [01:14:06] where we are here. And so, we encourage each other, and it's through the Holy Spirit that we may encourage each other, through the word of God, to give this response. Then we will be happy too, and at the same time we will be kept from all these dangers. When our heart is filled with thankfulness, we cannot fall in all these pitfalls, but as soon as we start to see our own self, our own failures, we become depressed, we see all the failures of others earlier than our own failures, we become more depressed, instead of being thankful, instead of looking up to the Lord. You know, it's so practical, and we fail, we have to say we fail so many times, but therefore we need this encouragement to look up to the Lord, that what comes from his mouth may enter in my mouth, that I may grow, as our brother said in his prayer, in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus. Amen.