

“It Ain’t Over ‘Till It’s Over” (1 Corinthians 10:1-13)

What do you think of when you hear the following names: Jimmy Swaggart, Jim Bakker, and Ted Haggard? What about Enron, Tyco, and WorldCom? Most people think: How in the world could these people let themselves do this? Why did they give up so much for so little? What would make them compromise their dreams?¹ These are all legitimate questions since these three men and three businesses self-destructed. Each of these experienced so much success, yet in the end they failed.

The former New York Yankees catcher, Yogi Berra once said: “It ain’t over ‘till it’s over.”² Now Yogi is no theologian, but he unknowingly expressed one of the greatest principles in the Christian life. It matters little to have the lead at the beginning; what matters is how you finish. Victory is won at the finish line, not at the starting blocks. Moreover, the Christian life is not a 100-yard dash; it is a marathon that requires endurance and a lifetime commitment to keep running with the intent of finishing strong. The cliché, “It ain’t over ‘till it’s over” also serves to remind you and me that even if we have fallen far behind in the Christian race there is still time to finish well.

In 1 Cor 10:1-13, the apostle Paul is going to warn us about the dreadful and severe consequences of sin. He is also going to challenge us to avoid sin and persevere in our Christian lives. Paul will argue that there is a very real possibility that many Christians will not finish their Christian lives well. In 9:24-27, Paul shared that he strived to keep himself in check because he didn’t want to end up being disqualified from the prize of God’s approval. What he considered a possibility in his own life he now presents as a sad reality in the lives of God’s people in the Old Testament. Paul gives us a major history lesson, with the express purpose of getting us to learn from the past. Someone has said, “If history teaches us anything, it is that history teaches us nothing.” In other words, those who fail to learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat its mistakes. In these 13 verses, God is going to say, “*It ain’t over ‘till it’s over.*” Two spiritual realities will reinforce this idea. First:

1. ALL of God’s people experience great spiritual privileges (10:1-5).³ In 10:1-4, Paul tells the Corinthians that they have been blessed with the same spiritual blessings as Old Testament Israel. As we will see in this passage, this is also applicable to us as well. Paul explains, “**For⁴ I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.**”⁵ These four verses clarify that the Israelites that left Egypt and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years were saved. They had observed Passover, which was an act of faith, and had come out of Egypt, a picture of salvation.⁶ Paul even used the Passover Lamb of Exodus 12 to describe the benefit of the cross of Jesus Christ to the Corinthians (1 Cor 5:7). The saved status of the Exodus generation is also seen in the use of the word “all,” which is used five times in four verses.⁷ Paul states: “ALL were under the cloud; ALL passed through the sea; ALL were baptized into Moses; ALL ate the same spiritual food; and ALL drank the same spiritual drink.”

Like Israel in the Old Testament, we too have received many spiritual privileges. In the same way that Israel was “under the cloud,” we have experienced God’s protection and guidance. In the same way that Israel “passed through the sea,” we have “passed from death to life” (John 5:24). In the same way that Israel was “baptized into Moses,” we have been “baptized into Christ” (1 Cor 12:13). In the same way that Israel ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink, we celebrate the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:17-34).⁸ In the same way that Israel was “followed” by Christ, Christ follows us (Heb 13:5). To what degree do you revel in the spiritual privileges that God has given you? Can you honestly say that you are awed by the fact that God saved you? Do you ponder the wonder that out of all the people in the history of the world, God chose of His own initiative to save you?

After unloading the spiritual privileges of God's people, Paul transitions into a startling contrast. In spite of Israel's redeemed state and numerous blessings (10:1-4), Paul writes in 10:5, **"Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness."** The word "nevertheless" emphatically brings out the contrast between how many were blessed ("all") versus how many with whom God was not pleased ("most of them"). This declaration is an obvious understatement of great proportions.⁹ Over two million people came out of Egypt, yet only two adults (Joshua and Caleb) were allowed to enter the Promised Land. The rest were "laid low"...as in six feet under! Literally, their carcasses were scattered across the wilderness.¹⁰ These individuals were tragically disqualified by death.¹¹ They did not go back to Egypt and get "unredeemed." The blood of the Lamb, which had taken them out of Egypt, was irreversible. They did not lose what they had, but they lost the reward God wanted to give them.¹²

The best example of this is Moses. Obviously, Moses was saved, yet on account of unbelief (Num 20:12; cf. Jude 5), he did not finish well.¹³ If this can happen to Moses, it can happen to you and me. We must humble ourselves and take God's warning very seriously. *"It ain't over 'till it's over."*

[So, while ALL of God's people experience great spiritual privileges, we will now learn further that...]

2. Many of God's people experience great spiritual failure (10:6-13). In 10:6-11, Paul draws himself, the Corinthians, and all of us into the story. There's a warning given to "us" collectively. Paul is going to summarize five stories from the 40 years of wilderness wandering that show a pattern of disqualification. He's going to tell us that it is important for us to understand these Old Testament accounts, because we stand accountable as Israel did. Look at the first statement, in 10:6: **"Now these things¹⁴ happened as examples¹⁵ for us so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved."** Now look at 10:11: **"Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction,¹⁶ upon whom the ends of the ages have come."** These bracketing comments are setting the context for the history lesson that unfolds in 10:7-10.¹⁷ Paul wants us to see ourselves here because there's a danger that we too might fall into sin like Israel and be disqualified from our reward.

Before we look at the four sins in 10:7-10, it is important to note the *source* of all four of these sins—craving evil things. The "craving of evil things" in 10:6b was an episode that took place about a year after the Exodus (Num 11). Israel had been given the law, they had built the tabernacle, and they had begun to travel. Do you know what the evil things were that they craved? Fresh vegetables! They were sick and tired of manna, and they wanted to go back to Egypt where there were cucumbers, garlic, and onions. We may laugh at this, but how often are we guilty of "craving" a new car, a larger home, a new partner, a new wardrobe? In light of eternity, these cravings are on par with cucumbers, garlic, and onions. Seriously, in eternity, what difference will it make what kind of car I drove or how large my home was? What difference will it make how successful I was in my job? Who will ask me what material possessions I provided for my children? Will I even care about those things? The answer is "NO!" Yet, Paul wants us to know that craving evil things can keep us from finishing well. *"It ain't over 'till it's over."* Let's now look at the four sins Paul mentions in 10:7-10.¹⁸

(1) Idolatry: In 10:7, Paul writes, **"Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, 'THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY.'"** The idolatry that Paul is referring to took place during the giving of the law at Mount Sinai (Exod 32). While Moses spent forty days on the mountain, the people became fearful and restless. They started to distrust that God even existed, and they asked Aaron to create an alternative god for them. In great weakness, Aaron gave in and created the golden calf. The result was an orgy with eating and drinking.¹⁹ Similarly, the Corinthians were guilty of idolatry through their temple feasts (10:14-22).

For you and me, idolatry is putting anything or anyone in God's rightful place in our lives. Anything can become an idol, but I want to focus on making our Christian experience an idol. We can create religious idols because we are fearful of intimacy with the living God of the universe. The busier we stay in Christian activity, the less we have to deal with Him. So success in ministry can be an idol. Love relationships in the body of Christ can become an idol. A concern for a healthy self-image can become idolatrous, because we don't believe that God Himself can be enough. So we end up demanding that our Christian experience and activity fulfill us—give us meaning and purpose. Then it becomes an idol.²⁰ Paul wants us to know that idolatry can keep us from finishing well. *"It ain't over 'till it's over."*

(2) Immorality: In 10:8, Paul writes, **"Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand²¹ fell in one day."** The sexual immorality of God's people continued through their wilderness wandering. Later in their progress through the desert, the Israelites practiced immorality when they participated in one of the Moabites' religious feasts (Num 25:1-9). Like the Israelites, the Corinthians were also guilty of sexual immorality. One of their members was having an affair with his step-mother (5:1-2), and others had to be commanded to flee sexual immorality (6:18).

The Corinthian church wasn't the only church to struggle with sexual immorality; we do as well—in thought and action. So here are some ways to guard yourself against sexual morality:²²

- Stay honest with your spouse. Even though it may be difficult, tell your spouse when you are struggling with sexual temptation.
- Monitor your marriage. Beware of child-centered marriages. Invest, first and foremost, in your spouse.
- Recognize that work can be a danger zone. Baltimore psychologist, Shirley Glass, has studied adultery and has determined that 25% of women and 44% of men have affairs. Of those men and women that do have affairs, the majority of them have their affairs with a coworker.²³
- Beware of the lure of the Internet. Use various safeguards to keep yourself from succumbing to on-line sexual sin.
- Commit to an accountability relationship. Howard Hendricks, a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, has studied 237 instances of Christian men (most are Christian leaders), who have experienced moral failure. He found one common factor: not one of the 237 had accountability relationships with other men.
- Spend time in God's word. Everyone has 96 15-minute periods of time every day. All of us have seven days in each week.

Paul wants us to know that sexual immorality can keep us from finishing well. We have seen this again and again in the Christian world. Thus, Paul exclaims, *"It ain't over 'till it's over."* Persevere in your marriage vows. If you are single, stay pure and wait on God to provide you with a spouse. The consequences can be severe when you take matters into your own hands. However, if you wait on God, He will reward you with a greater sense of intimacy with Him.

(3) Testing God: In 10:9, Paul writes, **"Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents."** In Numbers 21, the Israelites tested the Lord Jesus Christ by taxing His patience. They continued to complain, even though He faithfully provided for them (21:4-9). His provision of manna and water was inadequate from their point of view, and they despised it (21:5).²⁴ As a result, God destroyed them with serpents! Now I don't know about you, but I'm not sure I would pick that way to die. My three children love snakes and lizards. In fact, just yesterday Lori purchased an iguana at the pet store. While she was there, a customer offered her for free, a four-foot iguana that his neighbor was giving away. Can you imagine if we brought home an iguana that was the same size as our two youngest children? That's frightening! Well, God used snakes to destroy His people because they tested Him in the wilderness. God does not look kindly on a lack of faith.

Like Israel, the Corinthians had given evidence of being dissatisfied with God's provision. First, the Corinthians were disgruntled with God's servants (1 Cor 1:12). Second, the Corinthians repulsed God with their sinful arrogance (4:18; 8:1). Third, the Corinthians indicated dissatisfaction with the Lord's Supper by participating in pagan feasts (10:14-22). Fourth, the Corinthians were divided over class distinctions (11:17-34). We can test God in similar ways as well. When we do so, we risk the chastening hand of God. Paul wants us to know that idolatry can keep us from finishing well. "*It ain't over 'till it's over.*"

(4) Grumbling: In 10:10, Paul writes, "**Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.**" Tragically, the image of grumbling characterizes the whole wilderness experience of Israel (Exod 15 through Num 17). And this sinful behavior began one month after the Exodus. Sadly, God's people grumbled incessantly for a period of two years, and then God decreed that all those twenty years old or older will not be permitted to enter the Promised Land. They will be made to wander in the desert until the last rebel is dead (Num 14:26-35).

Paul's deliberate link with testing God (10:9) demonstrates that grumbling is particularly associated with putting God to the test (Exod 17:2-3). Specifically, it seems that the episode Paul is reflecting upon is the Israelites' grumbling about food. On these occasions, God's anger was particularly kindled against them (Num 11:1; 14:2-4). In Num 11:1-3, God sent fire that consumed some of the people on the edge of the camp. If this is the occasion Paul has in mind, Paul adds that God executed His wrath by using an angel, a fact that Moses did not mention in Numbers. However, the translators of the Greek OT used the same term, "the destroyer" (*olothreutes*) to describe the angel who executed the Egyptians' first-born on the night of the Exodus (Exod 12:23; cf. Heb 11:28).

In Numbers 16, Israel also grumbled against both Moses and Aaron. This resulted in a man by the name of Korah leading a rebellion where nearly 15,000 died.²⁵ How would you feel if today's newspaper reported that the military had executed 15,000 people? Suppose the victims were not criminals, foreign agitators, or political radicals, but ordinary citizens who were protesting the way their country was being run. Such a possibility seems unthinkable. Yet, in Numbers 16 we read that God responded like that to ancient Israel. He took the lives of 15,000 of His chosen people because they were complaining about the way He was caring for them.²⁶

The theme of ingratitude for all the blessings that God had given them marks this section. God's people wanted more. His presence, His provision, His availability, and His power weren't enough.²⁷ Can you relate? Have you ever thought about the fact that when you grumble and complain, either against God directly or against those to whom He has delegated leadership over you (like parents, teachers, pastors, bosses), you are really questioning His wisdom, His grace, His goodness, and His righteousness? May I encourage you to cultivate an attitude of gratitude? Pick your friendships wisely. Later, in 1 Cor 15:33, Paul will warn, "Bad company corrupts good morals."

Many Christians believe that every Christian has a guardian angel. I'm not sure that we can argue this from the Scriptures; nevertheless, undoubtedly various angels are protecting us from spiritual and physical harm. Yet, there comes a time in the lives of certain rebellious believers when God "pulls the plug" and assigns a death sentence! Instead of dispatching angels to watch over us, He assigns the destroying angel to take us home to heaven early!

The last two verses of this section (10:12-13) give a wonderful summary. In them are balanced an important warning and a hopeful word of encouragement and grace. In light of all that Paul has said, he challenges the Corinthians with these words in 10:12: "**Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.**"²⁸ Those who have great beginnings may still fall and ruin the latter days of their lives. The child of God who thinks he has arrived is being set up by the devil to be knocked down.

Those on the mountain top are the most vulnerable to attack. I played high school basketball on a team that started five guys 5'10" and under. I used to like to say to my teammates, "The taller they are, the harder they fall." The higher you are, the farther the fall. Elijah was on the mountain when he defied the prophets of Baal. The next day he ran across Israel as fast as he could, away from the painted face of Jezebel. He went from one magnificent, climatic victory to dismal defeat. There he sat under the juniper tree, defeated and discouraged. God came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He went from bravery to shrinking cowardice. Are all the breaks going for you? Even so, you must believe, "It could happen to me."

Fortunately, we can choose to avoid disqualification and finish well. Paul closes this passage in 10:13 with these powerful words: "**No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.**"²⁹ Before we look at this verse, we must keep in mind that the Greek word translated "temptation" (*peirasmos*) can also be translated "testing." Practically speaking, this term could be translated "temptation and testing." Every temptation is a test; every test is a temptation.³⁰

In 10:13, we can see three principles about temptation:³¹

- 1) *Temptation is common to every person, so there is no temptation that is unique.* In the Greek, the three words translated into our English, "common to man" are actually pressed into a single term. A more literal reading would be, "No temptation has seized you that is not *human*" (*anthropinos*, i.e., manlike). No one can hide behind the argument that his sin is unique and so he can be excused. It is impossible to be in business and not be tempted to sacrifice people for profit. Government workers can be regularly tempted to forfeit integrity for promotions. A mother of preschoolers will be tempted by this culture's priorities to think of herself as a victim of her family's needs.³²
- 2) *God controls the context of our temptation.* We've all seen load-limit signs on highways, bridges, and elevators. Knowing that too much strain can cause severe damage or complete collapse, engineers determine the exact amount of stress that various materials can safely endure. Posted warnings tell us not to exceed the maximum load. Human beings also have their load limits, which vary from person to person. Some people, for example, can bear the pressure of trial and temptation better than others; yet everyone has a breaking point and can take only so much.³³ In this verse, Paul promises that God is faithful and He will not allow you to be tested or tempted beyond what you are able. Yet, we must draw on God to deliver us. Mother Theresa (1910-1997) once said, "I know God won't give me more than I can handle. I just wish he didn't trust me so much."³⁴
- 3) *God personally and providentially provides a specific way of escape.* The use of the definite article ("the") with both "temptation" and "way of escape" points to a particular way of escape that is available in each temptation. Paul did not mean there is one way of escape that is available regardless of the temptation. His point is: Look for the escape route! There is a way out!³⁵ Overcoming temptation is not a matter of simply sitting down on a sofa with a box of chocolates and telling God to make the way of escape from whatever sin is tempting us. We are responsible to do our part as well. In 10:13-14, Paul states that we discover God's saving plan in the key words: "bear," "stand up," and "flee" (10:12-14). Paul wants us to be victorious. He wants us to persevere through our tests and temptations. He is for us!

My family and I love badminton. It's an addicting sport that we could play every day throughout the year if the Pacific Northwest weather permitted. My oldest child, Joshua, has become quite good. He is a natural athlete who takes after his mother. Joshua has the ability to put his dad to shame when he wants. Typically, he bounces out to an early lead. There are times when he can be up 5-0. Some of his shots are so amazing he even bows to acknowledge my exuberance for his effort. The problem is: As gifted as Joshua is, he makes self-imposed errors. He faults on the serve or he tries to cram it down Dad's throat, only to be thwarted by hitting it into the net. When Joshua makes these types of mistakes, I have him drop and give me five pushups. I will always say, "Joshua, you don't have to make these mistakes. It has nothing to do with ability. It has to do with concentration." I will then say, "Now, my son, learn from your father." *"It ain't over 'till it's over."*

Paul is telling you and me that we must learn from our fathers—from Israel. We don't have to repeat their mistakes. We can be obedient to God and finish well. Remember, it doesn't matter how you begin, it only matters how you end. *"It ain't over 'till it's over."*

Copyright © 2007 Keith R. Krell. All rights reserved. All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, and 1995 by The Lockman Foundation, and are used by permission.

Permissions: Feel free to reproduce and distribute any articles written by Keith Krell, in part or in whole, in any format, provided that you do not alter the wording in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. It is our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Keith Krell, Timeless Word Ministries, 2508 State Ave NE Olympia, WA 98506, 360-352-9044, www.timelessword.com

Biblical Examples of Falling (1 Cor 10:12)

The Scriptures are replete with accounts of God's children who fell into sin and failed to finish well. Interestingly, many of the following men committed sins similar to those of the Exodus generation in 1 Cor 10:6-10.

- **Moses:** Moses tested God by his unbelief (Num 20:12; cf. Jude 5). Consequently, God refused to allow Moses to enter the Promised Land and he died prematurely in the wilderness. Most likely, Paul has in mind the disqualification of Moses when he writes 1 Cor 9:24-10:13 (see esp. 10:1-2).
- **Lot:** Lot chose selfish greed over deference to his uncle (Gen 13:8-13). He craved what this world had to offer. This initial sin led to others (e.g., weak spiritual leadership, drunkenness, incest). There is no account of Lot's death in Scripture, yet Peter calls Lot "righteous" three times (2 Pet 2:7-8). Nevertheless, the words of Paul should be included on Lot's epitaph: "But those who long to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction" (1 Tim 6:9).
- **Samson:** Samson tested God by choosing to intermarry among pagans (Judg 14:1-3), desecrating his Nazirite vows (14:5-6), and refusing to glorify God (15:16). He also committed sexual immorality with a prostitute (16:1). His weakness for women put him in a compromising position that humiliated God's people and prematurely ended his own life (16:28-31).
- **Saul:** Saul tested God by disregarding Samuel's instructions and offering a sacrifice himself (1 Sam 13:8-9), refusing to submit to God's decree (15:9), attempting to kill David (19:1; 24:2; 26:2), and consulting mediums (28:1-25). He then concluded his life poorly by killing himself (31:1-5).
- **Solomon:** Solomon "offered sacrifices and incense on the high places" (1 Kgs 3:3). He pursued wine, wealth, women, wisdom, and work (Eccl 2:1-11). Yet, his downfall was his fetish for an obscene amount of women who eventually turned his heart to idolatry (11:3-5).
- **Asa:** After many military victories, King Asa began to compromise in his duties. As a result, the prophet Hanani confronted him (2 Chron 16:7-9). Asa rebuffed God's rebuke and threw Hanani in prison. When his subjects protested, Asa oppressed them as well. He then died from a severe disease in his feet (16:12-13).
- **Nadab and Abihu, Uzzah, and Uzziah:** These four men were religious leaders in Israel that had special responsibilities to keep the tabernacle holy. Their failure to do so resulted in physical death (Lev 10:1-3; 2 Sam 6:6-7). The lone exception was Uzziah who was stricken with leprosy all the days of his life (2 Chron 26:16-21).
- **Jonah:** Jonah tested God by refusing his preaching commission and running away (Jonah 1:3-17). Furthermore, he grumbled when God extended grace to the Ninevites (4:2-3, 8).
- **Ananias and Sapphira:** This couple refused to disclose the whole truth about the portion of money that they gave to the church (Acts 5:1-4). Therefore, God prematurely ended their physical lives (5:5, 10) and "great fear" fell upon the whole church (5:5, 11).
- **Demas:** Demas, one of Paul's fellow workers (Col 4:14; Phlm 24), forsook him on account of his love for the world (2 Tim 4:10). This is idolatry (Jas 4:4; 1 John 2:16) and resulted in Demas being disqualified from God's approval.

These biblical examples remind us of Jesus' words, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be required" (Luke 12:48). May we learn from these biblical examples of failure and seek to finish well.

Scripture Reference

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Colossians 1:28-29

James 1:12

Hebrews 12:1-2

1 Timothy 4:11-16

2 Timothy 4:7-8

Luke 14:25-35

Study Questions

1. Do I value the many spiritual blessings and privileges I have received (10:1-4)? If so, how do I exhibit my gratitude? How could I grow in gratitude and learn to express greater appreciation? Read Ephesians 5:1-4; Colossians 2:6-7; 3:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; and Hebrews 12:28-29; 13:15.
2. Why is it so easy for me to sin in spite of all that Christ has done for me (10:5)? What role does a lack of biblical meditation and prayer play in this failure? How can I improve my memory and appropriation of my many great spiritual privileges?
3. What sin from the list in 10:7-10 do I struggle with the most: idolatry, immorality, testing God, or grumbling? How am I presently seeking to overcome this sin? Who is holding me accountable in this endeavor? What specific victories (however small) have I experienced along the way?
4. In *Running the Red Lights*, Charles Mylander writes, "A believer does not slip into sin because he cannot avoid it. Rather, he does so because he inwardly cherishes a hidden love for it. The truth is, he loves this sin more than he loves Jesus Christ...A Christian can never conquer the one sin that gets him down until he loves the Lord Jesus more than that sin. Then he will repudiate his sin and turn to Jesus, his greater love." Do I agree with these conclusions? Why or why not? How do these words relate to my present struggles? How will I respond to what Dr. Mylander has written?
5. Do I read the Old Testament with the goal of being encouraged and warned (10:6, 11)? Am I balancing my biblical diet by reading and studying the Old Testament? When is the last time I studied a book of the Old Testament? Read Romans 15:4 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
6. What is my greatest test or temptation? Have I called out to the Lord Jesus? What escape hatch did He provide? Meditate on Hebrews 4:14-16. For other verses dealing with God's part in temptation, see Exodus 16:4; Deuteronomy 8:2; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Job 1:12; 2:6; Matthew 6:13; and James 1:13.

Notes

¹ This has been adapted and revised from Wayne Goodall, *Why Great Men Fall: 15 Strategies to Rise Above it All* (Green Forrest, AR: New Leaf, 2005), 11-12. I highly recommend this book.

² <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/y/yogiberra110034.html>, accessed July 23, 2007.

³ These two outline points come from Michael P. Andrus, "The Peril of Overconfidence" (1 Cor 10:1-13): unpublished sermon notes preached on 4/22/01.

⁴ The explanatory "for" (*gar*) and the vocative "brothers and sisters" (*adelphoi*) in 1 Cor 10:1 indicates that 10:1-13 has close ties with the exhortation and warning that has just preceded. See also Robertson and Plummer 1914:199; Fee 1987:443; Garland 2003:447. Many commentators either ignore (e.g., Conzelmann 1975:165) or downplay the significance of the *gar* by claiming that it connects only loosely to what precedes (Weiss 1910:249; Lietzmann 1949:44; Barrett 1968:220; Gundry-Volf 1990:239). The *gar* ("for") is left untranslated in the NRSV; NJB; and NLT, which makes it difficult for the English reader to see any connection.

⁵ 1 Cor 10:1-4 form one long single sentence in Greek.

⁶ Further support for the regenerate state of the Exodus generation is found in Exod 2:23-25; 4:30-31; 12:27-28; 14:30-31; 15:2, 13, 16; 19:8; Deut 1:31; Neh 9:13-21; Pss 78:39, 42; 99:8; 106:6-10; Isa 63:8-9; Acts 13:18; and Heb 11:29. This last verse is especially insightful. In the closing words of the "Hall of Faith," the writer includes the Exodus generation among "all [who] were commended for their faith." For like other great heroes of faith (11:32) who either stumbled badly (e.g., Samson, David) or ended poorly (e.g., Gideon) he states, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea" (11:29).

⁷ Strangely, the NIV leaves out the fifth and final "all" (*pantes*) probably on account of the repetition. Yet, Paul is intentionally being repetitious to drive home the point that "all" Israel was saved and no one was left out.

⁸ Eaton writes, "It seems that the Corinthians specially valued the symbols of baptism and the Lord's Supper. In all of Paul's letters only 1 Corinthians mentions the Lord's Supper and 1 Corinthians 1:13-16 is perhaps Paul's only direct mention of water baptism." Michael Eaton, *Preaching Through the Bible: 1 Corinthians 1-9* (Kent, England, 1998), 12. Eaton notes, "A few times when the word 'baptism' is used, the reference is to the Spirit rather than to water (Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12). There is also 1 Corinthians 15:29 but that certainly is not a verse from which we can learn much about water-baptism" (13). This final point is hotly contested.

⁹ Scholars call this a *litotes*.

¹⁰ Cf. Num 14:16. Morris 1990:140 writes, "The verb *katastronnumi* lends a picturesque touch. It really means 'to spread out'. Paul pictures the wilderness strewn with corpses. This is not simply a natural death. It is God's sentence against the rebels."

¹¹ The phrase "not well-pleased" (*eudokeo*) in 10:5 has the same root as the word "disqualified" (*adokimos*) in 9:27.

¹² Eaton, *1 Corinthians 1-9*, 14.

¹³ It is quite possible that Paul had Moses in mind when he expressed concern about disqualification, and in anticipation of saying "... our fathers...Moses" (1 Cor 10:1-2). If so, this again demonstrates that Paul's fear was not the loss of his justification, but rather the failure to experience God's approval by finishing well and receiving both temporal and eternal rewards.

¹⁴ Paul's use of *tauta* ("these things") in 1 Cor 10:6 and 11 refers to the history of Israel, specifically, their privileges, their failures, and their disqualification from God's purpose.

¹⁵ Some scholars argue for complete typology in this passage. However, Spicq (1994:3:384, 387) is likely correct to state that when *tupos* is used in ethical discussions the word "is a model, hardly different from an example." The NT confirms this understanding. A *tupos* reveals a pattern or correspondence, observed after the fact that contains a teaching (cf. Rom 16:7). The word also clearly means "example" in Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:7; 2 Thess 3:9; 1 Tim 4:12; and Titus 2:7. Moreover, the phrase "so that we might not be" confirms that they were not types but "examples for guidance."

¹⁶ The noun "admonition" (*noutheteo*) means a reminder or warning that calls for correct or corrective action, as teaching given to children (Eph 6:4), or warning served on a divisive person (Titus 3:10).

¹⁷ Paul believes that "whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom 15:4; cf. 2 Tim 3:16-17).

¹⁸ In 1 Cor 10:1-4, Paul revealed four privileges that God had provided the Israelites. Now in 10:7-10, he describes four failures, all of which occurred from their refusal to live responsibly in the light of their new spiritual blessings.

¹⁹ The phrase "stood up to play" is a euphemism for sexual relations. Richard Hays (1997:163) suggests that Paul highlights this one verse from Exodus because it ties into the theme of eating and drinking that reverberates throughout 1 Cor 8-10.

²⁰ Doug Goins, "The Danger of Disqualification": <http://www.pbc.org/library/files/html/4526.html>.

²¹ Garland 2003:462-63 writes, “The ‘Case of the Missing Thousand’—the discrepancy between Paul’s number, twenty-three thousand, and the twenty-four thousand mentioned in Num. 25:9—has prompted a number of solutions.” Yet, Garland concludes that the most promising alternative is that Paul deliberately mixed Num 25:9 with Exod 34:28, which records that three thousand died at the hands of the Levites who administered harsh punishment on the stubborn idolaters. Paul appears to have chosen Exod 32:28 as the model for his wording: “they fell,” “[in that] one day,” and “three thousand,” and combined it with the “twenty” from the Numbers text. Since twenty-four is a much more common multiple than twenty-three in the OT, it would seem to be deliberate choice.

²² Goodall, *Why Great Men Fall*, 40-41.

²³ Shirley Glass, *Not Just Friends* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2003), 3.

²⁴ Surprisingly, the verb “test” (*peirazo*) does not appear in Num 21, but it does in the summary of this incident in Ps 77:18 LXX: “They tested God in their hearts by demanding the food they craved” (see also Exod 17:2; Deut 6:16). Moses memorialized the people’s faithlessness with a play on words, calling the place where they tested God and wrangled with Moses “Massah,” which means “testing, proof” and “Meribah,” which means “quarreling, full finding” (Exod 17:7). In Ps 94:8 LXX, these locations are not transliterated but translated as “testing” and “rebellion.”

²⁵ The litany of Israel’s sins in Ps 105 provides the best backdrop for understanding the reference to the grumbling. Paul’s exposition has noticeable vocabulary parallels with the psalm.

²⁶ Mart De Haan, “Rumblings” in *Our Daily Bread* 3/1/1997: <http://www.rbc.org/odb/odb-03-01-97.shtml>.

²⁷ The horrible downward spiral in Romans 1 that ends with murder, violence, a depraved mind, and inhumanity in family relationships begins with ingratitude (1:21). Ingratitude is what triggers the downward spiral.

²⁸ Eugene Peterson paraphrases this verse in *The Message* by saying, “Don’t be so naive and self-confident. You’re not exempt. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else. Forget about self-confidence; it’s useless. Cultivate God-confidence.”

²⁹ We should note that 10:13 begins without a connective. It simply and abruptly begins with, “No testing has taken you ...” (*peirasmos humas ouk eilephen*) Why? After the above warnings one might just think, “Who then can possibly stand?” So Paul begins abruptly and emphatically in order to stress a point: God’s faithfulness, concern, awareness, and provision in the Corinthians’ problem of testing. The Lord is faithful, and furthermore, He is in control. See Keathley III 1998:11.

³⁰ See also Eaton, *1 Corinthians 1-9*, 18.

³¹ Trail 1995:27 suggests that the particular temptation that Paul seems to be referring to is to think oneself free from danger while attending the idol feasts.

³² Bryan Chapell, *Holiness by Grace* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 93.

³³ Richard De Haan, “Load Limits” in *Our Daily Bread* 7/21/2003: <http://www.rbc.org/odb/odb-07-21-03.shtml>.

³⁴ See <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/mothertere101983.html>; accessed 23 August 2007.

³⁵ Calvin 1960:213 puts it well: “I myself think that this was written to encourage them, so that, after hearing such dreadful examples of the wrath of God, as Paul has just mentioned, they might not be disturbed, and so lose heart.”