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## **Corrupt Christians!**

**By David Wilkerson**

November 28, 1994 The church of Jesus Christ has developed a distorted view of what corruption is. Not many Christians understand God's definition of corruption -- and few would admit they are guilty of it!

When we think of corrupt people, we think mostly of wicked sinners. According to our theology, corruption involves alcohol or drug abuse, adultery or fornication, cheating, gambling, homosexuality, murder, rape, incest and other such wicked deeds. We narrow down corruption to mean wild passions and life-controlling lusts.

Yet we have failed to understand how God looks at corruption! God's definition goes much deeper than the passions of the flesh. The word corrupt means "a change from what is solid and good to something that is putrid and decaying." Corruption signifies something that once was whole and well - but now it isn't, because decay and putrefaction have set in.

Israel was accused by God of a corruption surpassing even that of their godless enemies! While Moses was on the mount with the Lord, the Israelites decided to build an altar in honor of a golden calf. They ate, drank, danced and played before this empty idol. And God said to Moses, "...Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves" (Exodus 32:7). This corruption was so great in God's eyes, He threatened to consume them all on the spot: "And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation" (verses 9-10).

God relented, but what a serious charge! What had the people done to so enrage Him? Was it their drunkenness, their lust, their nudity? Was it their frivolity and playfulness during a solemn time? No -- it went much deeper than even their idolatry.

Only a few weeks before, these same Israelites had been delivered from the clutches of Pharaoh and his army. And they had stood amazed on the shore of the Red Sea, singing the Lord's praises: "...he hath triumphed gloriously.... The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation.... Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy" (Exodus 15:1-2,6). Now, only a short time later, they were totally corrupted -- and on the verge of being wiped out by an offended God! The New Testament uses their example to warn us: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:11).

I want to take a look at this corruption from God's view. And I want us to face the truth that we may be as guilty of corruption as Israel, when they danced around the golden calf!

1. Corruption is Casting Away Confidence in God Because of Delays!"And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we (know) not what is become of him"(Exodus 32:1).

What incredible blindness had come upon these people! At the very moment they were losing confidence in God, all heaven was in motion, making wonderful plans for their future!

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Up on the mount, a tabernacle was being unveiled to Moses through which God Himself would come down and dwell in their midst. He was giving them a law that would set them apart from all others on earth. Their enemies would be routed and destroyed. Giants would be slain.

God also was bringing Israel into a place of peace, rest and fullness. He was planning to give them a glorious inheritance -- houses they didn't build, orchards they didn't plant, everything they ever wanted. And all of it was in a land of milk and honey, green grass and vegetables.

At that moment, the very Godhead was focused on Israel's present needs and their future blessings. Yet, while the Lord was arranging everything for their benefit and inheritance, the people were crying, "Where is God? Where is His direction? We see no evidence of His faithfulness. There is only silence. What kind of God would leave us alone and afraid, without a word? Enough of this waiting -- enough of silence and delays. Let's take action. Let's do something!"

So Israel deliberately put out of their minds all the miraculous things God had done for them. They forgot the supernatural plagues He had sent on Egypt. They forgot the Red Sea miracles. They forgot the sweetened waters of Marah and the angel's food He had given them each morning. Not even the thundering voice at Sinai mattered to them anymore. All that mattered was, they were in need and yet heard only silence.

They were under the spell of unbelief! Nothing could shake these people from their conviction that God was no longer with them. The only thing they cared about was satisfying their inner craving for action!

The Bible says these people literally ripped off their earrings, so Aaron could begin shaping the idol: "And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron" (Exodus 32:2). I can almost hear their excited cry as the calf took shape: "Now we're getting someplace!"

It seems to us impossible that a people who had so recently experienced God's supernatural power would so quickly sacrifice to an inanimate golden calf. Were these Israelites really so stupid as to look upon their melted earrings and say, "This is the god that brought us out of Egypt"? What incredible blindness!

Yet blindness and spiritual stupor is the curse that befalls all who turn away from God to seek help and direction from other sources. Indeed, we can be just as cursed and corrupted as Israel was, whenever we turn to human resources for strength and guidance! Like Israel, we forget all of God's past blessings and mercies upon us. We forget the many times He has delivered us from the enemy's snare. We forget all His promises to us in our secret closet of prayer, and His pledge to guide us even until death.

Instead of fleeing to our secret closet to pour out our heart to the Lord of glory, we rush to the telephone to seek help from a friend. We unburden our heart to pastors, counselors, family members, even strangers. We search everywhere for sympathetic advice. We pout, accusing God of not hearing or answering our cry. And we cry ourselves to sleep, languishing in dreadful fits of loneliness.

Beloved, it is corruption of the worst kind to give in to such fear and despair! In doing so, we ignore the majesty and faithfulness of our loving Father! God told Israel:

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- "...I have talked with you from heaven...in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (Exodus 20 22, 24).

- "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me" (Isaiah 49:15-16)

But Israel answered: "...God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it" (Psalm 10:11).  
"...The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me" (Isaiah 49:14).

I received a letter not long ago written by a young Bible school graduate who had spent years preparing for the ministry. He had looked all over for a job but was turned down every time he tried. Finally, he wrote to a friend saying he was so discouraged, he was tempted to take his own life.

The friend mailed the young man's letter to me. It read: "I can't take any more. I only want to give my talents in ministry to the Lord, but all doors before me are closed. I have no money now, and I'm in despair. There is nothing left for me. I pray and cry out to God, and I hear sermons about trusting God. But I see nothing in my future worth living for. I have no option other than to think about taking my life."

I have prayed for this young man and will continue to do so. But don't be mistaken: His despair is a picture of corruption!

This young man is saying, in essence, "God saved me -- but then He left me floating helplessly like a splinter of wood on the ocean." He has cast away all his confidence in the Lord -- because of a delay! He doesn't know that God is acting on his behalf behind the scenes, working all things together for his good. And He is waiting for that young man to say, "Lord, live or die, I'm going to trust you!" When he comes to that place, God will act speedily!

Each of us becomes corrupted when we carry unnecessary burdens of guilt, fear, loneliness, anxiety, turmoil. It means we are refusing to rest on God's great and precious promises! God doesn't mock His children when He says:

- "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

- "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.... the righteous cry and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles" (Psalm 34:15, 17).

What an incredible sight to behold if the Lord allowed us a glimpse behind the veil, where He is preparing good things for all who call on Him. But because we cannot endure delays, we do as Israel did and turn away from Him -- choosing instead to trust the arm of the flesh!

2. Corruption is Standing Naked Before Your Enemies!"And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)" (Exodus 32:25). The Hebrew word used here for naked is "para," meaning, "to loosen up, expose, dismiss all restraint." It also infers "a new beginning." The Israelites were saying, "Things are not happening as they should. We're tired of this battle, tired of waiting on God. And now we're going to enjoy ourselves. Out with the old! We want new freedom, a new start - and we want it now!"

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Nakedness in the Bible also has to do with not having one's shield. Every man who didn't have his shield was considered naked. These Israelites were literally naked -- stripped down and dancing before the golden calf -- yet they also had laid down their armor.

Can you imagine their enemies, the Amalekites, looking down on this wild scene from the surrounding mountains? These Amalekites once trembled at the very sight of Israel. God had put a dread in their hearts toward His people, so that they could never let down their guard.

But now they saw Israel taking off their armor and stripping off their garments. And the Amalekites were mocking and laughing at them! "Look at them -- they're just like us! Their God has no power. They don't trust Him. See? They're throwing off all their strict ways! They want to lust and party and play just like the rest of us. Some holiness! What hypocrisy!"

In that one act of nakedness, Israel belittled their God in the eyes of the ungodly! They made the Lord seem heartless, cruel, uncaring, helpless. They besmirched His honor, His majesty, His omnipotence. They were no longer an example to the world.

And that is exactly what we do when we strip off our robes of faith and let go of our confidence in God! Without childlike trust in God, a Christian stands naked before the world -- exposed to all doubts, fears and unbelief!

God Has a Special Plan for You, and He Is Working Out Every Detail -- But You Can Jeopardize it! Israel was saying to the world, "We don't want to fight any more enemies. We don't want to resist any longer. We've had enough of rejection and sacrifice, future hopes and far-off blessings. We want to live and enjoy ourselves now!"

Likewise today, there are multitudes of naked believers in the church. These are Christians who are tired of the struggle, the hardships, the long delays, the lonely times, the pains and sorrows. So they set aside all confidence in God. And they talk as if He has forsaken them. Now, they yearn only for good times, fun, laughter, release from the battle.

They turn from all His promises. They reject the secret closet of prayer. They lay aside their Bibles. They forsake going to church. And they begin to drift into a self-centered pursuit of happiness. "No more legalism, no more heaviness," they say. "We want to be free!"

I am shocked by the number of ministers today who are resigning their pastorates. Our ministry receives letters from shepherds who say, "I'm so tired -- I just can't handle it anymore." Some are having nervous breakdowns.

I also listen to many pitiful pleas of ministers and lay people across the nation who call our ministry for counseling. To hear them talk, you'd think God was a tyrant -- that prayer doesn't work and faith is useless!

They have lost their confidence in God! They are living in fear and doubt, thinking God has left them to work everything out for themselves. That, my friend, is corruption!

God sees it and must say, "You make Me appear to be a cruel taskmaster before the whole world, as though I have abandoned you. What kind of testimony is that?" My own opinion is, I think it would be better for you to drink, smoke, curse or fornicate than to make God appear this way before the eyes

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of the world! You have thrown off your garments of faith -- your helmet, your shoes, your shield. You have stripped off all your armor. And you stand naked before a Christ-mocking world!

A beer commercial admonishes our generation to "turn it loose tonight." In other words, "Throw off all your moral inhibitions. Shake free from all laws and please only yourself. Do whatever makes you happy."

Prosperity preachers aren't far from this thinking. Some teach, "Don't wait for pie in the sky. You can have your dream right now! Go after it. Just name it and claim it, and it's all yours!" Even Pentecostals are holding seminars with this message: "You don't have to live such a strict life. God isn't like that. He wants you to relax and enjoy your trip to heaven. It's fun -- relax!"

What appalls me most of all today is the condition of our young people. I am alarmed by what I hear from Christian students. So many of our youth have no relationship with the Lord, no sense of direction. And they have a foreboding fear of the future, more so than any past generation. Few say, "God talks to me." And even fewer say, "I talk to God."

In too many Bible schools the cry is, "Away with all restraints. It's a bunch of legalism!" Each time I preach what may seem a hard message, increasing numbers of students are saying, "I can't handle that kind of preaching. It makes me nervous!"

Too many are becoming corrupt -- not merely because of eroding morals, but because they have not discovered or cultivated a deep confidence in the Lord. They have no bedrock of loyalty to Him. They live according to their emotions, because they have never known or experienced true rest in God. Instead, they live for the moment, doing the best they can with what they have.

They have turned from the Spirit of God to the music of the world -- its manners, its dress, its parties and frivolity. And little by little, they have thrown off what spiritual armor they had left. It is spiritual nakedness -- a rejection of old values and a yearning for fun and pleasure.

I thank God for those students who are growing in the fear and knowledge of our blessed Lord. God has promised to keep a wall of fire about all who trust Him. But basic things like prayer are virtually unknown to most young Christians today.

I believe Satan's main thrust in these last days is to corrupt the entire Christian youth population. He is bent on crushing their trust in God's concern for them. He wants to convince them that faith and prayer are no longer effective in this age of science and reason.

The church needs to fall on its knees for our young people! We need to cry out to God for an awakening of faith and confidence among them toward God. If we do not -- and if the trend continues -- some of our Christian colleges may become the most corrupt places on earth!

3. While Some Were Taking Off Their Clothes, A Holy Remnant Was Putting on Their Armor!"...Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him." And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion [wife], and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men" (Exodus 32:26-28).

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Here is the picture:

The "sons of Levi" were the great grandchildren of Levi -- a man who had been a spiritual wimp! Levi was the son of Jacob who, with his brother Simeon, had made his family to stink before the surrounding heathen. These two brothers each had taken a sword and slain Shechem for raping their sister Dinah. They also killed Shechem's father, Hamor, and took all their sheep, oxen, donkeys, wealth -- even their wives and little ones. What an ugly, horrible picture of Levi!

Yet now his descendants were rising up to do what was right in God's sight: "...And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto (Moses)" (verse 26).

These people didn't have any spiritual heritage to stand on. But something deep within them cried, "We will not bring reproach on the name of our God, as our father did. We will stand for the Lord!"

Moses told them, "If your wife or brother or sister or anyone has danced in front of that golden calf, cut them off! That kind of idolatry cannot be allowed!" Scripture says these men obeyed: "And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses...." (verse 28).

The message here is: You can be the first of a new, holy seed for God -- a new heritage! It doesn't matter what your background is. You can become the mother, father or young person who takes a stand for God -- and who receives His blessing!

God doesn't care about your upbringing. I have spiritual children all over the world whose dad was either a drug addict, alcoholic or pusher, and whose mother either sold drugs or was a prostitute. When these young people came to Jesus, He accepted them and called them to be His servants. And now their own children look up to them. They have become mothers and fathers of Zion!

The Lord only wants to know one thing: Will you pick up your sword and take a stand for righteousness today? Will you take a stand even among family and friends -- among all who stand naked and full of unbelief?

The children of Levi were starting their own tradition of godliness. Each one of them who carried a sword that day had children and grandchildren who looked up to them and remembered them for their godly stand. I ask you fathers: When your children become teenagers, what will they think of you? Will they tell their friends, "My dad is a couch potato. All he does is watch TV and play golf"? Mothers -- what will your children remember about you?

God is calling you right now to do what is holy -- to stand up against the trends of the time! He wants you to be the one people look up to. He wants you to start a new tradition. It doesn't matter whether you're married or single, from a dysfunctional family or a solid one. God wants to put His holy fire in you!

You may say, "But I've already failed. I've already blown my chance! At one time I served the Lord with all my heart. I was anointed, full of faith and trust in Him. All my children and friends looked up to me. But then I sinned and failed God. I've lost it all!"

No -- it is never too late with God! It is never too late to take up your sword and be part of His Levi priesthood. You can start over at any time!

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There is a water fountain in lower Manhattan dedicated to the memory of a man named Jerry Macauley. For years this man was an alcoholic and street bum who backslid time after time. But one day God said, "Enough!" -- and He got hold of Jerry's heart. Jerry started a mission in this city that has been going on now for many decades. When he was buried, the throngs were so huge that traffic stopped in lower Manhattan. This was a man who had blown his inheritance. But he repented - and God gave it all back to him, many times over!

So, what are you going to do? Are you going to quit? Or are you going to put on your sword?

You may ask, "What does it mean to 'slay your naked brothers and sisters'? How do you 'slay' such people nowadays?" You do it by living among them with patience, hope and joy! When everyone around you is giving up the fight, you are building up more and more fight within you. You testify more and more to God's faithfulness, even though you may not see an answer. That will slay everyone around you with shame over their own unbelief.

Oh, the matchless grace of God -- to choose the most unworthy of all people to be His instruments: the sons of Levi! Moses promised them, "Consecrate yourselves to day to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that (God) may bestow upon you a blessing this day" (Exodus 32:25-29).

And God did reward them. He made them a semi-priestly order called the Levites, who were given to the service of God's house.

Dear saint, no matter what your background or heritage, you must step out and declare, "I am on the Lord's side! I will stand against all attacks on His majesty and faithfulness. I will cast down all fears and doubts. And I will deal utterly and finally with all leanings toward worldly pleasure and idolatry. I don't care whether my family or friends have failed I cast my lot with the Lord!"

Is there something inside you urging you on to a higher place in the Lord? Do you feel a fire for Him being ignited within you? Do you sense being drawn to renewed faith and trust in God? Be thankful! That is the voice of your Moses -- Jesus Christ the Lord -- calling you to stand for Him in this evil day!

May God help you to beware of the corruption of doubting His concern for you. And may you wait patiently in faith for God to work all things out for your good. His promise to you is even greater and more precious than His promise to the Levites. He says to you: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Corinthians 2:9).

Will you take up your sword for Him today? Will you stand for His name's sake in this evil hour? Give Him your whole heart, weak as it may be. And He will give you a godly inheritance beyond your greatest dreams! Hallelujah!