



“Continued Warnings from Israel’s Past”

Sunday, March 16, 2014

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:9-11 (ref. Num. 16:41-50; 21:4-9)

Two reminders before we jump into our text:

God’s Word is relevant!

According to Bible historians, roughly 1,500 years separate the Israelites in the desert and the Christians in Corinth. Clearly there were two entirely different cultures, however they both had in common the fact that they did not respond to the grace of God rightly. Because of this, Paul repeats in verse 11 “these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction.”

Nearly 2,000 years separates our church and the early church in Corinth, and what Paul says to the Corinthians applies to us as well, “these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction.”

Paul’s purpose

As a reminder, Paul’s purpose was not to condemn, but to exhort; to encourage right hearts, motives, and actions towards Christ; to learn from the past.

“Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.” (1 Cor 10:6 ESV)

Brief recap of the past few weeks

From 1 Cor 10:7 we learned about the sad history found in Exodus 32:

- That waiting while worshipping will test our faith!
- That godly leadership is critical! Remember Aaron caved to people pressure and people died! “Aaron had let them break loose.” (Ex 32:25)
- That God hates idolatry and views it as corruption. It offends His holy character. Idolatry offends God in part because it gives what belongs to Him to another...worship, praise, credit, adoration, exaltation, honor. It puts the wrong god on display in God’s own creation!
- That being “stiff-necked” leaves us susceptible to this sin.
- That sin can have such terrible consequences. As the Levites went about the camp killing, imagine the lamentation. Then God sent a plague among the people. Sad and hard to read.
- That the people knew the Ten Commandments WHEN they asked for a golden calf!

From 1 Cor 10:8 we learned:

- We can’t overstate how angry God is about idolatry
- Sexual immorality is a bridge to further idolatry
- Sin makes you stupid!
- Today’s church is tempted to relax God’s standards and fall into idol worship
- Today’s church is tempted to go soft on sexual immorality or see it as a viable, natural lifestyle
- Today’s church is tempted to forsake the singular Truth of Christ for a more “open” view of other gods (both idols and man himself) in the form of humanism.

Today's text

There are two events Paul references in today's verses

- V9 Tempting Christ and being destroyed by serpents
- V10 Grumbling and being destroyed by the destroyer

Verse 9 references what can be found in Numbers 21:4-9

(Numbers 21:4-9 ESV) [4] From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. [5] And the people spoke against God and against 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 worthless food." [6] Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. [7] And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. [8] And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." [9] So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

- Verse 4 – It all started Impatience

There were probably several factors that led to this impatience. It was hot, stony, sandy, and mountainous. Not only this, but the way they were taking (around Edom) was directly opposite of the way to Canaan!

Some things for CRCC to remember when we walk through: hot, stony, sandy, or mountainous seasons of life in the opposite direction of where we want to go

(Psalm 37:23-24 ESV) [23] The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way; [24] though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand.

(Psalm 34:19 ESV) [19] Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

- Verse 5 – Their lack of patience resulted in them speaking against God and His servant Moses

Note that in 1 Cor 10:9, Paul said that they spoke against Christ. This proves the deity of Christ. He is not merely a man, or prophet, or example. He is God!

The difficult way that they were taking put their attitude of ungratefulness on full display. Instead of being grateful for God's gift of deliverance from Egyptian slavery, they questioned His motives. The Israelites were in full blown "Me Mode." They even complained about the manna and water from the rock.

- Verse 6 – The judgment of God

There is much speculation among Bible scholars (snake, flying snake, bat like creatures, red in color, or called fiery because of the bite). What we can say for certain is that the Israelites were previously protected from this, but their sin brought on God's judgment in this powerful way.

- Verses 7 – 9 – Repentance and request for intercession

The judgment of God caused the people to see and confess their sin. Realizing that only God could deliver them from the serpents, they asked Moses to intercede on their behalf. God's primary purpose in judgment is to bring people to repentance. Moses displayed great meekness by interceding for the ones

that spoke against him not too long ago. We also see a wonderful foreshadowing of Christ in the fiery serpent statue. (John 3:14-15) [14] And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, [15] that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Verse 10 references what can be found in Numbers 16:41-50.

(Numbers 16:41-50 ESV) [41] But on the next day all the congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and against Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the LORD." [42] And when the congregation had assembled against Moses and against Aaron, they turned toward the tent of meeting. And behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared. [43] And Moses and Aaron came to the front of the tent of meeting, [44] and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [45] "Get away from the midst of this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." And they fell on their faces. [46] And Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer, and put fire on it from off the altar and lay incense on it and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone out from the LORD; the plague has begun." [47] So Aaron took it as Moses said and ran into the midst of the assembly. And behold, the plague had already begun among the people. And he put on the incense and made atonement for the people. [48] And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped. [49] Now those who died in the plague were 14,700, besides those who died in the affair of Korah. [50] And Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the tent of meeting, when the plague was stopped.

- Verse 41 – Sin Makes You Stupid!

These people just saw the wrath of God exercised against those who murmured about God's choice of Moses and Aaron. They called those who died the day before "The People of the Lord!"

- Verse 42 – The Presence of God

Normally, the cloud hovered, but in this case, the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting. The presence of God was different this time.

- Verses 43 – 48 – Intercession

Moses and Aaron, again the subject of much ridicule and hate by the Israelites, intercede on their behalf and God honors their intercession.

- Verses 49 – 50 – The scene of Judgment

14,700 people dead due to murmuring. This number would have been more if not for intercession by the leaders.

1 Corinthians 10:11

I don't believe Paul meant that these things happened SOLELY to be examples. I believe that he means that they are valuable lessons that can be wrought from them for the Corinthian church. Paul lays out clearly that the judgment of God burns white hot on idolaters, fornicators, and murmurs.

1 Corinthians was written around 55AD, and the Jerusalem temple was destroyed around 70AD. I believe that when referring to the end of the age, Paul is not talking about the end of the world. Like Christ in his discussions with the disciples on the Mount of Olives, he is referring to the end of the age of temple sacrifices.

Big Take Aways from our Text:

1. Do not lose heart when times are rough. Be encouraged.
2. Do not revert back to a life of sin simply because it seems more comfortable.