

Spiritual Overconfidence
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
March 21st, 2021

1. Learn from _____ examples of overconfidence. (10:1-10)
 - a. _____ of the Israelites experienced deliverance from Egypt and God's miraculous provision. (vv. 1-4)
 - b. _____ of the Israelites failed to walk faithfully in the wilderness. (vv. 5-10)
2. _____ of your own spiritual overconfidence. (10:11-12)
3. But God is always _____ to provide a way of _____ when facing temptation. (10:13)

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

1. Why were the Israelites able to experience such blessings during the exodus (10:1-4) and yet still turn from God in important ways (10:5-10)? What does that reveal about human nature, the experience of temptation, etc.?
2. Why is it significant that Paul refers to the Israelites as "our fathers" when speaking to a Gentile church? What does this whole passage (especially vv. 6 and 11) tell us about the relationship between Christians, the Israelites, and the Old Testament stories? (see also Romans 4:9-17)
3. In what sense was the rock that the Israelites drank from in the wilderness Christ? (Ex. 17:1-7) What does that tell us about Jesus' involvement in the Old Testament? What does that tell us about Jesus' identity?
4. What leads to spiritual overconfidence for a Christian so that we need to be warned to "take heed that he does not fall" in v. 12? Do you see that in your own life?
5. What hope does v. 13 provide to someone experiencing sin and temptation?
6. How does v. 13 counter common misunderstandings about the experience of temptation?

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Big idea: Overconfidence in spiritual experiences makes us vulnerable to falling into sin. We must take heed.

Intro

In high school I worked as a river guide on the Salmon River near my hometown. We would take guests on 5 day trips through the Frank Church Wilderness to areas accessible only by boat, horse, or on foot. I was too young to be a licensed guide so I would assist other guides and got plenty of time on the oars as we navigated rapids. After a few trips my first summer, I had a chance to run Salmon Falls, a narrow slot between two large granite boulders with a pretty significant drop. I hit it just right and was talking with some of the guides that night about it and one of the seasoned guides just said, "Don't get cocky."

As a 16 year old, I didn't like that. I probably still wouldn't like hearing that. But he was right. There's a danger with overconfidence on the river because it leads to taking chances that aren't wise, like failing to scout out a section of the river because you think you know it and getting yourself in trouble.

There is a danger from spiritual overconfidence. Someone thinks – I've been baptized, I take communion, I attend church regularly, I've grown through different challenges...and they let their guard down.

The key command in this section is in v. 12 – Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.

How does this fit in context of freedom and food sacrificed to idols that runs from chapters 8-10?

The warning is for those who feel overconfident in the freedom eat meat sacrificed to idols, a theme he returns to right after the section we're studying today. We're saved, we're solid, we've been baptized and take communion, we have knowledge, what's the danger?

The danger is that in their overconfidence they can place themselves in dangerous positions of temptation and fall.

And that's a danger for us. We assume because we have made a profession of faith in Christ or we go to church or we were baptized at one point or we take communion or we read our Bibles on occasion that we're not in danger of falling into sinful and/or destructive patterns in our lives.

1. Learn from **historical** examples of overconfidence. (10:1-10)
 - a. **All** of the Israelites experienced deliverance from Egypt and God's miraculous provision. (vv. 1-4)
 - i. Notice he calls them "our fathers" but he is speaking to a primarily gentile church. There's a sense of continuity with the people of the OT that is part of our heritage as believers in Christ.
 1. **Romans 4:16-17** For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.
 2. So the theologically rich classic hymn "Father Abraham" is right – Father Abraham, had many sons, and many sons had father Abraham, and I am one of them, and so are you.
 - ii. They all experienced God's deliverance from Egypt in a way that corresponds to our experience as Christians.
 1. Guidance and protection from God in the pillar of cloud described in Exodus 13:21

- a. **Exodus 13:21** The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.
2. Passed through the Red Sea
3. “baptized into Moses in the cloud and the sea”
 - a. Not that they were literally baptized – they passed through the sea dry – but that this deliverance was a key moment at the beginning of their experience as a people of God and they were identified with Moses as the human instrument being used to rescue them.
 - i. Analogy – as Moses was Israel’s earthly deliverer; so Christ is theirs.
 - ii. Two “baptisms” – both stand at the beginning of the two existences and both are with water, but we shouldn’t press the analogy any further.
4. Spiritual food
 - a. Reference to God’s provision of manna in the wilderness, “spiritual” not referring to the type of food but rather the way in which it was supernaturally provided for them.
5. Spiritual drink
 - a. Same thing – reference to the supernatural giving of water through the rock struck by Moses.
 - b. In what sense was “the rock Christ?”
 - i. Don’t want to push the analogy too hard
 - ii. Main point is not about Christ’s preexistence in these events, but that seems to be the reality that Jesus was present in the OT events, which is a remarkable evidence that He is one with the Father, present in the OT. Main point is to show the continuity of their experience and the Corinthians and to warn them that they are in danger of following the same path.
- iii. Parallels with our experience as Christians
 1. Baptized as an initial expression of faith in Christ as our deliverer
 2. Eating “spiritual food and drink” through communion (which comes up in chapter 10 so is likely an intended parallel)
 3. We might identify ourselves with God’s people, but ... here comes the warning in v. 5.
- b. **Most** of the Israelites failed to walk faithfully in the wilderness. (vv. 5-10)
 - i. Nevertheless - Strong contrast - Even after these great experiences with the Lord – with most of them God was not well-pleased and they were “laid low in the wilderness”
 1. Meaning, the majority of them died in the wilderness between their rescue from Egypt and entering the promised land of Israel 40 years later.
 2. “most of them” is actually a dramatic understatement. How many actually made it into the land instead of perishing in the wilderness? 2. Joshua and Caleb. The rest who entered the land had been born after the exodus.

3. "All" "all" "all" experienced these great spiritual experiences, but "most" still fell. Doesn't mean they weren't saved by faith. They may have been. But they experienced God's discipline in the wilderness rather than the great joy that could come from faithfully standing.
- ii. These things happened as example for us – we're meant to read and learn from them.
 1. Stated in v. 6 and repeated in v. 11 – they were written for our instruction, us who live at the "ends of the ages," meaning the final period before Jesus' return that the OT narrative was building towards.
 2. Do the stories of the Old Testament ever seem weird and disconnected from your life? Read with this question in mind, "God, why did you have this event recorded and preserved?"
 - a. What can we learn from the OT? Does it point ahead to Christ?
 - b. Does it give an example of faith, even if imperfectly lived out?
 - c. Does it give an example of failure, to learn from even as the failure points ahead to the need for the obedience of Jesus?
 - d. Great value in our Sunday school program that takes our kids systematically through the OT and NT every 3-4 years. A kid who jump into class at 5 years old will have worked through the key OT stories 3 times, at different age appropriate levels, by the time they graduate high school.
 - c. Four particular warnings for the Corinthians and for us:
 - i. Idolatry (v. 7)
 1. Quotes from Exodus 32:6 where the people made a golden calf to worship, saying this calf was their God who delivered them from Egypt.
 2. He likely quoted the lines that he did about eating and drinking because that was the issue at hand for the Corinthians.
 3. In the context of Exodus 32, "rose up to play" refers to a immorality that was accompanying their idolatrous celebration.
 - ii. Immorality (v. 8)
 1. Notice for these three Paul words them as "nor let US" – he's modeling what he wants them to see. He is taking heed lest he fall.
 - a. An evidence of spiritual overconfidence is hearing a message like this and only thinking of other people that need to hear it rather than taking it into your own heart.
 2. **Numbers 25:1-3** While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. ² For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³ So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel.
 3. We've seen that this was an issue for the Corinthians that has come up in chapters 5-7. We've seen it's an issue today, as unrestrained sexual freedom is assumed to be right and good in broader society (until it inevitably spills out and harms people).

4. The warning here though is not about what people do “out there” but what happens “in here.” Will we as a church follow the lead of the world in sexual ethics or will we be distinct?

iii. Testing the Lord (v. 9)

1. **Numbers 21:5** The people spoke against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food."
2. **Psalm 78:18** And in their heart they put God to the test By asking food according to their desire.

iv. Grumbling (v. 10)

1. **Numbers 14:2-4** All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! ³ "Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" ⁴ So they said to one another, "Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt."
2. Who/what is the destroyer?
 - a. **Exodus 12:23** "For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite *you*."
 - b. Exp - "The Destroyer" is "the destroying angel as the one who carries out the divine sentence of punishment."

2. **Beware** of your own spiritual overconfidence. (10:11-12)

- a. "Therefore" – not just a history lesson but the lesson we are to learn is that if we think we are standing firm we need to be cautious and realistic so that we don't fall.
- b. In what ways are you overconfident?
 - i. "I can hang out with my girlfriend late at night, snuggled on the couch, but we won't go any further because we are committed to Christ."
 1. In 22 years here, walking with college students as they follow Jesus, going back to my own time as a student, that kind of overconfidence has gotten many young people in trouble. They have crossed lines they never thought they would because they underestimated their own desires. Set a line farther back than you think is necessary.
 - ii. "I watch super-sketchy shows but it won't affect me."
 - iii. "I listen to music loaded with profanity and sexual content, but it's just music. The words won't stick with me."
 - iv. "I'm dating a non-Christian but it's not serious, I would never marry someone who wasn't a believer. I know that's wrong."
 - v. "I know I haven't made church a priority but my faith is strong in Jesus."
 1. ... I know what Jesus says I need but I'm doing ok without it...
 - vi. "I'm just close friends with this guy at work but there's nothing going on. I don't 'like' him like that. My husband has nothing to worry about"

- vii. “I know I grumble and complain a lot but my family and church body have to love me so it’s not a big deal. It’s just my personality.”

c. Could be speaking to two groups of people:

- i. Those who are truly saved but are in danger of making a trainwreck of their lives and disqualifying themselves from ministry to others (as in 9:27)
- ii. Those who *think* they are saved but are only externally identified with the people of God. Internally they have never really received new life in Christ.
 - 1. Visible church vs invisible church
 - 2. You were baptized, you take communion, you gather regularly, you believe in God. You had Christian parents and Christian friends.
 - 3. In 2 Corinthians he will encourage the same group of people to examine themselves to see if they are truly saved:
 - a. **2 Corinthians 13:5** Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?
 - b. 1 John was written so that believers could know that they are saved and have eternal life. It provides that “examination.”
 - c. BLOC – belief, love, obedience, conscience

3. But God is always **faithful** to provide a way of **escape** when facing temptation. (10:13)

- a. Four promises that combat the four most common lies Satan tells us when we are struggling in a trial or temptation
 - i. Your trial is not unique – it’s “common to man”
 - 1. We feel like our experiences and temptations are unique – no one understands me! No one has gone through this! You can’t help me because you can’t understand!
 - ii. God is faithful
 - 1. We feel like God has abandoned us when tempted or that He doesn’t care, like He has left us all alone to deal with it
 - iii. It’s not more than you can handle – you can endure it
 - 1. We feel like the temptation is too strong
 - 2. This shouldn’t be so hard! The pressure feels too hard to be angry, bitter, to look at pornography, to steal something, etc.
 - iv. There’s a way out of this
 - 1. We feel like there is no way out, we are stuck with a sinful pattern that we can’t get out of; we feel like it’s too much
- b. This verse shows up here as if we may swing from overconfidence to despair and hopelessness.
 - i. “I couldn’t possibly fall into that sin!” to “It’s hopeless! I’m stuck in this and there’s no way out!”



1

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Numbers 14:2-4 ³ "Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" ⁴ So they said to one another, "Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt."

11

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14