

Lesson 7 16 March 2014

Warnings From Israel's History

Lesson Scope: [1 Corinthians 10:1-15](#)

Lesson Focus

This passage is found in the middle of Paul's discussion of Christian liberty. He concluded chapter 9 by expressing his concern that he not become a castaway after he had witnessed the power of God's grace. Then he began chapter 10 by using Israel as an example of how this can happen. Though God led them by the pillar of cloud and provided for them in many miraculous ways, they did not love Him enough to obey Him. They fell into sin and experienced His judgment. "With many of them God was not well pleased" (10:5).

This lesson is a warning against arrogance in exercising Christian liberty. The fact that we have tasted the spiritual blessings of salvation does not remove the risk of falling away. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (10:12).

Israel's failures and God's dealings with them "are written for our admonition." We must heed these warnings lest we fall into sin as Israel did. Looking at Israel's history, we can easily see their weaknesses and may wonder why they were not more faithful to the Lord. But today is our day. How are we faring in our generation? Disrespect for authority and murmuring abound in our world, and they can easily trickle into the church. If we cannot be faithful to God and His church, it will be very difficult to convince the world of truth.

May God give you grace to make this lesson practical to yourself and others.

Lesson Aim: To learn principles from Israel's history that will preserve the church today.

Theme Verses: [Hebrews 3:12-13](#). Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Lesson Text

Wise Interpretation

1 [Corinthians 10:1-5](#) ¹ 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; ² And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ³ And did all eat the same spiritual meat; ⁴ And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. ⁵ But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Carnal Appeal

1 [Corinthians 10:6-10](#) ⁶ Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 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. ⁸ Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. ⁹ Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. ¹⁰ Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Spiritual Opportunity

1 [Corinthians 10:11-15](#) ¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. ¹² Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 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*. ¹⁴ Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵ I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

Questions for Study

Spiritual Opportunity

1. Enumerate some blessings that all Israel experienced.
2. Why did many of Israel fail?
3. How can we benefit from studying church history?

Carnal Appeal

4. How did Israel tempt Christ?
5. How might we murmur as the Israelites did?
6. What tragic results does sin bring?

Wise Interpretation

7. How does God help us gain the victory?
8. What part do we have in experiencing victory?

Analyzing the Passage

"Under the cloud" (1 Corinthians 10:1) refers to the pillar of cloud by day. God led Israel by a pillar of fire by night. These were symbols of God's presence, leading, and protection (Exodus 13:21-22).

"Baptized unto Moses" (1 Corinthians 10:2) may be based on Psalm 77:16-20. Baptism is a rite of identity that brings one under the authority of his master. The Israelites were committed to Moses' leadership.

"Spiritual meat" (1 Corinthians 10:3) refers to the manna that Israel received throughout the forty years of wandering. This is the "bread from heaven" mentioned in John 6:31.

"Overthrown in the wilderness" (10:5) is an apt description of Israel's demise. Their wilderness experience was one long story of death, because of their unbelief.

To "tempt Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:9) means "to prove or test His character or power." See Numbers 21:4-6 for the Old Testament account.

"The ends of the world" (10:11) can be understood as this present time. Compare Hebrews 9:26 and 1 Peter 1:20. Both Peter and Paul believed that their time was the last opportunity.

Principles and Applications

Spiritual Opportunity

1. The lessons of history are a valuable resource in preserving the church (1 Corinthians 10:1, 11). People from generations before us have faced the same enemy and many of the same tests in church life as we do. We are blessed with literature that has been written about the church in the past. The victories give us courage, and the failures challenge us to avoid making similar mistakes.
2. The church will be preserved when it carefully follows divine direc-

tion (1 Corinthians 10:1). As Moses followed God's direction and the people followed Moses' leading, they were saved from the hands of the Egyptians. "And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians" (Exodus 14:31). They followed a visible pillar, which was a symbol of God's presence. The church today is guided by the Holy Spirit, who dwells within the believer. He enlightens us as we read the Scriptures and shows us the way to go.

3. The church will be preserved when personal conviction inspires her members to practical obedience to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 10:2-5). The children of Israel all experienced God's blessings and guidance, but group victory did not result. Did so many fail because they had a weak leader? Definitely not! Their failure was a result of individual failure to accept God's provisions and follow His directions.

The same story has happened over and over. Many who lost out spiritually in past apostate settings did not necessarily fail because they lacked strong leaders. They failed because personal conviction was lacking and obedience to the Scriptures was lost. Faith must be kept alive in our hearts in order to preserve a Biblical church for our posterity.

4. Submission to authority is imperative for success (1 Corinthians 10:2). Baptism is voluntary, and it involves a lifelong commitment to the cause of Jesus Christ. Part of that commitment is submission to the authority of the church leaders God has placed over us. We may not always agree with or understand the direction they give, but joyful submission to spiritual leadership is always blessed by God.

5. Spiritual nourishment from divine resources is essential for preserving the church (1 Corinthians 10:3-4). The manna in the wilderness foreshadowed Jesus, "the living bread which came down from heaven." The water from the rock typified the living water that Jesus offered to the woman at the well. Daily feeding on the Word of God provides satisfaction and strength for success.

Carnal Appeal

6. Crucifying fleshly lusts is essential for faithfulness (1 Corinthians 10:6-8). Idolatry and fornication went hand in hand as God's people turned from God to idols. Satan still makes sin attractive through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. As we stay close to the Word and to our brethren, we can crucify our carnal desires.

7. The destructive nature of sin must be clearly understood (1 Corinthians 10:8-10). Sin brought serious consequences upon the Israelites. Many fell into sin because of the influence of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. After the ground swallowed up these men, others murmured by saying, "Ye have killed the people of the LORD." Consequently, thousands more died from the plague.

Sin is no less dangerous today. Ingratitude and disrespect for authority may start out small, but if allowed to grow, they will destroy not only us but also others whom we influence.

8. Murmuring militates against efforts to preserve the church (1 Corinthians 10:9-10). The Israelites tempted Christ by complaining about the manna God was providing. They said, "Our soul loatheth [despiseth] this light [worthless] bread" (Numbers 21:5).

A murmuring spirit is ultimately rebellion against God. God wills that we give thanks in everything (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Unpleasant circumstances in life challenge our thankfulness, but the unfailing presence and power of God are always cause for gratitude.

Wise Interpretation

9. The church can be preserved when each member understands that none is exempt from failure (1 Corinthians 10:12). The knowledge that we can fail will help us to be vigilant against our enemy. When everything seems to be going well, beware. Success is our goal, but it is also fertile ground for self-confidence, which leads us astray (Deuteronomy 8:11-17).

10. God makes available to man all the resources that are needed to preserve the church (10:13). God's work in preserving us when we are tempted is twofold. He screens the temptations that come to us, and He provides the way to victory over the temptations that He allows. As we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, that way of escape becomes clear to us. It may be through praying, quoting Scripture, singing, or even physically escaping a seductive environment. A victorious church is a result of victorious members.

11. Fleeing from idolatry is a spiritual imperative (1 Corinthians 10:14). Paul's double warning against idolatry should remind us that idolatry is much closer to us than literally bowing to graven images. Many things are bidding to replace our worship of the true God. "But thanks be to

God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Important Teachings

1. The lessons of history are a valuable resource in preserving the church (1 Corinthians 10:1, 11).
2. The church will be preserved when it carefully follows divine direction (1 Corinthians 10:1).
3. The church will be preserved when personal conviction inspires her members to practical obedience to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 10:2-5).
4. Submission to authority is imperative for success (1 Corinthians 10:2).
5. Spiritual nourishment from divine resources is essential for preserving the church (1 Corinthians 10:3-4).
6. Crucifying fleshly lusts is essential for faithfulness (1 Corinthians 10:6-8).
7. The destructive nature of sin must be clearly understood (1 Corinthians 10:8-10).
8. Murmuring militates against efforts to preserve the church (1 Corinthians 10:9-10).
9. The church can be preserved when each member understands that none is exempt from failure (1 Corinthians 10:12).
10. God makes available to man all the resources that are needed to preserve the church (1 Corinthians 10:13).
11. Fleeing from idolatry is a spiritual imperative (1 Corinthians 10:14).

Answers to Questions

1. Enumerate some blessings that all Israel experienced.
All Israel benefited from the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. (Note that this was one of the keys to deliverance at the Red Sea.) They all safely passed through the Red Sea, led by their faithful leader, Moses. In the wilderness they all benefited from manna until they passed over Jordan into the Promised Land. They all received water out of the rock.
2. Why did many of Israel fail?
Israel's failure as a group was largely a result of individual failure and disobedience. Ingratitude spread its leaven through the group. They

could not enter into the Promised Land because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:19).

3. How can we benefit from studying church history?

Success in the past inspires us to the same today. The failures in history challenge us to avoid similar errors. Noticing what the enemy used in the past can better equip us to recognize and fight our battles.

4. How did Israel tempt Christ?

They questioned the ability of God to lead them through the wilderness to the Promised Land. "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" (Numbers 21:5). They blamed God when it was because of their own sin that they were still in the wilderness.

5. How might we murmur as the Israelites did? We may question God because of our trying circumstances, or even blame Him for them. Unthankfulness and disrespect for God-ordained leadership is as serious today as it was in Israel's day.

6. What tragic results does sin bring?

Sin is a vicious downhill spiral that affects one's eternal destiny. Sin has great potential to influence others to go astray. It gives occasion for the enemies of God to blaspheme.

7. How does God help us gain the victory?

He gave us the example of Christ, who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He does not allow greater temptation than we are able to overcome through His power. Because of His faithfulness, resources for victory are always available.

8. What part do we have in experiencing victory?

Staying close to the Word and memorizing it provide us with a powerful weapon when we face temptation. Daily exercising ourselves in prayer, staying away from corrupting influences as much as possible, and making a covenant with our eyes and mind are ways that aid in experiencing victory.

Summarizing the Lesson

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:1-2).

Research Guide

1. Read the following accounts of the Israelites' experience: Red Sea experience—Exodus 14

Worship of golden calves—Exodus 32

Accounts of failure that are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 10:8-10—Numbers 16; 21:5-7; 25:1-9.

2. Read the verses under "Murmuring" in Nave's Topical Bible.