

Series: God Is Jealous #1822

Title: 1 Corinthians 10.5-11

Examples For Us

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We spent a good deal of time in the Old Testament discovering that God is jealous and last time we turned to the New Testament and the Book of 1 Corinthians to learn the exact same truth. God is still jealous. And of course He is, because God never changes. He is immutable. Who God is, is always who He is. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. I am glad you are here again so we can continue together in 1 Corinthians chapter 10.

Thus far we read verses 1-5 in which we learned about the Apostle Paul's reference to "our fathers." He begins verse 1 of 1 Corinthians 10, "**For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers...**" This is a reference to the Patriarchs, men like Abraham. And Abraham is our father. We are his spiritual descendants. All of us – believing Jews and Gentiles, Christian Jews and Gentiles – are descendants of our father Abraham. And Paul does not want us to be unaware of the lessons our spiritual father's lives taught us. He then continues in verses 1-4 with three basic blessings they had. And by "they" I mean the Israelites, the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The first blessing was how God delivered them from Egypt. The second blessing was how God baptized them into Moses. And the third blessing was how God provided them spiritual food and drink.

As much as I would like to take time to deal with each of these, I will resist. I invite us to press ahead in the text and consider verse 5. "**Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.**" The Apostle was quite the historian, as all preachers need to be. Here, he references the wilderness wanderings the Israelites embarked upon after leaving Egypt. And in those years their disobedience was so great that God was not well-pleased, so He brought discipline and judgment upon His very own people. They were "laid low." The Greek word here indicates they were strewn or spread all over the wilderness. They were corpses. God brought to an end to their wilfully disobedient lives.

It was so bad that only two men, Joshua and Caleb, were allowed to enter the Promised Land. Not even Moses and Aaron were allowed in, because of their sin at Meribah. You can read about that in Numbers chapter 20. Also, in verse 8 you will read about twenty-three thousand Israelites that died in one day. The results of sin. After alerting us to not be unaware of what happened to our spiritual forefathers and mothers, Paul says this in verse 6, "**Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.**" What poignant words. Why is it important that we not be unaware of what happened to the people of God historically? We read and understand our Old Testament? Here is *why*. So that we can learn from their sinful, wicked behavior. Our fathers serve as examples for us!

And what specifically do they teach us? Paul answers, "That we would not crave evil things as they also craved." Brothers and sisters, if we think the Books of Genesis through Malachi do not have anything to say to us modern, contemporary people then we *really* need Saint Paul's admonition here. Part of the reason we read the whole Scripture – front to back – is so we can learn from our examples and sometimes those examples are bad examples. We must *not* do what they did. And Paul continues by giving us four of their major sins, which by the way, are still prevalent today.

And *look* at what the very first one is. The beginning of verse 7 in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, "**Do not be idolaters, as some of them were...**" It's idolatry! You and I already know the ancient Israelites were idolaters, because we have been reading the Hebrew Bible for several days now. Here, Paul uses an example from Exodus 32. Verse 7 continues, "**As it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.'**" That is, they feasted and then engaged in improper sexual relations. According to commentators the word "play" is a euphemism for sex. Sexual play, like caressing (used in Genesis 26, verse 8, describing sexual play between Isaac and his wife Rebecca).

And what were the results of this sin? God put to death three thousand Israelites! Exodus 32, verse 28, **“So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day.”** It is important to remember the whole context of Exodus chapter 32 is idolatry. We used this chapter earlier in this series. Remember? Moses came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments and found them worshipping a golden calf. In anger he threw the tablets from his hand and shattered them. Well, guess what? The Christians in the church at Corinth had done the same thing! They bowed before idols.

Saved and redeemed by Christ from their sin of idol worship, some of them were now returning to it. Back in chapter 5 verse 11 he wrote, **“I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.”** You heard it, “an idolater.” And over in verse 21 of this chapter, chapter 10, he wrote, **“You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.”** What’s he saying? He is saying false gods are demons and you cannot worship the false gods and the true God at the same time. In order for the Apostle to write this it must have meant some of the Corinthian Christians were returning to idol worship in their deeply pagan culture.

Idolatry is the first of four major sins the people of God in the Old Testament committed *and* that the people of God in Corinth were *committing*. And, quite frankly, the sin of idolatry that is being repeated among believers in churches *now*. Again I ask, what about in your church? Are you and your fellow believers worshipping the One True God in the way He wants to be worshipped? Do you alone worship the God of the Bible in the biblical way in which He commands worship? If you and I, and other Christians, worship anyone or anything other than this God and/or if we worship Him in a way that He rejects, then we too are idolaters.

The next of the four sins, emphasized by the Apostle, is sexual immorality. That’s in verses 7 and 8. **“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.’** (There is the sexual immorality; immoral play between men and women) **8 Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did...”** Here is something that is very, very common: idolatry and sexual immorality go together. They are close associates. This was certainly the case in all ancient religions. And true at Corinth in the combination of the worship of the goddess Aphrodite at her temple on the Acropolis (religion), which included at least one thousand religious prostitutes (sexual immorality).

I will only mention these third and fourth sins, because we want to keep moving, but you should certainly research the text for yourself. The third sin was trying God. Verse 9, **“Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.”** And the fourth sin was complaining. Yes, complaining. Verse 10, **“Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.”** These four sins, still prevalent in our generation, are the ones Paul listed as examples of the evil the Israelites craved *and* examples all of which we must *not* crave in our own lives.

It is little wonder that verse 11 of 1 Corinthians 10 says, **“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.”** There it is again: they are our example. The Hebrew Bible is written for our instruction. We heard that in verse 6 and now again in verse 11. The Apostle repeats himself to emphasize his point. There is a strong link between the ancient people and modern people, since all people since the first people are sinners. I say again: there is a strong link between the ancient people and modern people, since all people since the first people are sinners. We have so, so much to learn from those who have gone before us. I pray we will.

You should know this word “instruction” (“written for our instruction”) strongly carries the meaning of *warning*. It is used to urge or impress upon us a change of behavior in light of God’s judgment upon us. So, we do not read the Scripture passively, as if it is only ancient history and has no impact upon us. No! We read it to convict us of our sin and to change our behavior. And “the ends of the ages” is a reference to the time of the Messiah and the salvation He alone brings. This is our time. This chapter says *more* about idolatry and God’s jealousy, so come back next time for God Is.

---END---