

1Corinthians 10:1-5 "The Danger of Over Confidence"

1CO 10:1-5 "For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

As we come to chapter 10 there would appear to be a disconnect from what has come before. In chapter 10 we move from the race Paul has been talking about in the previous portion, where he exhorts the church to run in such a way as to win the prize, to where now he begins to give a history lesson about Israel.

But Paul is not writing this portion to simply enlighten the church about Israel's past. All of this is connected and building on previous exhortations to help these Christians in Corinth grow up in their faith and be the best servants they can be for Jesus Christ.

Paul has been dealing with Christian liberty since chapter 8, and interestingly enough he has not left that theme here in chapter 10. But his perspective on Christian liberty in this chapter takes a little different slant.

"The second half of chapter 8 and all of chapter 9 illustrate how using our freedom affects others. Chapter 10 illustrates how our use of freedom affects our own lives." (John MacArthur)

You see, if we are to run this race to the glory of God, to the very end, then we must run it God's way. He has set the course and has given us many examples of what to do and what not to do.

And as Paul ventures into the life of Israel, here in chapter 10, he is about to show us what not to do so that our lives will not become ship-wrecked in the process and we become useless in the kingdom of God.

With the Christian liberties we have in Christ we must never assume that it makes no difference how we use them or how we view them. A liberty is not a license. And though being free from the penalty of sin in Christ is a glorious thing, we are not at liberty to place ourselves in situations where that liberty may tempt us to

fall back into the power of sin which can so easily entangle us if we're not careful.

This is where Paul is going in our text. And he's about to use a classic example of a people called out by God to represent Him and follow Him and be used by Him to be a light to the nations.

1CO 10:1 "For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea."

The history lesson starts in Egypt. This is where Israel grew to be a nation. It is the culmination of hundreds of years of following the promises given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It would be in their deliverance from Egypt's bondage that Israel would be set free to now have the privilege of walking with God without the constraints of Egypt.

Keep in mind that Paul is addressing primarily Gentiles in Corinth, but it certainly wouldn't exclude the possibility that Jews were also part of the church there. But he says, that "our forefathers" were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.

He includes the Gentiles as having the same forefathers as the Jews. Now, obviously this would not be in a national sense, but in a spiritual sense. All Jew and Gentile believers have the same spiritual roots, with Abraham himself being our spiritual father by example.

Speaking to the Christians in Rome Paul points out that the law saves no one, not even the Jews who received the law from Moses. Rather, it is by faith alone by which we are reconciled to God through the promises of God, even as was Abraham.

ROM 4:14-16 "For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, 15 because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. 16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring - not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all."

Paul made the exact same point when writing to the Galatian's.

GAL 3:26, 29 "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

This is the connection Paul is making for these Corinthian believers. Just as Israel was called out and just as our Hebrew forefathers went before us, what makes us just like them is that they believed on the promises from God and received them by faith.

Now, in the case before us, Paul is referring to the faith of Moses. He is certainly one of the forefathers Paul is pointing out. And it was Moses who led Israel out of Egypt as the Lord brought them out under his leadership.

We're told that they were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. This is a reference to the cloud of glory that went before Israel. It was this cloud of glory, or the Shekinah cloud, in which the Lord manifested Himself to Israel and by which He led them out of Egypt.

EXO 13:21-22 "By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. 22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people."

What an awesome sight that must have been for Israel; to know that God was with them and would truly deliver them. What comfort and peace they must have experienced knowing that the promise of deliverance was a sure thing as God Himself was in their midst.

And as they came to the Red Sea they saw God do a mighty thing.

EXO 14:21-22 "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, 22 and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left."

Paul is taking these believers back to that time in which God delivered Israel, and showed Himself faithful. And then he makes the connection to the faith of Moses who followed the Lord and exhorted Israel to follow him in his faith as they in turn came out with Moses.

1CO 10:2 "They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea."

What does Paul mean by this?

Well, the idea of being baptized into Moses means that they were identified with Moses in the sense that they were identified with his obedience through faith in God.

To be baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea is to say that as they followed the Shekinah cloud through the sea, they were being carried along by faith in God who did the leading as they are identified with the man of God, Moses.

And it says that they were *all* baptized. Not one remained behind. They all went through the sea. By the way, some have suggested that being baptized in the Red sea is the forerunner of being water baptized through immersion.

You might remember, though, that they all walked on dry land through the Red sea. They didn't get wet. That doesn't discount water baptism through immersion, it simply means that it would be a stretch to use this portion of the O.T. as a proof text for water baptism by immersion.

Moving on, Paul then reminds these Corinthian believers about Israel's travels to the promised land.

1CO 10:3-4 "They all ate the same spiritual food⁴ and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ."

What is Paul referring to here? He's referring to the food they ate in the desert. Since it would be impossible to feed this mass of humanity out in the middle of nowhere, unless you brought provisions with you, everyone would starve to death. Knowing this, God provided.

They didn't have the kind of provisions which would sustain them in the desert. However, despite the fact that God delivered them from Egypt they could not possibly see how God would provide for them in the desert. And like we're all prone to do when we don't trust the Lord, they grumbled.

EXO 16:3-4 "The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD'S hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions."

Interesting. The Lord knew their need and yet in all of this it was meant to be a test for Israel. And this is really where Paul is going with this narrative about the history of Israel. You see, for Israel, this was their race. Remember what Paul said in chapter 9?

1CO 9:25-27 "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

Israel would be disqualified for the prize, as a nation, because they would not discipline themselves to simply trust God. If they couldn't see it with their eyes they would not follow. If they couldn't have it placed in their laps they would not trust God. On many occasions they failed the test.

And Paul is saying to these Corinthians and to us that we don't want to fail the test. And believe me all of life is a test from God. But do we want to be disqualified from the race; not that we will be disqualified from eternal life, but from the path God has us on to effectively shine for Him?

Do we want to go through this life simply taking from God and not giving anything back, and in that sense being disqualified from being an effective witness? Remember, when Paul speaks here, he is speaking on behalf of God Almighty. And when Paul says to run this race of life for the Lord, it is Jesus Himself who is conveying His heart to us on this matter.

Simply because we're blessed by Christ does not mean we are exempt from representing Him faithfully in this world under all circumstances. Being put in the middle of the desert doesn't sound like an ideal place to be to serve God. But, it's exactly where the Lord wanted them to be.

It's exactly what they needed. And yet, when you read the accounts in the book of Exodus Israel is constantly complaining about being in the desert. And by the way, this is exactly why they took 40 years to make what should have been a few weeks journey as God caused them to wander.

Does it make a difference how we walk with Christ in the race He has put us in? You better believe it. He is the same yesterday,

today and forever. He still expects His people to walk by faith and not by sight. But more important, He also wants us to know, that just as in the days of the desert, He is still with us; not as a cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, but now He actually lives in us.

The Israelites had everything they needed from God, but it never seemed to be enough, from their perspective. They had spiritual food, which came down from heaven.

EXO 16:31 "The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey."

Do you know what manna means? It comes over into the English in a literal way as, what is it? To question what it was became its name. What is this stuff? I don't know. So, what else would you call it?

Paul also says, they all drank the same spiritual drink. By the way, what makes it spiritual since it was just real food and water? What makes it spiritual is the fact that God was miraculously providing it. And if God provides it how could it ever be bad? But it was also spiritual because of its spiritual importance.

JOH 6:32-33, 35 "Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

And yet, in Israel's case, what was obviously spiritual was not enough for them. And unfortunately, it's often not enough for us today. How many times are we told that God works all things out for our good, to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose?

And yet, since we don't or won't have eyes to see Him in our midst, we grumble and complain and wonder why we're wandering around in the desert.

Now, the spiritual drink Paul speaks of in our text is the water that came from the rock which Moses was instructed to strike. After he did this the water flowed out abundantly enough to water all the people in Israel and their animals.

It's worth noting here that the rock Moses struck was not some little boulder. John MacArthur points out in his commentary that "the term Paul uses here for rock is not *petros*, a large stone or boulder, but *petra*, a massive rock cliff."

And yet, we're told here in our text that this rock followed them wherever they went. It's interesting that there was a legend among the Jews that the very rock which Moses struck is the same rock which followed them throughout the desert experience, providing them water.

And Paul may very well have had this legend in mind when writing this. But Paul makes it clear that the true rock which followed them was not made of earth, but was truly spiritual in nature. It was Christ Himself.

And so, when they drank from the rock God provided in the desert, Paul intimates that they drank from the hand of the Lord who is the source of all good blessings, physical and spiritual.

This also shows us that it was the pre-incarnate Jesus Himself who was in their midst. It was Jesus, the Son of God, who met their needs and directed them in the ways they should go, and tested them in this time to prove their faith.

Yes, Jesus proved their faith then, even as He proves our faith today for our own sakes, and for the sake of the world which looks on to see if what we possess is real or just convenient.

This is exactly what the apostle Peter meant when describing how glorious our salvation is in Christ, and yet how that the testing our faith is meant to glorify our God and speak to the world of His life in us.

1PE 1:6-7 "In this you greatly rejoice, [that is, your salvation], though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Nothing has changed in thousands of years when God calls His people out of bondage; be that bondage from Egypt or bondage of sin. We're still called to walk by faith and represent Him faithfully as our faith is proved through trials and tests.

But, we must never think that we walk alone. Every good gift and every blessing which comes from above is there for our ability to show ourselves faithful to Him. Jesus is our spiritual drink and food. He is the one we can come to for spiritual life, just as He told the woman at the well.

JOH 4:13-14 "Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

It is this same Jesus who stood before Israel and comes to us and says, "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." (Rev.22:17)

This was the message to Israel. And yet, despite the fact that Jesus Christ was with Israel in many tangible ways, most of them failed the test to demonstrate their faith effectively. That's why Paul explains how God viewed this time in Israel's history.

1CO 10:5 "Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert."

When Paul says that God was not pleased with most of them that is certainly an understatement. You might remember that of all the hundreds of thousands of Israelites who came out of Egypt, only two of that original group got to enter into the Promised land. That would be Joshua and Caleb.

The rest found themselves dying along the way. Moses and Aaron didn't even get to enter into the Promised land because of unbelief. This doesn't mean that many who died in the wilderness were not true believers who went to be with the Lord, it simply means that in terms of passing the test of faithfully following and obeying the Lord, they came up short.

Moses, for example, was a man who followed and obeyed the Lord most of his time in the desert. But, because of his position in Israel, God expected him to be the example. And when he and his brother Aaron failed the test the Lord did not turn the other way.

NUM 20:8-12 "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink." 9 So Moses took the staff from the LORD'S presence, just as he

commanded him. 10 He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. 12 But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."

God expects us to follow Him. We don't have the luxury to make it up as we go. And it does make a difference to our Lord how we represent Him. To think that simply because we are not under the law but under grace that we can presume upon God's grace, is not to show ourselves very appreciative or thankful.

This doesn't mean that we will find our bodies being scattered throughout the desert, but in a spiritual sense it does mean that we may find ourselves being just as useful in the kingdom of God, if we're not willing to love the Lord in our obedience.

If we're not willing to trust our God wherever He leads, and in that we fail to run the race the Lord has set before us, then we show ourselves not to be running for Christ. And if we're not running for Christ, we're usually running for ourselves. And that path will be just as rewarding as it was for the Israelites who came out of Egypt and died in the desert.

That's not how we want to show our gratitude and thanks to Christ for so great a salvation. We need to look at the examples that God has placed before us in the word of God. In fact, that is exactly what Paul is doing here by using the life of the nation of Israel in the desert.

Next week we'll discover how God viewed their lives from a spiritual stand-point and how we can and must glean from them so that we don't repeat the same mistakes. What a loving and caring God we serve.

But we also serve a God who loves and cares for the rest of the world. And if we think we can run a race with Him that excludes serving others, both inside and outside the body of Christ, then we've missed the point of His great commission, which is to go out to the world with the gospel, making disciples everywhere.

That's our race. That's the course our Lord has put us on. And if we will allow our freedoms or liberties in Christ, as we perceive

them, to get in the way of that, then we must consider if we've gotten off the path of where our Lord wants us to be.

Praise God, He's always leading us back. And praise God He never gives up on us, because He does love us and will never leave us or forsake us. But, with that in mind, may we never try and use that freedom from the penalty of sin to think we can be free from the responsibility and privilege of being used by our God in this world to His glory.

And there's no better place to start in that service than in the very church He's placed each one of us. We all have gifts and we all have the Spirit and we all have the Lord Jesus who encourages us to go forward with Him in the body in which He's placed us.

May we see our salvation as much more than a place reserved just for us in heaven. May we see it as an opportunity to take others along with us. And as we represent our Lord and Savior faithfully, in the power of the Spirit, the world will see Jesus in us and that's what it's all about.

ACT 4:12 "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."