INTRO

Rob opened by talking about warning labels—how Americans don't like them but have more of them than anyone. He joked about a steroid warning label giving him a "get out of jail free card" for mood swings.

- **Think of a warning label you've ignored or dismissed. What happened? Looking back, was the warning actually helpful?**

This week's sermon tackled one of the difficult passages found in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:1-7, where Paul uses Israel's wilderness failures—idolatry, grumbling, impatience—as a warning to the church in Corinth.

- **"Avoidance is a short-term solution." Why do you think we're tempted to skip over the harder parts of Scripture?**

IDEA 1

Rob asked the question: How do we hold God's holiness—His untamed, uncontrollable, consuming fire nature—in tension with His compassion, empathy, and deep love that draws near? The story of Exodus 32 reveals this tension vividly. While Moses is on the mountain receiving instructions for the Tabernacle (God's plan to dwell among His people), the Israelites at the base are crafting a golden calf. From a covenant feast to covenant betrayal. From worship of the Creator to worship of a created god. God's holiness is grieved, yet His compassion and faithfulness to His covenant promises remain.

- **How comfortable are you with the idea of God's holiness being "untamed" and "uncontrollable"? Does that image comfort you or unsettle you?**

- **Rob said, "Seasons in the desert expose true hearts and true character." What has a wilderness season revealed about your own heart?**

- **The Israelites wanted a God they could control, understand, and predict. In what ways are you tempted to craft your own version of God—one who endorses your desires, fits your politics, or affirms your preferences?**

- **Rob pointed out that the church often over-emphasizes either God's holiness (leading to legalism and judgment) or His compassion (leading to cheap grace). Where have you seen this imbalance? Where might you personally lean too far in one direction?**

IDEA 2

The Israelites were invited into freedom and flourishing they couldn't even grasp. But instead of surrendering control, they brought their slavery with them—they recreated their bondage by crafting the familiar gods of Egypt. The church in Corinth did the same thing, mixing their new faith in Jesus with practices from Greek temples. Rob used the milkshake analogy: adding things to the pure form doesn't enhance it—it corrupts it. Syncretism—blending the gospel with cultural idols—leads us back into bondage. We exchange God's presence for substitutes and harden our hearts (Hebrews 3).

- **What does it look like to "bring your slavery with you" in a modern context? What old patterns, mindsets, or idols are you tempted to carry into your new life in Christ?**
- **Rob mentioned syncretism—adding cultural "mix-ins" to the pure gospel. Where do you see this happening in the broader church today? In your own life?**
- **The Israelites wanted more control, comfort, and a more understandable God. Which of these three temptations do you struggle with most?**
- **Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 10 is clear: "These things happened as a warning to us." What specific warning do you hear for your own life in this passage?**

EXPERIENCING GOD TOGETHER

A Practice of Confession and Softening

Part 1: Honest Examination (5 minutes)
Read aloud 1 Corinthians 10:6-7: *"These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, or worship idols as some of them did."*

Invite participants to silently reflect on these questions:

- Where am I crafting my own version of God?
- What "slavery" am I bringing with me—old patterns, idols, or substitutes for God's presence?
- Where has my heart grown hard toward God or toward others?

Part 2: Remembering the Cross (Scripture reading)
Read aloud together Romans 8:1-2: "So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death."

Prompt: "Christ on the cross is where holiness and compassion meet without compromise. His holiness covers you. The Spirit empowers you. You are not condemned—you are called out and called beloved."

EXPERIENCING GOD TOGETHER

Part 3: Prayer for Soft Hearts
Read aloud Colossians 3:12-15 as a group prayer: "Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts."

In groups of 2-3, share one area where you need God to soften your heart—toward Him, toward yourself, or toward someone else. Pray for one another, asking the Holy Spirit to:

- Reveal any idols or substitutes we've crafted
- Keep our hearts tender and teachable
- Empower us to live as a called-out people who represent God to the world

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

ick one or more of the following prompts to practice this week:

- Examine Your "Add-Ins": Take inventory of your spiritual life. Are you adding cultural "mix-ins" to the pure gospel—performance, piety, political ideology, or other idols? Journal about what needs to be left behind so you can walk in freedom.
- Memorize Romans 8:1-2: Let this truth anchor you: "There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus." When you're tempted to fear God's holiness, remember His compassion covers you through Christ.
- Identify Your Idols: Rob asked, "Are you crafting your own God?" Spend time in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to reveal any ways you've tried to control, manipulate, or reshape God to fit your preferences. Confess and surrender those areas.
- Cultivate Tenderness: Read Colossians 3:12-15 daily. Each day, choose one quality (mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience) and ask the Holy Spirit to help you embody it in a specific relationship or situation.
- Reflect on the Tension: Spend time meditating on both God's holiness (Exodus 19-20, Isaiah 6, Revelation 4) and His compassion (Psalm 103, Lamentations 3:22-23, John 3:16). Journal about how holding both realities together shapes your understanding of God and your calling.
- Walk in Confidence: If you've been living in fear of God's judgment, remind yourself daily: "I am clothed in Christ's righteousness. The Holy Spirit empowers me. I am a called-out person, beloved and commissioned."