

High Peaks Bible Fellowship

Warnings About Abusing Liberty 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Introduction

- In first Corinthians chapter nine the apostle Paul illustrated the principle of yielding personal rights by giving his own example of yielding his apostolic right to the support of the churches.
- Now in first Corinthians chapter ten the apostle Paul continues to illustrate this same principle by describing some events from the history of his people Israel.



An Old Testament Example of Freedom (1 Cor 10:1-5)

The Privileges of the Israelites (1 Cor 10:1-4)

- Paul gave the perfect biblical example of true freedom under God from the life of his own people, Israel.
- "Our fathers" = in a general sense, this means those who have gone before us. In a specific sense, this points to the fathers of the nation of Israel, Paul's own people, whose story is recorded in the Old Testament.
- "Were all under the cloud" (see Exodus 13:21) = this illustrates Divine guidance.
- "Passed through the sea" (see Exodus 14:19-22) = this illustrates Divine deliverance.
- In the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, people have only been saved through personal faith in God. The Exodus represented God calling His chosen people, both believers and unbelievers, out of their bondage in Egypt and His deliverance of them into the promised land.
- "Were baptized into Moses" = Just as baptism is an outward sign of union or identification with something or someone, this phrase expressed a sense of unity as a community or nation under Moses as their divinely appointed leader.
- "Ate the same spiritual food" (see Exodus 16:15) = this illustrates Divine sustenance.
- "Drank the same spiritual drink" (see Exodus 17:6) = also illustrates Divine sustenance.
- "A spiritual rock which followed them; and that rock was Christ" = The word Paul used for rock was not *petros*, a large stone or boulder, but *petra*, a massive rock cliff. Twice God had used a large stone or boulder to provide water for Israel (Exodus 17:6; Num 20:11). But the spiritual rock that followed them in the wilderness was not those physical stones. The Lord Jesus Christ was (in a figurative sense) a massive supernatural rock that protected the Israelites and sustained them.

The Failure of Most of Them (1 Cor 10:5)

- Now notice the direct contrast in the word most rather than all that was used in the first four verses.
- "God was not well-pleased" = In the original language, the word *not* is placed toward the front of the sentence for emphasis.
- "They were laid low in the wilderness" (see Numbers 14:29-30) = the Old Testament itself gives the historical consequences of the rebellion of the Israelites.
- Despite the great privileges given to them by God, the Israelites did not please God. In the next section we will see exactly how they did not please God, but here we need to understand that great privilege or blessing does not guarantee holiness of life.

The Destructive Use of Liberty (1 Cor 10:6-10)

- "These things happened as examples for us" = in an ethical sense, the word for *example* means a dissuasive example, a pattern of warning, so that others after them do not follow their example.
- "That we ourselves would not be cravers of evil things" = to lust after, to covet, to long for things that are forbidden or have not been given by God.

LUST

- Numbers 11:4-34; Psalm 78:27-31
- Lust is mentioned first because it was what led to the very first sin in the Garden of Eden. It is the desire for something outside of God's provision.

IDOLATRY

- Exodus 32:1-6
In this incident, the Israelites took part in a feast to an idol, the golden calf.
- It was a common practice in Corinth to celebrate a community feast that was being held in honor of an idol, so this incident in the life of Israel was especially appropriate for cautioning the Corinthians against the danger of participating in the feasts celebrated in the pagan temples.
- Many of the Corinthian Christians were confident in their own spiritual standing or strength, and they became careless about participating in activities where false gods were worshiped. They thought they could associate with such pagan activities without being spiritually harmed, but they were in grave danger of slipping into sin.

IMMORALITY

- Numbers 25:1-9
Twenty-four thousand of the Israelites actually died because of this incident, but here Paul points out that twenty-three thousand of them fell dead in a single day!
- Idolatry and sexual immorality were almost always found together in the pagan religions. In Corinth this was especially prominent, since the main temple to Aphrodite had a thousand ritual prostitutes.
- The Corinthian Christians thought they could participate in such a corrupt culture without being corrupted themselves, but Paul warned them strongly against such overconfidence.

FAITHLESSNESS

- Numbers 21:4; Psalm 78:18
To *try* the Lord is to test His patience by seeing how far you can push the boundary lines that He has placed around your life for your own protection. The Israelites did not use their new freedom to serve *God* better -- instead they demanded that He serve *them* better.

DISCONTENT

- Numbers 14:2, 11-12; 16:41, 49
Grumbling is the manifestation of discontent, and it is a direct attack on God's character. Elsewhere in First Corinthians the apostle Paul referred to Satan as an agent of destruction (1 Cor 5:5) as well as to how abusing the Lord's Supper had led to physical affliction (1 Cor 11:30), so some of the Corinthians had already experienced this consequence of abusing their Christian liberty.

Drawing the Analogy (1 Cor 10:11)

- "Now these things happened to them as an example" = see 1 Cor 10:6 where Paul literally said, "Now these things examples *for us* became." Here he literally says, "Now these things as examples transpired *to them*." Because of his emphasis on them, Paul added another phrase to show the purpose for these events being

recorded in the Scriptures.

- "They were written for our instruction" (*nouthesia*) = to admonish, exhort, or give a warning, just as the word example indicated a "dissuasive example or pattern of warning."
- "Upon whom the ends of the ages have come" = here Paul indicated that the time in which he was living, which has continued through to our own time, is bringing to completion the last days of human history before the Messiah will come to establish His kingdom. This is quite a different age from that of the Israelites living in the wilderness, but we can learn a valuable lesson from their experiences. Here Paul wanted to apply the lessons seen in the life of his people to the believers in Corinth.

The Truth to be Applied (1 Cor 10:12)

- "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall" = This is the major lesson that Paul wants us to learn from what he has just said about the failure of the Israelites, despite the great blessings that had been given to them.
- "Think you stand" = This is a perfect way of describing over-confidence, prideful self-sufficiency, or a false sense of security in one's own spirituality. There is always a danger of falling into sin, and no amount of spiritual privilege can justify a lack of caution.
- Arguments about Christian freedom and the right to do some questionable thing are seldom a matter of mere freedom, but there is a real danger of falling into sin. As over-confidence increases, so does carelessness -- and as carelessness increases, so does the risk of moving in the direction of sin.

Encouragement from God's Faithfulness (1 Cor 10:13)

- "Temptation" (*peirasmos*) = a testing or proving. In the original language, this word did not have a negative connotation -- it was not necessarily a bad thing. Our personal response to the situation is what determines whether it is positive or negative.
- "Such as is common to man" (*anthropinos*) = human-like, characteristic of belonging to mankind. Temptations are normal human experiences that are common to all of mankind, so you don't have to be super-human in order to resist them.
- "God is faithful" = see 1 Cor 1:9 where Paul began this letter by proclaiming the absolute faithfulness of God. Now again Paul encouraged the believers at Corinth to trust in the faithfulness of God and to depend on His strength to do what is right.
- "Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able" = God is sovereign over all the circumstances of our lives. Just as we can trust in His faithfulness, we can also trust in His control over our lives, and we can rely on His power to handle whatever comes our way.
- "Will provide the way of escape" (*ekbasis*) = the way out, the exit! The definite article with this word clearly points to a *definite* way of escape provided by God.
- "You will be able to endure it" = to bear up under something. When believers rely on the strength and resources of God, they will be able to bear up under the circumstances of life that God allows. Even when they fail, believers can still rely on the strength of God to handle their failure in the right way and rely on God to forgive and restore.

Conclusion

- Paul ended this section with a wonderful promise for the Christian life because the Corinthians seemed to be doing the opposite of what he was advising. It is as if Paul were saying, "You Corinthians should not run *toward* temptation!" This seemed to be exactly what some of them were doing by participating in the feasts at pagan temples.
- God's faithfulness is wonderful, but we should not become overconfident as a result of all the blessings and privileges He has provided for us, thinking that we are immune from falling into sin.
- Abusing our Christian liberty will lead us directly into sin, and we will harm ourselves, other believers, and the reputation of God.
- Questions to ask yourself:
 1. What are some of the great privileges and blessings that God has given to you?

2. In what ways are you becoming overconfident in your spirituality, so that you are getting too close to sin?
3. Are you pleasing God today by your humble dependence upon Him for the things He has brought into your life?

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