

Chapter 10

Warnings from Israel's history 10:1-13

Spiritual food and drink 10:1-5

v1 Brothers and sisters, I do not want you to forget that all our ancestors were under the cloud. And all of them passed through the sea. v2 They all received baptism into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. v3 They all ate the same spiritual food. v4 And they drank the same spiritual drink. Because they drank from the spiritual rock that went with them. That rock was Christ. v5 But God was not pleased with most of them. Their dead bodies lay all over the desert.

Verses 1-2 The book of Exodus (chapters 13-17) and Psalm 105:39-41 record the escape of the Israelites from Egypt. They had been slaves. But Moses led them out and through the desert. The 'cloud' was a sign that God was with them to guide and to protect them (Exodus 13:21-22; 14:19-20). They were able to go through the Red Sea on dry land. God sent a strong east wind to push back the water. So they could cross safely (Exodus 14:21-22).

Perhaps the 'cloud' was a picture of the Holy Spirit as he guides the Church. Some writers think that it was. Christian baptism is like the Israelites as they went through the sea. This is what Paul is saying. God used Moses to rescue the Israelites from being slaves in Egypt. In the same way, God used Christ to rescue us from being slaves to sin. 'Baptism into Moses' is a phrase similar to that in Romans 6:3. Believers receive 'baptism into Christ'. 'Baptism' meant that the Israelites accepted Moses as their leader. 'Baptism into Christ' means that we must be loyal to Christ. He is our leader.

Verses 3-4 The spiritual food was manna. It was a special kind of bread that God gave the Israelites during their time in the desert

(Exodus 16:11-15). When they were without water, Moses struck a rock. Water came out (Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:1-11). Moses got water from a rock at the beginning and end of their time in the desert. There was a popular Jewish belief that the rock followed the Israelites. It always gave them water to drink.

Christ is like the rock in the desert. He gives Christians a continuous supply of spiritual water to keep them spiritually alive. To call Christ the rock is a way to show that Christ is God. It is a name for God in the Old Testament, for example in Psalm 18:2, 31.

Verse 5 Although God had done so much for them, the Israelites did not obey him. So they died in the desert. Only Joshua and Caleb and the very young people entered the promised land. Paul was warning all Christians. They may have received baptism. They may take the bread and wine during the Lord's Supper. But they must trust and obey God. Otherwise, there is a danger that they will lose their spiritual life.

The examples of Israel's sins in the desert 10:6-10

v6 Now these things happened as examples. They are to stop us from wanting evil things as they did. v7 Do not worship idols as some of them did. The scripture says, 'The people sat down to eat and drink. They got up to dance.' (See Exodus 32:6.) v8 We should not be guilty of sexual sins as some of them were. And in one day, 23 000 people died. v9 We should not test the Lord's patience as some of them did. Snakes killed them. v10 Do not complain about your leaders. That is what some of the Israelites did. The angel of death destroyed them.

Paul described four different occasions when the Israelites sinned. They are a warning to all Christians. God will punish those who do not obey him.

1. The worship of idols, verse 7

While Moses was up the mountain, Aaron made a gold idol in the shape of a young cow (Exodus 32:1-6). Many of the people worshipped it. As a punishment, the Levites killed three thousand people. Other people died from a disease (Exodus 32:28, 35).

2. Sexual sins, verse 8

‘They got up to dance’ was a way to describe wild behaviour that included sexual sins. Paul must have thought also about the time when the Israelites had sex with women from Moab (Numbers 25:1). This led them to worship the gods of the people from Moab. Because of a disease that followed, 24 000 Israelites died (Numbers 25:9). Paul said ‘23 000’. Perhaps the other 1000 did not die on the same day. Or perhaps the number was between 23 000 and 24 000 and is given approximately in each place.

3. Testing the Lord’s patience, verse 9

The Israelites began to complain about the manna that God had given to them and the lack of water. They said that Moses had brought them out of Egypt to die in the desert. Poisonous snakes then bit the people and many people died (Numbers 21:5-6).

4. Complaining, verse 10

The Israelites complained against Moses as their leader (Numbers 4:1-38). They complained because Moses had spoken about God’s punishment of Korah and those who followed him (Numbers 16:41). This time, many people died from a disease. Then God said that only Joshua, Caleb and the very young people would enter the promised land (Numbers 14:20-31). All the rest would die in the desert. Paul used words from

Exodus 12:23 when he spoke about the ‘angel of death’.

The Christians in Corinth had complained about Paul. When they did this, they were complaining about God. Paul was warning them by these examples. They must be careful. If not, they would fail to receive what God has promised to Christians.

Warning and promise 10:11-13

v11 These things happened to them as examples for us. They are in Scripture to warn us who are living now. The world is near to its end. v12 So be careful. You may think that you are standing firm in your faith. If you think that, you might easily sin. v13 All other people have the same temptations as you. God is faithful. He will not allow you to suffer a temptation that is too strong for you to deal with. But when temptation happens, God will also give you a way out. He will do this so that it does not defeat you.

Verses 11-12 Paul believed that God told Moses to write these scriptures. Then, in the future, people could avoid the sins of the Israelites. The Christians at Corinth lived after the death and resurrection of Jesus. They were in the new age that leads to the final time of God’s plan for the world.

Verse 12 Although God had done so much for them, the Israelites failed. It can be easy for someone who is too confident to sin. Peter said that he would be loyal to Jesus, whatever happened. Instead, he said three times that he did not even know Jesus.

Verse 13 After the warning, Paul encourages the Christians in Corinth:

1. They are not the only people who suffer temptations. Other people also suffer temptations. And they defeat them with God’s help.

2. God does not allow anyone to suffer a test that is beyond his spiritual strength.

3. There is always an end to a temptation. Christians can defeat it with God's help. They are like an army in a narrow mountain route who find a way to escape from their enemy.

The reason that they should avoid pagan temple feasts 10:14-22

v14 Therefore, my dear friends, run away from the worship of idols. v15 I am talking to sensible people. Judge for yourselves what I say. v16 We give thanks for the cup of wine at the Lord's Supper. It is then that we are sharing in the blood of Christ. When we break the bread, we are sharing in the body of Christ. v17 We all eat from the one loaf. So, we, who are many, are one body.

v18 Think about Israel's people. Those who eat the sacrifices share in the offering on the altar. v19 I do not mean that what the pagans give to a god is of value. I do not mean that the pagan god is real. v20 No, I do not. But the gifts of pagans are to demons, not to God. And I do not want you to share with demons. v21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons as well. You cannot eat bread at the Lord's table and at the table of demons. v22 We are not trying to make the Lord jealous. We are not stronger than he is.

Verses 14-15 In 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, Paul had warned the Christians at Corinth by reminding them about events in Israel's history. Now he gives them a strong order. They must keep far away from the worship of idols. They are sensible people. So, they should be able to understand that his words are true.

Verses 16-17 They share the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper has a special meaning. They eat the bread and they drink the wine

together to remember Christ. This shows them that there is a unity between them and Christ. There is also unity of Christians with each other. This is because they share the cup of wine and eat the bread together. They become like one body because they share one loaf.

Verse 18 When the Israelites shared a meal after a sacrifice, they became united in their worship of God.

Verses 19-21 When pagans offer a sacrifice, they are not offering it to a real god. The Christians at Corinth had agreed that idols do not really exist (8:4). But they were wrong to think that they could therefore share a meal in a pagan temple. It was not just a social occasion. Paul gave two reasons why they were wrong:

1. To share a meal in a pagan temple united them with pagan guests. Therefore Christians would appear to believe that the god of the pagans was real.
2. People were really worshipping non-human evil beings (usually called 'demons') when they worshipped idols. So because they were sharing a pagan meal, Christians were becoming partners with demons. These Christians had shown by their actions that they were carrying out the purpose of demons. They were doing the demons' work because they were destroying the faith of other Christians (8:11). They were preventing pagan guests from knowing the proper faith. It is not possible to worship Christ and also to worship demons.

Verse 22 Paul includes himself in his statement because he says 'we'. He warns them about the danger of making God 'jealous'. The second commandment forbade the worship of idols because God is a 'jealous' God (Exodus 20:4). God is holy and powerful. He will not allow anything to take his place. In the song of Moses, God blamed the Israelites for their worship of

idols (Deuteronomy 32:2). By their actions, the Christians in Corinth showed that they doubted God's right to punish them. They were quarrelling with God as if pieces of a broken pot could question the maker of the pot (Isaiah 45:9-10). They would fail to please God.

The problem of meat from the market 10:23–11:1

v23 You say, 'Everything is allowed!' But not everything is good for us. Again, you say, 'Everything is allowed!' But not everything builds us up spiritually. v24 No one should look out for his own advantage. Instead, we should look out for the advantage of other people. v25 Eat anything that they sell in the meat market. Do not ask any questions because of your conscience. v26 Because Scripture says 'The earth belongs to the Lord. And so does everything in it.' v27 Suppose that a non-Christian invites you to a meal. And suppose that you want to go. Then eat anything that your host puts in front of you. Do not ask any questions about it. v28 But someone may say to you 'This food has been part of a sacrifice to an idol.' Then do not eat it. Think about the man who told you. Think about what is good for him. Do not eat it, because of his sense of what is right and wrong. v29 I am talking about the other person's feeling about it, not yours. What someone else thinks should not affect my freedom. v30 Perhaps I give thanks when I take part in the meal. I am eating food that I thank God for. People should not blame me for that. v31 So eat and drink and do everything else for the glory of God. v32 Do not cause anyone to sin. It does not matter whether they are Jews, Greeks, or members of the Christian church. v33 I try to please everyone in every way. I am looking out for what is best for other people. I do it to help

them to accept the way to heaven. (Chapter 11) v1 Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.

Verses 23-24 The Christians at Corinth are emphasising their freedom to act as they choose. But not everything that they are free to do will be good for their faith. It will not help their Christian faith to become strong. And Christians should think about what is best for other people rather than for themselves.

Verses 25-26 They can eat any meat that they buy in the market. They need not ask where it came from. Paul uses the words from Psalm 24:1 to remind them that all food comes from God. So, they can be free to enjoy his gifts.

Verses 27-28 Then Paul gives his opinion about meals in private houses. It is possible to accept an invitation from someone who is not a Christian. Then the Christian should accept whatever his host provides. He should ask no questions about it. But he may hear that the meat has been part of a pagan sacrifice. If so, he should not eat it. It should not matter to him. But the person who told him might have been trying to show respect for the Christian's belief. Then the Christian should not eat the meat. He should not offend someone who was trying to be helpful. It might also offend another Christian who was there. The other Christian might have found it difficult to understand that an idol was not real. So, for this reason as well, the Christian should not eat the meat. He should not worry another Christian whose faith was weak.

Verses 29-30 Paul is emphasising his own freedom. He should be free to eat food for which he has thanked God. But, in verses 31-32, he shows why he limits his own freedom. And he shows why they should limit theirs.

Verses 31-32

1. Everything that they do should be for the glory of God.
2. They should think about other people. They must do nothing to cause other people to sin. It does not matter whether the other people are Jews, Gentiles or other Christians. Paul himself behaved in a way that would attract people to the good news about Jesus Christ. He would not take advantage of his freedom. He wanted other

people to become Christians, and to be strong in their faith.

Chapter 11 verse 1 Paul invited people to see how Christ made a difference to him. Christ affected the way that he acted. So, he urged them to imitate his behaviour. He himself imitated Christ, who always put the needs of other people first. Paul was not being proud. But he was eager that the Christians at Corinth should correctly understand Christian freedom.

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