

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Numbers: Lessons From Spiritual Casualties And Conquerors
Part XXIX: Resisting Worldliness In Recalling Its Huge Long-term Cost
(Numbers 20:23-29 et al.)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

A big temptation exists today to yield to worldly lusts for quick gratification only to result in long-term loss of God's blessing:

(1) The President recently fell for this temptation in his clash with Catholic bishops over contraception. Though warned for months by many parties both outside and inside the White House that he would face a political backlash if he required Catholics to violate their faith on contraception (Erica Werner, AP, "Obama was warned of contraception backlash," denverpost.com, 2-12-2012), in the desire for votes come November, the President first had his Department of Health and Human Services assert on January 20th that his health-care bill would "force Catholic institutions" to "pay for insurance coverage for abortion-inducing drugs, sterilizations and contraception." (Donald Wuerl, Charles Colson and Meir Y. Soloveichik, "United We Stand for Religious Freedom," The Wall Street Journal, 2-10-2012, p. A13) When not only Catholics, but people of many faiths saw this assertion as an threat of government infringement on First Amendment religious rights ["Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ." (Ibid.; Comp. Ency., vol. 21, 1973, p. 151)], the President offered a "compromise" -- make the insurance companies pay for the controversial services.

Some *liberal* media pundits who are supportive of the President claim it was all a ploy to gain more votes: you first anger conservatives to make them react like extremists while pleasing your liberal base, then "compromise", looking like a moderate to win independent voters.

Regardless, the President's actions alone keep him from God's blessing: (a) he wronged Pro Lifers, upsetting them by asserting they would have to kill unborn babies when he was abundantly warned such an assertion would create such a response, (b) only to alter his stance to say their insurance companies whom they hire could be the "hit men." This "compromise" is worse than his initial assertion, for it uses the power of the presidency to lead citizens who are free of involvement in murder to become guilty of accessory to murder in relief that they themselves won't actually have to kill babies! God must be furious!

(2) At the grassroots level, we all at times face this lure to feed our lusts short-term only to see it dearly cost us in long-term blessing.

So we ask, "How can I be *MOTIVATED* to take the *RIGHT* path *OVER IMMEDIATE WORLDLY LUST GRATIFICATION?!"*

Need: "*How can I say no' to immediate worldly lust gratification?'"*

- I. **Numbers 20:23-29 presents a solemn, tragic scene of the death of Moses' brother, Aaron for yielding to the worldly lust of pride:**
- A. After God led Israel to Mount Hor, He told Moses that Aaron would die there for rebelling with Moses at Meribah, Num. 20:23-24, 2-13.
 - B. Numbers 20:10-11 reports that sin had involved Moses and Aaron in worldly pride claiming they provided Israel water from the rock by striking it versus speaking to it, keeping God from being glorified.
 - C. This sin was committed in public (Num. 20:10a), and Aaron's death was made equally public in a national tragedy, Numbers 20:25-29:
 1. The Lord had Moses take Aaron and his eldest son, Eleazar with him up to the top of Mount Hor, Num. 20:25; 3:4 with Ex. 6:23.
 2. There, Aaron was to be stripped of his outer high priestly garments and see them placed on his son, Eleazar before dying, Num. 20:26.

3. This all occurred in the full view of the people, Num. 20:27-28b.
4. When Moses and Eleazar descended from the Mount, the nation mourned the death of Aaron, its first high priest, Num. 20:28c-29.

II. **However, the HISTORICAL and GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXTS makes this event TEACH the HUGE LONG-TERM COST of QUICK WORLDLY LUST GRATIFICATION more powerful:**

- A. Numbers 20:23 notes Mount Hor was near the border of Edom.
- B. That was the land of Esau's offspring, for he had sold his birthright, or assurance of a double share of his father's inheritance as the eldest son, to his brother, Jacob for instant gratification of hunger via Jacob's "thick soup of red lentils," and "Edom" sounds like the Hebrew word "red" that recalls this event, Genesis 25:30-34 ESV, ftn. to verse 30; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Genesis 25:31.
- C. Hebrews 12:16 claims Esau's despising of his birthright was sin, that it was "worldly and materialistic" (Ibid., ftn. to Heb. 12:16) to choose to meet his immediate hunger need at the cost of his birthright.
- D. So, much as Aaron missed entrance into the Promised Land, Esau also missed access to the Promised Land, having to settle for bare Edom:
 1. Hebrews 12:17 notes the Lord permissively [in allowing the deception of Rebekah and Jacob, Genesis 27] kept Esau from the eldest son's blessing that went with the eldest son's birthright.
 2. If we check the actual account of the blessing, we note his father, Isaac gave to Jacob the blessing: "May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness -- an abundance of grain and new wine" (Genesis 27:28 NIV; cf. ESV) where Esau was told: "Your dwelling will be **away from** the earth's richness, **away from** the dew of heaven above . . ." (Genesis 27:39 NIV; cf. ESV)
 3. Thus, just as Aaron in worldly pride would miss the Promised Land, Esau would similarly dwell in an inhospitable country, missing the Promised Land that the descendants of Jacob would come to possess due to Esau's own worldly act of quick satiation of his hunger by selling his birthright to Jacob for red stew!

III. **Applied to Israel, this lesson that COMBINES by the historical and geographical contexts the DESTINIES of Aaron and Esau was meant to WARN Israel to AVOID INSTANT WORLDLY LUST GRATIFICATION toward ENTERING the PROMISED LAND:**

- A. We learned last week that Israel had to circle around the land of Edom since the Edomites had not let her cross their land, Numbers 20:14-22.
- B. This required journey suggest the same lure of quick lust gratification that Esau faced in selling his birthright and that Aaron faced in proudly claiming he produced the water versus speaking to the rock would occur for Israel: the nation Israel would also face the lure to get just as frustrated at the long, "at risk" march in the desert around the land of Edom, and so complain about the trip, lusting for immediate gratification versus waiting on the Lord for His ultimate blessing.
- C. In the same way, the *tragic death* of *Aaron* at *Mount Hor near* the border of *Edom* was **designed of GOD** to make Israel RECALL the HUGE COST of IMMEDIATE LUST GRATIFICATION: the NATION simply was to RESIST the temptation to COMPLAIN about the LONG, HARD WAY around Edom in PUTTING OFF IMMEDIATE gratification and TRUST GOD to GAIN ACCESS to the PROMISED LAND that BOTH Aaron and Esau missed!

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

A big temptation exists today to yield to worldly lusts for quick gratification only to result in long-term loss of God's blessing:

(1) The President recently fell for this temptation in his clash with Catholic bishops over contraception. Though warned for months by many parties both outside and inside the White House that he would face a political backlash if he required Catholics to violate their faith on contraception (Erica Werner, AP, "Obama was warned of contraception backlash," denverpost.com, 2-12-2012), in the desire for votes come November, the President first had his Department of Health and Human Services assert on January 20th that his health-care bill would "force Catholic institutions" to "pay for insurance coverage for abortion-inducing drugs, sterilizations and contraception." (Donald Wuerl, Charles Colson and Meir Y. Soloveichik, "United We Stand for Religious Freedom," The Wall Street Journal, 2-10-2012, p. A13) When not only Catholics, but people of many faiths saw this assertion as an threat of government infringement on First Amendment religious rights ["Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting

the free exercise thereof . . ." (Ibid.; Comp. Ency., vol. 21, 1973, p. 151)], the President offered a "compromise" -- make the insurance companies pay for the controversial services.

Some *liberal* media pundits who are supportive of the President claim it was all a ploy to gain more votes: you first anger conservatives to make them react like extremists while pleasing your liberal base, then "compromise", looking like a moderate to win independent voters. Regardless, the President's actions alone keep him from God's blessing: (a) he wronged Pro Lifers, upsetting them by asserting they would have to kill unborn babies when he was abundantly warned such an assertion would create such a response, (b) only to alter his stance to say their insurance companies whom they hire could be the "hit men." This "compromise" is worse than his initial assertion, for it uses the power of the presidency to lead citizens who are free of involvement in murder to become guilty of accessory to murder in relief that they themselves won't actually have to kill babies! God must be furious!

(2) At the grassroots level, we all at times face this lure to feed our lusts short-term only to see it dearly cost us in long-term blessing.

So we ask, "How can I be *MOTIVATED* to take the *RIGHT* path *OVER IMMEDIATE WORLDLY LUST GRATIFICATION*?!"

Need: "How can I say no' to immediate worldly lust gratification?"

Application: (1) May we trust in Christ for salvation from sin to become a child of God, John 1:11-12. (2) As believers, may we (a) recall the devastating price Aaron and Esau each paid for quick lust gratification, (b) that we be spurred to (c) rely on the Holy Spirit to obey God for His ultimate blessing! (Galatians 5:16-23)

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

The Lord has used this passage on Aaron's death and its huge lesson to teach me a practical lesson on avoiding worldliness when it comes to diet! I share this with you for your insight and edification:

(1) My genetic blood disorder has led me to a Hematologist who is also an Oncologist, a "cancer doctor," and he informs me that researchers have learned that a diet that is bad for the heart is also bad in the sense of helping to fuel cancer!

(2) Also, a story that appeared in The Wall Street Journal on February 14, 2012 (Jennifer Corbett Dooren, "The Best Foods For Thought, Literally," p. D1) reveals "the Mediterranean diet" has been "long known" to be "good for the heart," but that now researches believe "it may be good for the brain as well." This diet highlights "vegetables, fruits, fish, whole grains, nuts, olive oil and a moderate amount of alcohol" and conversely a "limited consumption of red meat, sweets and refined grains like white bread or white rice." (Ibid.)

Past studies have shown that this diet "is associated with a lower risk of heart disease, stroke and cognitive disorders like Alzheimer's disease." (Ibid.)

(3) In addition, my blood disorder that makes consuming alcohol and red meat unacceptable for me, and I also have a conscience problem about consuming alcohol, so those items are off limits. However, it is clear that **God** would want me to help and not hurt my body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), and by application, to **avoid** immediate lust gratification of consuming lots of sweets, lots of refined grains and lots of other highly processed foods while sticking more to a Mediterranean style diet!

(4) This has recently been strongly enforced! I have been trying to track down an unhealthy issue I face by seeing different doctors, and they conclude that my lack of a spleen (due to my 1990 car accident) has left me with a partially compromised immune system that keeps me vulnerable to yeast infection! I thus have to cut back on sugars and starches that feed yeast -- **I have to apply the Mediterranean diet! I cannot afford to lust for sugars and refined foods -- period!!**

So, may we be SPURRED from the record of Aaron's death to RELY on the Holy Spirit to RESIST IMMEDIATE WORLDLY LUST GRATIFICATION for God's long-term blessings!