

Sermon Notes on I Cor. 10:1-12, Lent IV

1. First read 9:24-27. In 24-25 Paul likens the Christian to an athlete contending for the earthly prize. He practices utter self-control lest he lose the prize. The Christian contends for a heavenly prize. In 26-27 Paul speaks of himself but includes all of us. He is very serious about his Christianity lest he lose the very thing which he is urging on others.
2. Then in 10:1-4 Paul recounts how Israel was signally blessed. He mentions "all" five times. The cloud and sea literally protected them but are also typical of baptism. Moses was a type of Christ as Savior. They were baptized into Moses. Vs. 3 speaks of manna, a type of the Lord's Supper. The water from the rock (Num. 20:7-11) is typical of Christ. Vs. 4 clearly states that Christ was their Savior. They drank of Him. They believed in Him.
3. Vs. 5 is a very sad sentence. God rejected the majority of them. They were scattered in the desert.
4. The expression "these events are our models" in vs. 6 point backward to vss. 1-4 and forward to vss. 6-11. Like the Israelites, the Corinthians were highly blessed. But, like Israel, they were beginning to be dissatisfied and were grumbling.
5. Then in vss. 6-11 Paul recounts five disastrous occasions of the Israelites. a) They lusted for evil things. Num. 11:4,34; b) They fell into idolatry. Ex. 32:6; c) They committed fornication. Num. 25:1-9; d) They tempted Christ. Num. 21:6-9. This was the occasion of the fiery serpents and, significantly, Paul says "they tempted Christ." e) And, finally, their murmuring led to the destruction of many. The "destroyer" is the angel of the Lord, not Satan. Num. 16. Israel should have trusted in the Lord and should have practiced self-control but became victims of their own doubts, lusts and unbelief.
6. Vs. 11 returns to the thought of vs. 6. All these things happened as examples, both the blessings (vss. 1-4) and the warnings (vss. 6-10). These things happened for our admonition. We live at the end of history. The only unfulfilled promise is the last judgment when Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. Upon us the ends of the ages have come.
7. Vs. 12 is the central thought in this text, the theme of our sermon outline. LET THE PERSON WHO THINKS HE STANDS TAKE HEED LEST HE FALL. Israel became overconfident and fell. The majority were lost. The Corinthians were in danger of repeating the history of Israel in the wilderness. That is why Paul began with the thought at 9:24-27. Read those vss. again. He said that he was severe with his own body and desires lest he would lose his own soul.
8. The subject of the first sentence in vs. 13 can mean either "trial" in the sense of testing or "temptation." Most commentators and translations understand it as "temptation." The first sentence means: "No super-human temptation has come to you." Paul is granting that temptations have tried them but none of them were stronger than those which human beings can bear. Then the well-known words BUT GOD IS FAITHFUL. This statement is very frequent in the NT. See I Cor. 1:9; II Cor. 1:18; I Thess. 5:24; II Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 2:13; Hebr. 10:23; Hebr. 11:11; I Jn. 1:9; Rev. 1:5; Deut. 7:9. In what sense is God faithful? a) He will not permit you to be tempted beyond what you can endure; b) With the temptation He will provide an escape so that you can bear it.
9. Life is like a mine-field in time of war. Everywhere we tread there is danger. Sometimes the greatest danger lies in the very place we considered most sacred. Like an athlete (9:24-27) we must practice our God-given self-control at all times. Self-control is a gift of the Holy Spirit, Gal. 5:23. Even when we worship the Lord we should not let frenzy overtake us. When we take a drink of vodka, let not excess cause loss of self-control. Let not anger cause a grudge.

Theme: LET HIM WHO THINKS HE STANDS TAKE HEED LEST HE FALL (Vs. 12)

Introduction: In the four vss. previous to our text Paul compared the Christian to an athlete. Ancient Greek runners, boxers and wrestlers had to observe the rules of their sport very seriously or they would lose the contest. Likewise, Christians must be very diligent in their faith, faithfulness and fight with sin lest they be lost. This introduces our text in which we learn a lesson from Jewish history.

I-The Lord has provided us with the means to live physically.

We are like Israel in the wilderness for whom the Lord provided all.

A-The Lord provided for their bodies. When they left the land of Egypt the Lord opened the Red Sea for them to pass over. Not one Israelite was lost. The sea closed on the Egyptians and not one was saved. He gave them the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night to guide and protect them.

B-When they arrived in the barren desert the Lord provided food from heaven which they called manna. Every morning for six days of the week the Lord provided this bread. We know from Jn. 6 that this was a type of Jesus Christ, Who is the bread of life.

C-When they arrived in the barren desert and could find no water the Lord made water come from a rock. This rock was a type of Christ, Who is the water of life as we learn in Jn. 4 at the well of Sychar.

II-He has also provided us with the spiritual means to fight temptation.

We are also like Israel for whom the Lord provided all spiritual need.

A-All of them were baptized into Moses. This is not yet Christian baptism but Moses was a type of Christ, the Savior of God's people. He was their spiritual leader and fed their souls.

B-All of them ate the same spiritual food. This means more than manna. The Lord fed their souls with the forgiveness of sins and the promise of everlasting life. They were saved by the promises of God and faith just as are we. Hebr. 11:29 says they crossed the Red Sea by faith. Num. 21 tells us how they were saved by the look of faith at the serpent on the pole.

C-Vs. 4 tells us that all of them drank of the spiritual rock which followed them, namely, Christ. Moses and the children of Israel knew of the Christ Who was to come and save them.

III-But they rebelled against God

A-They yielded to their sinful desires.

When Moses did not return from the top of Mt. Sinai they grew restless and asked Aaron to provide another god for them. He made them a golden calf like they worshipped in Egypt. Then they made a feast. After that they began to dance and commit fornication. Twenty-three thousand of them were killed in one day.

B-They tempted Christ by challenging Him. Vs. 9. That means they doubted that God could really do what He had promised. It was a form of unbelief. This is described for us at Hebr. 3:12-19. It finally amounted to unbelief. Their lusts and evil thoughts crowded out faith.

C-Vs. 10 tells us that they rebelled by murmuring against the Lord. This resulted in the destroyer killing those who murmured. The apostle is recounting these things for our warning.

IV-Take heed lest you fall as did Israel in the wilderness

A-Our temptations are not superhuman. Sometimes we think that our temptations are more than human. That is true if we do not trust in the Lord. Satan is too strong for us. Read I Pet. 5:8-9.

B-Our Lord is faithful. He has provided all our physical and spiritual needs. He faithfully watches over us so we will be able to withstand the temptation. And when it comes, He will provide an escape from the temptation.

Conclusion: Learn from the athlete. Learn from Israel. Trust your Lord Jesus Who faithfully guards and protects you.