

I Corinthians Lesson # 22
The Example of Israel for Christians
Warnings Against Idolatry
Pentwater Bible Church
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1 Corinthians 10:1-4 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 followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

The God of the Universe has blessed the Jews. Paul is declaring this to us and to the Corinthians so that we will be abundantly aware of what can happen to God's children when we engage in sinful behavior. They had five distinct advantages over other cultures.

1. They enjoyed Supernatural guidance. All the liberated Israelites enjoyed the supernatural guidance (Exodus 13:21) and protection (Exodus 14:19-20) of the pillar of cloud in their Exodus from Egypt. The Corinthians had similarly experienced God's guidance (Luke 1:79 Give light) and protection (1 Peter 1:5 God keeps us).
2. They all experienced miraculous deliverance from those who sought to take their lives (Exodus 14:21-28). So too had the Corinthians experienced a miraculous deliverance—salvation (Hebrews 2:14-15 Deliverance from Spiritual bondage; Galatians 1:4 Christ gave Himself for our deliverance).
3. They were all baptized into their Spiritual deliverer. (Moses) that is, united with their spiritual head, God's servant, who became the object of their trust (Exodus 14:31; cf. John 5:45)? The Corinthians had been baptized into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13) of which He is the Head (Ephesians 1:22) and in whom they trusted (Matthew 12:21; Ephesians 1:12)
4. They had Spiritual Food from heaven the supernatural bread from heaven (Ex. 16:4, 15). The Corinthians too had eaten bread from heaven (John 6:31-34 Christ is the Bread from Heaven). They had Spiritual drink which was Christ who gave them water from a rock
5. The spiritual drink enjoyed by Israel in the desert (Exodus 17:6). Christ was the source of this supernatural water. The rock, which produced water, marked the beginning of Israel's wilderness wanderings (Exodus 17:1-7) and happened again near the ending of their wanderings. (Numbers 20:1-13) Christ accompanied them. Christ too was the source of supernatural water for the Corinthians (John 4:10-14 Jesus is Living Water).

This section of Scripture is a perfect example of what happens to people that claim to be saved, experience God's blessings and then turn against Him by living sinful lives.

The Jews thought that since God blessed them with Supernatural experiences, they were invulnerable. They could live any way they wanted to because they were special and on the way to heaven.

These five blessings are intended to reflect the two ordinances of baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1-2) and the Lord's Supper (vv. 3-4), which the Corinthians may have thought communicated a magical protection like similar rites in some of the mystery religions. The Corinthians did seem to have a distorted view and practice of both of these ordinances (cf. 11:17-34; 15:29), which required correction.

1 Corinthians 10: 5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

The presence of supernatural experiences in Ancient Israel did not draw them closer to God. On the contrary, in spite of their special advantages, all but two members of one generation, Joshua and Caleb received God's discipline, were disqualified, and died in the desert (Numbers 14:29). In light of this, Paul's avowed need for personal self-discipline (1 Corinthians 9:27 Bringing the body in subjection to Christ's will) was genuine since even Moses was disqualified for the prize (Numbers 20:12).

1 Corinthians 10: 6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

One of the most important reasons for knowing the Old Testament is the example that the Jews provide. For us it means that Christian freedom was not meant to lead to self-indulgence but to selfless service (Galatians 5:13 Christian liberty is not to serve the flesh), as the behavior of past Israelites illustrated. Following the fivefold blessing enjoyed by Israel in their freedom from bondage in Egypt, Paul recounts a fivefold failure experienced by Israel during this time. Starting with the Israelites' craving for the pleasures of Egypt, summarized in their cry, "Give us meat to eat!" (Numbers 11:4-34, esp. v. 13) God gave them what they wanted but while the meat was still between their teeth, He struck them with a plague. The Israelites named the cemetery for those who were killed "Kibroth Hattaavah" ("graves of craving"; Numbers 11:34). The application to the Corinthian situation was obvious (1 Corinthians 8:13 don't eat food sacrificed to idols if it will cause a brother or sister to sin).

1 Corinthians 10: 7 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.

Most of the Israelites failed by committing idolatry (Ex. 32:1-6) and paid for it with their lives (Exodus 32:28, 35). Some Corinthians were interested in more than just food in the pagan temples (1 Corinthians 8:10; 10:14). For those who thought they as Christians could take part in idolatry with no repercussions, Paul gave illustrations like this, to get them to look at the situation clearly from God's view (verse 12) before God intervened and took their lives. If you are truly called into Christianity and continue to sin, God will bring an early end to your career.

1 Corinthians 10: 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

The expression in the previous verse “rose up to play” means they were engaging in sexual immorality. This is what in common parlance is called group sex. In the Israelites’ case the immorality was associated with idolatry (Numbers 25:1-2), which also characterized much pagan worship in the first century. The activity and celebration of sex outside marriage is commonly associated with idolatry. People start to worship sex without Godly sanction and fall into idolatry. The Corinthians indulged in immorality in contexts other than idolatry, as the instances of rebuke in 1 Corinthians 5:1 and 6:18 illustrate. As God had brought death to the immoral among the Israelites (Numbers 25:4-9), He could do in Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:5 delivery to Satan). This should be a sobering thought us.

One explanation of the 24,000 in Numbers (Paul’s number is 23,000) is that the former included the leaders (Numbers 25:4), whereas the latter did not. It just might be scribal error or Paul says one day and the Numbers entry speaks to the total in the plague, which lasted more than one day.

1 Corinthians 10: 9-10 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.

Those who love the Lord will not test Him to see how much sin we can get away with. This is also known as not taking the Lord at His word. That is, not believing sections of the Bible or failing to learn it and thereby assuming if you don’t know it you are not responsible for following it. Grumbling or murmuring is not wanting to follow God’s will for us and complaining about our lot in life. Sometimes God will move us to different situations and we must be ready to prayerfully accept them. He sent snakes into the ancient Israelites to kill them for their sin until they repented (Numbers 21:4-6).

1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

God’s dealings with Israel were examples (v. 6) and warnings for the Corinthians and us that the God of the universe who is controls all things, will bring His disciplined to us as He did to the Israelites with death and would do so again (1 Corinthians 11:30).

1 Corinthians 10: 12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Anybody that thinks they can get away with sin is wrong and continued sin will show them they are dead wrong.

1 Corinthians 10: 13 There hath 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.

Temptations come into the believer's life as in each person on earth. A temptation in and of itself is not sinful. God will not always remove the temptation but he will offer a way out. He will always provide a safe path away from the temptation to sin. Self-discipline comes into play when we stop at the first temptation to sin and look for the way out. The temptation and not yielding to it will produce the character God seeks to produce in His children (James 1:12).

I Corinthians 10: 14-15 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

We must not dabble in sin and the case of the Corinthians in this instance it was idolatry. Fleeing any sin is the answer as well as enduring a temptation that we cannot remove in our lives. God will honor us when we flee from sin and the wisdom he imparts at the point of belief will enable us to realize the truth of these teachings.

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