



Take Heed Lest You Fall

The Danger of Overconfidence

Perhaps you've heard it, too. This survey or that reveals the state of morality in America - and the news isn't good. Perhaps most indicative is the state of the family in this country. Any nation that will tolerate abortion on demand, divorce for any cause, and seriously consider legalizing same-sex marriage is gravely out of step with the God of the Bible. As disturbing as these trends are though, even more disturbing are those surveys that indicate the morality among those who name the Name of Christ. In many circles it isn't that different than the world. It is often pointed out that the divorce rate is the same among those professing Christ as it is in the rest of the society. Many of those who name the Name of Christ cannot seem to figure out just what is right and what is wrong - or whether they really need to be that concerned about it. Other indicators of decline are similar. It is disheartening and distressing.

The early church had to deal with the world's encroachment, too. The Corinthian church had more than its share of members who were still carnal. Yet they thought they were doing just fine. That is the basis for Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. The Christians at Corinth needed to quit making excuses for their sin and get on track. Their arrogance (1 Corinthians 5:2) wasn't at all appropriate for the danger of their real condition. Paul's warning to them was also meant for us. We should take it to heart.

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

10:1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. 6 Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. 7 And 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." 8 Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. 9 Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. 10 Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 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, that you may be able to endure it. NAS

1. Were these words written to Christians or non-Christians? See 1 Corinthians 1:2. Why is it important to determine this before studying a Bible passage in depth?

2. Read verses 1-5. To what period of Bible history do these verses refer?

3. In verses 1-5, Paul mentions six experiences he wanted them to remember about their Jewish ancestors. They are listed below, along with the passages in Old Testament to which they refer. Look up and read the story behind each experience.

- a. All were under the cloud. Read Exodus 14:19-20
- b. All passed through the sea. Read Exodus 14:21-22.
- c. All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. (This is probably best explained by the fact that when they crossed the Red Sea, they were fully enveloped with the walls of water on either side and the cloud over them, fulfilling the meaning of the word "baptized," that is, "immersed.")
- d. All ate the same spiritual food. Read Exodus 16:4-6.
- e. All drank the same spiritual drink. Read Exodus 17:6; Psalm 78:15-16.
- f. Yet God was not pleased with them. Most of them were laid low in the wilderness. Read Numbers 14:29.

4. Read verse 6. These people had the benefit of seeing God work directly in their lives, seeing Him work many miraculous deeds, yet their faith wasn't strong enough to get them to the Promised Land! What was the lesson for the Corinthian Christians and what is the lesson for us?

5. Read verses 7-10. What four specific sins did Paul mention as he continued to apply this lesson from Israel's history to the Corinthian Christians? Are these still issues today?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

6. Read the historical event behind each of the sins Paul mentions.

- a. Verse 7, cf. Exodus 32:4-6.
- b. Verse 8, cf. Numbers 25:1-9.
- c. Verse 9, cf. Numbers 21:5-6.
- d. Verse 10, cf. Numbers 16:1-35.

7. Read verse 11. State Paul's admonition in your own words.

8. Read verse 12. Describe the attitude Paul warning about here? What does he say should be done about it?

9. Read verse 13. Man's tendency is sometimes to believe or claim that his temptations are unique and that "no one has ever faced such things before." What does Paul say about such claims?

What assurance does Paul give about the faithfulness of God? How can this help a person who is under temptation?

What will God provide with every temptation?

Will the "way of escape" be removal of the temptation or a way to pass through it? (Be sure to get your answer from the text.)

For Your Personal Consideration...

· If God did not make exceptions for the faithless Israelites who fell in the desert, what is the lesson for us?

· If we must "take heed" lest we fall, how much attention should we pay to our Christian walk? Are you paying enough attention to it?

· If all temptations we face are "common to man" then can we ever claim that ours are unique? Are times tougher for us living today than they have been for those who have lived before us?

· If there are no unique temptations, and others have faced them successfully before, can we also face them successfully? Where might we learn about those who have faced temptation successfully?

· Can we ever claim that God has allowed us to be tempted beyond our ability? Can we ever say, "I can't" with regard to anything God expects us to do? What might we say instead? (Philippians 4:13)

· What are some possible "ways of escape" that God might provide for us to help us endure temptations successfully?