

1Corinthians 10:6-13 "The Consequences of Abusing Grace"

Last week we ended with somewhat of a history lesson of the nation of Israel as Paul conveyed to the Corinthians how he wanted them to be aware that, despite the fact that Israel was a favored nation by God, it did not give them the excuse to abuse that grace from the Lord.

They were taken out of Egypt, they passed through the Red sea, they followed the Lord as He manifest Himself in the Shekinah glory cloud and pillar of fire. God provided the manna in the desert along with all the water they needed which sprang forth miraculously from the rock, which Paul tells us represented Jesus Christ Himself who provided for all the needs of Israel in the desert.

And yet, despite the fact that the Lord was with them, they didn't appreciate the way in which the Lord was with them. They were never truly satisfied with His presence and His provision. And because they were an ungrateful and rebellious people the Lord was displeased with them.

And as we saw in verse 5 last week, "they were laid low in the wilderness", as the NASB puts it. Or as the NIV puts it, "their bodies were scattered over the desert."

Over a period of 40 years, all of the original people who came out of Egypt, with the exception of 2, Joshua and Caleb, did not get to enter into the Promised land. Their offspring would have that privilege.

But what Paul has conveyed here is not meant to simply be a history lesson without any practical application. If we taught the word of God simply as a history book or as only a book of theology or doctrine, without applying these truths to our lives, then we would have missed the point of what God is trying to show us.

And this is where our text is going as Paul now gives the reason for the opening verses to chapter 10.

1CO 10:6 "Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did."

In hindsight I suppose any example of those who went before us could be used to encourage us not to pursue those things which

displeased the Lord. And we have the entire O.T. which is full of examples; from Adam and Eve on.

But here, Paul is trying to make the point that this has been the pattern of men, even those called out by God, in the instance of Israel, where simply because they were the chosen, we find they were not exempt from the Lord's discipline.

And so, Paul has a dual message for the believers in Corinth. He is teaching them that simply because they are chosen and set apart for God, it does not give them the excuse, or the right to choose what path they will follow, especially when that path is not where God wants them to go.

But he's also teaching them that there will be consequences to the kind of behavior which displeases the Lord. Now, most of us don't want to hear that there is a good possibility that if we pursue our own paths that the Lord could possibly be displeased with us.

I dare say, that most of us believe that the Lord is a loving God who continually shows mercy and compassion. And yet, because God is holy He expects His people to be holy as well.

In fact, in His holiness and justice He has demonstrated the greatest act of mercy and compassion and grace as He poured out His wrath on His Son who bore our sin and our penalty. That should have been us, but in His great love the Lord has taken our debt and paid it in full at the cross of Christ as He died in our place.

And so, we can never say that in His holiness He is an ogre, or a God who is unfair when He does discipline His children. Because as we have been told, He disciplines those whom He loves. And His discipline is always meant to restore and to make better than before, not to tear down and destroy.

In the case of Israel, we have an extreme example of how God does not wink at continual and unrelenting rebellion despite the fact that He is always pouring out grace and love. And Paul says, we need to look at these examples for our own lives and learn from them to the point where we don't make the same mistakes.

Of course, this is easier said than done, it seems. I don't know how to explain that except that human beings naturally don't want to be told what to do. When I was a teen-ager I didn't like my parents telling me what to do. I didn't like my employers telling me what

to do. I didn't like the police telling me that I couldn't violate the speed limits.

In fact, there's a side of me today which still doesn't like people telling me what to do. When I was younger I knew of a lot of people who had gotten speeding tickets. Now, according to Paul's thought here in our text I should have taken their example and not repeated those actions.

In fact, on one occasion, when I was 16, I had two friends who had their licenses taken away because they both had accumulated enough speeding tickets. A thinking person might then reason that if I speed I too might have my license taken away at some point.

The operative word here is thinking. My two friends wanted to take an excursion on the Florida turnpike early one Saturday morning. I didn't have a car but one of those two friends did. In fact, it was a '65 Ford Mustang. And that little car would fly. Guess who got to drive? The only guy with a license.

In their own sort of way, they exhorted me to head north as fast as the car would carry us. Evidently, speeding was somehow null and void if you weren't behind the wheel. And so, they egged me on.

To make a long story short, the police didn't appreciate me doing 120 MPH on their turnpike, especially after one of their officers blew an engine chasing me, and the other one not catching up with me for 13 miles. I wasn't running from them, I just didn't know they were behind me until I saw the blue lights flashing in my rear view mirror.

I wish I could say that that example prompted me to never again get a speeding ticket. But it just goes to show us that previous examples are not always heeded. But it doesn't mean they shouldn't or they can't.

And for believers in Christ we have the ability and the power in the Spirit to be able to consider, not just ourselves, but the One who has redeemed us and given us life eternal.

What is the example these Corinthian believers are to understand for their own lives from what Paul has mentioned in the first 5 verses? Well, in verse 6 he says that they are "examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did."

In other words, not only are we not to pursue evil things as believers, but we must also understand that God takes it personally

when we do. And if we consider these things from God's perspective it should alert us to what displeases Him and then it should alter our behavior so as not to displease the Lord.

That's how an example should work. And many examples do. We can learn early on from examples and they can be very effective. I remember as a very young child; maybe 5 or 6, that when you stick a knife into an electric socket things happen. Aside from being knocked down and your entire arm becoming numb, you get the distinct impression that it could have been worse.

I never repeated that incident. The same is often true when we decide to touch the hot burner on a stove, even after repeated warnings from our parents who said that it will burn you. You don't have to do that too many times before it sinks in that there are consequences which can be quite harmful.

And that's all that Paul is saying. If you choose to continually despise God's wisdom by rebelling against your heavenly Father you will learn first-hand that He is not happy with that behavior because He loves you. He will often times give consequences which are designed to keep us from getting, or hurting others, and damaging the good name of our God, who deserves all glory and honor.

These Corinthian believers were playing with fire as they took some of their liberties and began using them in a way that actually brought Christ's name into question as far as being a God who desired that His children be holy.

But then Paul goes back to the actions of Israel, which are examples for us, and begins to identify what some of their actions really were from a spiritual stand-point.

1CO 10:7-8 "Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." 8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did - and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died."

Here Paul gives a couple examples of how Israel, after having been delivered from Egypt by the hand of God, and after having agreed to worship the one true God who delivered them, then willfully and consciously broke that promise.

It wasn't long after they were in the desert that the Lord spoke to Moses who then went to the people with the words of the Lord who desired their full allegiance.

EXO 19:7-8 "So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. 8 The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD."

It would be one thing if they didn't know better, but they did. And for this reason their idolatry was inexcusable.

The example Paul gives is when Israel was out in the desert and Moses went up the mountain to speak to the Lord and he didn't come back for some time, and so the people encouraged Aaron to make a golden calf to worship and to protect them.

EXO 32:4-6 "He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." 5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD." 6 So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry."

These people instigated a plan to enter into idolatry and to use this time to please the flesh. They had a big party without God, and in their partying they got drunk and did things which were blatantly against the Lord.

They sat down to eat and drink. And then they got up to play is the way many translations have it. The word "play" is not meant to mean that they formed up teams to have sack races or volley ball.

The word play is a euphemism for sexual immorality in this case. The word revelry or play in Exodus 32:6, is the same word in Gen. 26:8 for the word caress. But the point Paul is making in our text is that they did not go unpunished for such rebellion.

1CO 10:8 "We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did - and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died."

Remember, sexual immorality was an issue in the Corinthian church when one of their members had his father's wife. And so, it was apparent that this was an issue which didn't seem to bother, at

least some of these professing Christians, which could potentially open the door for future problems in this area if not checked by the word of God.

But then Paul uses another example.

1CO 10:9 "We should not test the Lord, as some of them did - and were killed by snakes."

NUM 21:4-6 "They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; 5 they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" 6 Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died."

Israel had seen the Lord work in their midst and yet they were not content to trust Him and they tested Him by complaining against Him to try and produce something better than what they already given by the Lord.

How many times in our own lives have we seen the Lord work and yet we're not content. Eternal life isn't enough. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not enough. The many ways in which we know God has provided is not enough. And so, we get in a huff and demand of the Lord that we want things changed soon or we won't follow.

Paul says, learn from the examples which have happened in the past and don't repeat the same selfish mistakes. Use your life as a light, not as an example of rebellion.

By the way, in some translations verse 9 reads, "We should not test Christ, as some of them did - and were killed by snakes."

There seems to be good manuscript evidence that this is a viable translation which would lend further credence that it was in fact our Lord Jesus Christ who led Israel in the desert and it was the Pre-Incarnate Christ they rebelled against.

1CO 10:10 "And do not grumble, as some of them did - and were killed by the destroying angel."

Grumbling is one of those words which even sounds bad.

Grumbling is an attitude and a destructive force toward the work God is trying to accomplish in the earth. And when the very people He has called out to be a light in the world begin to grumble and

complain it becomes very divisive; so divisive that the Lord was willing to destroy thousands of people in Israel, than to let it go on.

<But grumbling is more than simply having a negative attitude and trying to pass that on to others. The greater sin is that it calls into question God's plans and God's choice, as in the case of Israel when they questioned the choice of God in Moses. And so, ultimately it calls into question God's wisdom and understanding and goodness of any particular situation.

In Israel's case they "grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, "you are the ones who caused the death of the Lord's people." (Num.16:41) God was so incensed at their complaints about divine justice that He immediately sent a plague that killed 14,700 people. The destroyer was the same angel who had slain the firstborn of the Egyptians before Israel left Egypt." (John MacArthur)

Israel was a nation who worshipped the Lord and served the living God. They were also a nation who rebelled against that same loving and delivering God. When they obeyed and followed they were blessed. When they rebelled they were shown the displeasure of God in many dramatic ways.

In fact, we see this same displeasure with the "Israel of God" in the N.T., the church, where John is given a Revelation by Jesus Christ to exhort the seven churches to consider how they follow Christ. And in some cases they are warned to repent, and if they don't, the Lord promises to take away their lampstand, which is the very light of life that is to be found in the true church.

We also know that in the last days there will be a repeat of what we saw in the case of the Israel of old where the visible church falls away from the faith, which is what we see happening today in dramatic ways, where the word of God and the very deity and redemptive work of Christ is called into question. Paul refers to it as the apostasy which precedes the second coming of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 ^{NAU} Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every

so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

But in the case of Israel's past all of this is meant to be an example to us, who are separated from these events by thousands of years, which means it is worth studying and meditating upon. This is another reason why we study the O.T. Scriptures. And this is precisely why we are in the book of Genesis on Thursday evenings.

All of God's word is relevant. And all of God's word is inspired by the Holy Spirit and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2TI 3:16 -17)

That's what Paul is doing here in this letter to the Corinthian church. He's teaching, rebuking, correcting and training these people, not with the idea of destroying, but of equipping them and encouraging them to seek after the Lord and love Him above all.

But he's teaching that we don't have the option to go our own way. There are consequences to rebelling against the very God who loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son into this world to die for the penalty of our sins and bring us back into a peaceful relationship with our heavenly Father. And this is why he says what he does in verse 11.

1CO 10:11 "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come."

Not only is Paul saying that they were examples for future generations of believers, but he actually infers that God Himself used these people to be an example and a warning for future generations of believers.

In His sovereign will God allowed Israel to be an example to the world in many different ways. One example was to show the world that the God of Israel was real and all powerful and that He would always be with Israel.

Egypt learned this first hand. The example that Israel was to Egypt in those days proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that there was only one true God. But, unfortunately, Israel would be an example of how to live for self and rebel against this God who loved them and delivered them.

And sometimes the question needs to be asked of the church today, are we getting it? Do we not understand that as people who have been purchased by the blood of Christ that we do not belong to ourselves? We do not have the option to decide not to follow Christ if He has called us to follow.

We have a new master. No longer is the master of this world, who kept us in darkness and sin and who offered nothing but death, the one we are to follow. Rather, we have a new master who is the creator of this universe and who desires for us to have an eternal relationship with Himself and who proved that love at the cross.

This is exactly what Paul told the Romans.

ROM 6:6-12 "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires."

Paul is telling these Corinthians to consider the examples found in Israel and not to repeat the same rebellious attitudes which did not promote their holiness, but got in the way of it and actually promoted the displeasure of God who did not let it slide.

I don't mean to suggest that God is waiting for us to mess up so He can hit us with a big stick. He doesn't take pleasure in disciplining His children any more than a natural father takes pleasure in disciplining his children.

But, because the Lord loves us too much to allow us to pursue a path which is detrimental to us and His church, He will often step in and take appropriate action which will protect His church and His name, because you see, His name is on the line with every person who names the name of Christ.

We can't rest on our laurels when it comes to representing Christ in this world. We can't think that we have the inherent ability to go our own way, and then to think that we can stand and the enemy

won't get a foothold if we decide to dabble in his backyard, as we pursue our own path instead of God's.

1CO 10:12 "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"

We can sometimes fool ourselves into thinking that it doesn't make any difference how we live for our new master and Lord as we've placed our faith in Christ for our eternal life. Paul is saying when you take that attitude and you think you're on firm ground, the bottom may just drop out when you least expect it.

But, when the Lord causes the bottom to drop out, it's ultimately to cause us to drop into His hands as He is there to catch us. We usually know when the Lord is trying to get our attention. And sometimes we'll fight Him, but the example of Israel still stands. God has the final word and no one ever beat Him.

We need to submit and love Him because He first loved us. He knows our situation better than we do.

1CO 10:13 "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

Does this sound like a God who has no intention of being with us in the fire? Not at all. But Paul makes it clear that some temptations will seize us, but they're the kind of temptations which are common to all men to one degree or another since the fall of man.

The word temptation here in our text is the Greek word *peirasmos*, and it means an experiment, a trial, a proving. In other words it is a device which is often used by God to prove our faith, to strengthen our faith and to show us faithful even in the midst of the trial.

But that other word, seized is also interesting. It is the Greek word *lambano*, and it carries with it the idea of laying hold of any person or thing in order to use it. It's the exact same word Jesus used after His resurrection when He said to His disciples "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "**Receive** the Holy Spirit. (Joh.20:21-21)

The word receive here in John 20 is also the Greek word *lambano*. At that point the disciples had been indwelt with the Holy Spirit who sealed them for the day of redemption. The Spirit of God would lay hold to them and never let them go.

In a similar fashion the temptations or trials Paul speaks of in our text will seize us in a way where it will not let go until it has accomplished its desired effect by God, which is always trying to increase and strengthen our faith and our endurance to serve and love Him.

We can fight it all we want. But it will not let go until God is finished with it. However, even in the midst of that trial God still promises to be with us and He will personally make sure that it will not destroy us, even though we may feel it will. And that's why he says at the end of verse 13, "But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

The same promise He gave to Israel He gives to us today as far as what His ultimate plans are for us, even in the midst of trials and temptations.

JER 29:11-13 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

And this is really the issue Paul is dealing with here in our text; the heart. We will always fight Him if our hearts are not united to Him in love and faith and trust. But it's a fight we will not win, because He will not allow us to win if that fight involves moving away from Him and not closer.

He longs for our love and fellowship and He will move heaven and earth to accomplish that. It may be uncomfortable for us in the process, as some of that earth looks like it's going to bury us at times, but it is always for our best.

The way of escape is through the Lord not running from Him or rebelling against Him as we do our own thing. And not only will we then be able to endure the trial, we will actually find ourselves being useful to be used by our God and bring glory to His name in the process, which is what He desires of every one of His children in Christ. I like the way the Psalmist put it.

PSA 124:7-8 "We have escaped like a bird out of the fowler's snare; the snare has been broken, and we have escaped. 8 Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. 125:1 Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever."