

### 23. Learning to Resist Temptation

In our last topic, we saw that Paul gave us an example of learning to minister to people by setting aside our own desires so that we can effectively communicate the Gospel to people of other backgrounds in a way that they can understand. We want to provide a similar example to our physical and spiritual children so that they will see what it means to set aside their own desires to effectively communicate the Gospel. We also saw that Paul helped the Corinthians to understand the freedom that we have in Christ as Paul set aside his own desires and disciplined himself in order to effectively share the Gospel with the Corinthians.

However, it is possible to misuse that freedom to satisfy the sinful desires of the flesh instead of using that freedom to serve one another in love. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Instead of using their liberty to serve one another in love, Israel left the slavery of Egypt and used the freedom that they experienced in the wilderness to practice various forms of sin. As a result, we will look at the example of Israel and be shown why we want to resist temptation instead of using our freedom to sin.

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, we read, “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.” Here, we see that God brought the entire nation of Israel out of the slavery of Egypt. He protected them from the heat of the desert by a cloud. He opened the Red Sea so that Israel could escape when Pharaoh came after them and then destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptian army in the Red Sea.

Israel was also baptized into Moses so that they became a part of his life as he followed the Lord and led them through the wilderness. God provided them with manna for forty years in the wilderness and provided them with water to meet their needs in the wilderness. In addition, we are told that the spiritual Rock followed them and provided everything that they needed. The word translated “Rock” speaks of a great massive cliff of rock. In Matthew 16:18, we read, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” The Greek word for “Peter” is “petros” which means *a little rock*. The Greek translated rock is “Petra” which means *a great massive rock*. Just as Christ is the great massive Rock foundation upon which Christ said He would build the church, we read that Christ was that great massive spiritual Rock that provided everything Israel needed in the wilderness.

The final verses of 1 Corinthians 9 talked about the way that Paul disciplined his life in order to effectively serve others and bring them to the Lord. Paul now shows us in 1 Corinthians 10 that Israel used their freedom to satisfy the evil desires of the flesh instead of choosing to serve one another in love. 1 Corinthians 10:5 says, “But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.” When Israel came to Kadesh-Barnea, Moses sent twelve spies to spy out the land of Canaan that later became the land of Israel. Ten of the spies focused on the giants and said Israel could not defeat them. Joshua and Caleb focused on the

power of the Lord to give them victory. The people listened to the report of the ten spies and refused to enter the land. As a result, the people were forced to wander in the wilderness for forty years. During those forty years, all of the adults except Joshua and Caleb died in the wilderness with the result that their bodies were scattered across the wilderness.

We see that Paul said the people of Israel in the wilderness became negative examples by using their freedom to satisfy the evil desires of the flesh. In 1 Corinthians 10:6-11, we read, “Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.’ Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” The people of Israel used their freedom to commit various forms of sin.

We see that the real cause of the sin of Israel actually began in the hearts of the people. We see that they lusted after evil things. The word that is translated “lusted” means *to have a strong desire for*. Here, we see that the people of Israel had a strong desire for evil things. Here, we see the source of temptation. James 1:13-15 says, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” The word that is translated “desires” here in James is the same root word that is translated “lusted” in 1 Corinthians 10. Lust for evil things will always give birth to sin and sin as it becomes full-grown will result in death.

Some of the people of Israel lusted for the idols that they had worshiped while they were in Egypt. As a result, they asked Aaron to make a golden calf while Moses was up on Mount Sinai receiving the law. Exodus 32:6 says, “Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” That day, three thousand were killed by the Levites. Exodus 32:28 says, “So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.” God then sent a plague in verse 35; and apparently, 20,000 more were killed that day. Many years later, the people also offered sacrifices to the gods of the Moabites. Number 25:9 says, “And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.” As a result, we know that there were at least these two incidents where many people died as a result of worshiping idols. Both of these incidents also involved sexual immorality among the people.

In Numbers 21, the people spoke against God and against Moses. They were actually speaking against Christ because we have seen that He was the Rock that was their provider. At that time, God sent fiery serpents among the people. Many died and God told Moses to make the bronze serpent. Those who showed faith and looked at the bronze serpent lived. Those who failed to look died. John 3:14-15 says, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Christ is the Rock who saved both in the Old Testament and still saves today. When the people complained in Numbers 16, we see that many were destroyed by the destroyer.

Paul said that all these things happened in the Old Testament to the people of Israel as negative examples for us. Paul said that they are a warning to us and to all those upon whom the end of the ages have come. We see that Christ came at the end of the ages to put away sin. Hebrews 9:26 says, “He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” Here, we see that Christ came at the end of the ages to put away sin by His death and resurrection. Christ did this to set us free from sin and that is why Galatians 5:13 reminds us that we are to use that freedom to serve one another in love.

Just as Israel thought that they could stand and fell into sin, we see that what happened to Israel is to be a warning to us. That is why 1 Corinthians 10:12 says, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” If we think that we can stand in our own strength, we are warned that we also may fall. That is why it is so important for us to help our physical and spiritual children understand how to resist temptation.

In 1 Corinthians 10:13, we read, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.” As Christians, we do face temptation. However, God is faithful. God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able. God will always make a way of escape from temptation. That is why we want to help our children understand how to escape temptation. After talking about the temptation of the love of money in 1 Timothy 6:10, Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:11-12, “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” We want to help our children learn to flee temptation, follow the things that strengthen, and fight the good fight of faith.

Then, Paul repeated similar instructions to Timothy in 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Just as Paul was concerned for Timothy, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to flee youthful lusts, follow the things that strengthen their spiritual life and call on the Lord out of a pure heart. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to resist temptation.