

### A Warning for Christians

#### 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

1 Corinthians 10:1-13: *“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7 And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” 8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

#### Background Notes

The apostle Paul began a section of this letter on the proper use of Christian liberty in 1 Corinthians 8. By “Christian liberty.” we mean the freedom that believers enjoy in Christ. We are free from the penalty of sin. We are free from the rituals and restrictions of the Old Testament Law. We are free to enjoy our new life in Christ.

However, we are **not free from the moral laws of God**, because we are now under the law of Christ (v21). The law of Christ contains all the moral laws of God, so Christian liberty does not free us from the moral laws of God.

Furthermore, even in the non-moral areas, we should restrict our Christian liberty so that weaker believers won't be stumbled or hindered in their Christian growth. By “weaker believers,” we don't mean the Christian legalists who “nit-pick” and find fault with almost everything other believers do, and who judge everyone's spirituality by their own set of standards. No. Weaker believers are newer and younger believers in the faith, who are not yet knowledgeable in the Word of God, and are not yet mature in Christ.

Flaunting your Christian liberty may hinder the Christian growth of young and immature believers. For example, inviting new Jewish believers to your house for a backyard pig roast would not be the right use of your Christian liberty. The new Jewish believers might have a tender conscience about eating pork, and could be stumbled in their Christian growth.

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul used himself as an example and illustration of what it means to restrict our Christian liberty in the interest of serving the Lord and His people. Although Paul had certain rights and privileges as an apostle and servant of the Lord, including financial support, he gave up these rights so no one would be able to accuse him of being “in the ministry for the money,” or for what he could get out of it.

In chapter 9 Paul taught that serving the Lord and using our Christian liberty in the proper way takes a lot of self-denial and self-discipline. Look at the last verse of the chapter. *“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”* Remember, “disqualified” here does not mean he would lose his salvation. He was referring to Christian service and reward.

In chapter 10 Paul used the children of Israel in their wilderness wanderings as a negative example. The Israelites did not practice self-denial and self-discipline when they were in the wilderness, and they were thus disqualified from entering the Promised Land.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The events from Egypt to Canaan are a spiritual picture for God’s people.

In this account of the sins of nation of Israel as they journeyed from Egypt to Canaan, the word **“example”** is used in both verses 6 and 11. This is the Greek word *typos* or “type”. A “type” is an Old-Testament person, place, event, or other item which pictures New Testament truth. So the whole journey of Israel from Egypt to Canaan is a spiritual picture of the Christian life. That’s why the word **“spiritual”** is used in verses 3 and 4 for the manna and the water in the wilderness. They *“all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”*

The manna was *real* bread that fell on the camp each day - but it was spiritual in that it pictured or typified Jesus Christ as our Living Bread from Heaven. The water that flowed from a *real* rock was *real* water – but it was a spiritual picture of Jesus Christ, the Living Water for our souls.

Verse 4 says that the rock followed them. Jesus Christ, the true Rock, was with them throughout their wilderness wanderings. This was emphasized in the spiritual picture,

in that the people of Israel drank water from the Rock both at the beginning of their journey (Exodus 17) and at the end of their forty years in the wilderness (Numbers 21).

So the events from Egypt to Canaan are a spiritual picture for God's people. Coming out of Egypt after applying the blood of the Passover lamb to their home is a picture of salvation. When we recognize Jesus Christ as the true Passover Lamb and trust in Him who shed His blood for us, we, too, are delivered from the slavery of sin and Satan.

In the spiritual picture, entering, conquering and occupying Canaan represents the ideal state of the Christian life - enjoying our spiritual blessings in Christ and successfully fighting our spiritual battles in the power of Christ. This is the ideal, but too often we are like the children of Israel. We fall short of all the blessings and victories that we could experience. Why? Because we continue to commit the "sins of the wilderness."

So the failings of the Israelites in the wilderness are also part of the picture of the Christian life. Unfortunately, many Christians spend most of their lives wandering in the wilderness of Christian experience. The events from Egypt to Canaan are a spiritual picture for God's people.

## **2. The events from Egypt to Canaan are a spiritual warning to God's people.**

This portion of Scripture was not included in the Bible only for us to appreciate the fact that Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan is an Old Testament type, a spiritual picture of the Christian life. It is also included as a warning for us! God doesn't want believers to make the same mistakes that Israel made, and thus fall short of the blessings and victories that He has for us.

Notice that **all** of the people of Israel came out of Egypt, and **all** crossed the Red Sea, and **all** were guided by the cloud, and **all** were under the leadership of Moses, and **all** ate the manna, and **all** drank the miraculously provided water. But **all** did **not** enter the land of Canaan. In fact, most of them did not! Verse 5-8: "*But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them, Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did.*"

The end of verse 8 says that in one day, 23,000 of them fell. According to Numbers 25, where this event is recorded, a total of 24,000 died. But this is not a contradiction in the Bible. A *total* of 24,000 died during this entire event, but 23,000 of the 24,000 died *in one day alone*.

Verse 9: *“Let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents.”* (See Numbers 21 for this event.) Verse 10: Let us not *“complain, as some of them also complained.”* All of the sins in the wilderness (they’re recorded in the book of Numbers) kept the people out of the land of blessing and rest.

The same will be true in our lives. If we are true believers, the sins in the wilderness will not result in a loss of our salvation, but they will keep us from obtaining the blessing and reward and joy that the Lord has for us in this life.

Notice the emphasized warning in verse 12: ***“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”*** The events from Egypt to Canaan are a spiritual warning to God’s people.

## Practical Application

### Look for the way of escape!

Verse 13, *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”*

Verse 13 is a wonderful verse to memorize. In view of the warning to watch out that we don’t commit the same sins of the wilderness that Israel committed, the Lord gives us a three-fold promise to encourage us.

1. *No temptation or test has overtaken you except such as is common to man.* The word “temptation” here includes both solicitation to sin and test of our faith. So you can never say “no one has ever been tempted or tested like this before.” That is part of the promise. You’re not alone! *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man.”*
2. *God is faithful. He won’t allow you to be tempted or tested beyond what you are able to handle.* God knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows our limits, and He won’t allow any temptation to sin or test of our faith that is beyond the limits of our endurance. You can never say that you *had* to sin because the temptation was just too much, or that you *had* to fail because the test of your faith was just too great. It’s a promise!
3. *God will always provide a way of escape so that you can endure.* See it there at the end of verse 13? *“But with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”* It may not be obvious, but look for the “way of escape.” It may be a change of circumstances. It may be the help of a fellow believer. It may be just the right portion of Scripture for the situation. Look for the way of escape.