

1. We Must Learn from Our Fathers' Mistakes

a. ALL Israel were delivered out of Egypt by miraculous divine intervention

i. ALL under the cloud – Exodus 13:20-22

1. The entire nation was led by the presence of God under the cloud
2. They were "under" it - they followed it, and were led by it, subservient to it en masse, "and it did not depart from them"
3. They saw the manifestation of God's provision and presence as a Savior through the wilderness as the faithful promise-keeping God

ii. ALL brought through the Sea – Exodus 14:29-31

1. The entire nation passed through the safety of the waters from slavery to freedom
2. They all saw God defeat their enemies and free them from the oppression of slavery, faithfully keeping His Word to save them, and they saw and feared Him

iii. Moses (baptized into)

1. in the cloud and the sea
 - a. this phrase indicates the totality of the Exodus story of Israel
2. baptism indicates the union, willful and voluntary and complete association, with Moses
3. Clearly they struggled with his leadership, but they followed him out of Egypt

iv. ate the same spiritual food – Exodus 16

1. Manna provided by God miraculously for their survival and flourishing
2. Grumbling (dissatisfaction with God's provision) preceded God's provision

v. drank the same spiritual drink – Exodus 17

1. Grumbling (dissatisfaction) preceded God's provision again
2. They drank from the spiritual Rock
 - a. It was the Christ who followed them
 - b. The Christ gave life, always

vi. All of this language is meant to jar the Corinthians' hearts that they, too, have done these things with Christ Jesus

1. They passed under His cloud, through the sea of death, and were baptized into union with Him, giving Him unswerving allegiance as their lord in submission to His Word
2. They (and we!) have eaten the food and drink of the Spirit in our union (baptism) in Christ Jesus, memorializing this union consistently through the Lord's Supper
3. We ARE them, all rescued from slavery and brought through the waters of death, united with our deliverer, and sustained by God's gracious provision in the Christ

b. We are united to God's people throughout history as one people

- i. He is showing that the eternal Son of God was the provider then, as he is to the Corinthians, as He is to us!
- ii. The Christ did not just show up 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem. The Son of God is eternal and has always been the providing agent of God's great blessings to all whom received them
 1. You can see the tri-unity of God expressed here by Paul, for the food and drink is from the Spirit, the Rock of provision is the Christ, and the one whom was displeased with their grumbling is God.

- iii. It is also true that though we are separated by thousands of years, thousands of miles, language, cultures, customs, and technologies, we are one people with God's people throughout all time.
 - 1. The baptism of Israel into Moses, in the cloud and the sea, is the type of union of allegiance which finds its fullness (completion) in the antitype of baptism into Christ of both Jew and Gentile by faith.
 - 2. The food and drink which God provided them in the wilderness typified the Christ, who is the Bread of Heaven and the Rock from whom flows rivers of living water
 - a. The manna, the bread from heaven, was intended to show us our dependence on the Word of God for life (Deuteronomy 8:3)
 - i. Jesus is this bread from heaven (John 6:32-33) which the manna typified, the very Word of God which we depend upon for life (John 1)
 - b. Jesus is the Rock who was struck, from whom flows rivers of water-bringing life (John 4:14/Rev 21:6)
 - 3. The nation of Israel is the type (v6) and the Church of Christ Jesus, made of both Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female, is the antitype.
 - a. Hebrews 11:39-40 - "and all these [OT faithful], though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, but God had provided something better concerning us, in order that apart from us they should not be completed."
 - 4. We make them whole, and they are part of us. There is one people of God - the Church of the Christ, and Paul's typology (not merely an analogy) here stands or falls with this truth.
 - iv. Therefore, we must not cut our Bibles into two pieces!
 - 1. Israel and the Church are not two distinct peoples-NO!
 - a. Their history is our history, their promises our promises
 - 2. Old Testament and New Testament are not two distinct words - NO!
 - a. There are not two words of God, one for Israel and one for the Church.
 - 3. There is one people of God and one Word of God, for we, together with our forefathers of faith, are the body of Christ, for Christ is the one through whom the world was made, with whom Abraham covenanted, Jacob wrestled, David typified, and Isaiah beheld.
 - c. The primary point of Paul for the Corinthians is that we must learn from our fathers' mistakes and must not give sinful desires any quarter
 - i. Our "family history" is full of God's dealings and our failures, His promises and our fears, His provisions for our foolishness
 - ii. We would do well not to think too highly of ourselves and too lowly of our forbearers, for we are more connected with them than we realize, and their downfall of faithlessness and idolatry can be ours as well
 - iii. Thus, "take heed!" and "flee from!" and "I don't want you to be ignorant!"
 - 1. Our propensity to idolatry is equally tempting as was theirs
 - 2. If they fell for idols, then so can we: be on your guard!
2. God's Mercies Cannot be Presumed Simply Because We are Associated with His People
- a. Though all the people had participated with God's blessings upon them, God was not pleased with many (most!) of them
 - i. they were overthrown in the wilderness
 - 1. literally - "scattered through the wilderness"

2. The image is of bodies trailing behind their wanderings, none of which reached the promised land because of their grumbling and idolatry and faithlessness
 3. This does not necessarily imply that all of these who fell were not covenant believers (Moses didn't make it in, either), for it could be discipline of sons rather than judgment on enemies
 - a. Deuteronomy 8/Hebrews 12
- b. For they turned to idols rather than the LORD *for their joy*
- i. "*desired evil*"
 1. Longed for meat from Egypt more than presence of the LORD (Exodus 16)
 2. Longed for sexual satisfaction more than the presence of the LORD (Numbers 25)
 3. Their dissatisfaction with God's promise led them to try and find satisfaction from another "promiser" (idol = false promiser)
 - ii. What are we trusting in to deliver JOY or DELIGHT?
 1. Remember that last week we discovered that it is keeping our eyes on the prize, the joy and delight of our hearts, that enables us to run the race to the end
 2. However, Paul recognizes that if he's not running the right race, running aimlessly outside the lines, etc., then he will be disqualified.
 3. Therefore, it is imperative, says the apostle, that the delight of our hearts is set on the worthy prize, the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, and not upon the worthless things, i.e. idols.
 - iii. Idols are False Promisers, promising us joy but never able to deliver.
 1. They can be good things, in and of themselves, but when they become *ultimate* bringers of joy, when we *must have it*, they ruin us
 - a. A good reputation is a good thing, but when *I must have it*, it will lead me to do whatever pleases people, and I become *enslaved* to their opinion
 - iv. Are we dissatisfied with God's provision? Are we seeking our joy elsewhere, from another "rescuer of our current dissatisfaction"?
- c. Warning that even though many experienced the deliverances of God, the presence of His Spirit, and participated in the provision and sustenance of the Christ, they still loved evil things and were willing to turn to someone other than God to get them.
- i. The visible church can be a mixed group of worshippers of God and worshippers of idolatry, even though they all experience the same participation in God's provision for the community in total.
 1. The reality is that some who call themselves Christians are not, and we should not be deceived that participating in the communal provisions of God to the Church is the same as regeneration of the Holy Spirit which has led to desiring God above all other things, taking His Word seriously, and walking in dependence upon His Spirit for holiness.
 - ii. Presuming upon God's grace while pursuing the things for which Christ came to redeem us from receives a strong and weighty warning from the apostle about disqualification
 1. Paul applies this truth even to himself, and it makes him run even harder
- d. "To him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall."
- i. What do you believe gives strength to your feet?
 1. Overconfidence in any strength but God can lead to our destruction
 2. God calls it "forgetting" Him in Deuteronomy 8, and "taking pride" in oneself
 - a. It is a *devotion* to self, a *love* of self, and a trust intrinsically in one's self that tempts us.
 - b. This idolatry of Self is shown by our preoccupation with self, always thinking about how *we* feel, how *we* are mistreated, how *we* deserve better, how *we* have succeeded, how *we* can build *our* church, etc.

- c. “That this devotion to the self seems not to be like that older devotion to a pagan god blinds the Church to its own unfaithfulness. The end result, however, is no less devastating, because the self is no less demanding. It is as powerful an organizing center as any god or goddess on the market. The contemporary Church is whoring after this god as assiduously as the Israelites in their darker days. It is baptizing as faith the pride that leads us to think much about ourselves and much of ourselves.” (David F. Wells, *The Courage to be Protestant*)

3. What shall we do?

- a. The solution to the temptation to idolatry is to heed the warning of God's provision and to set your affections, trust, delights, fears, and allegiance upon the Lord who has graced you so provocatively in Christ Jesus
 - i. We must learn to recognize idolatry as within the realm of our *desires*
 - ii. What am I depending upon for my joy? What is the prize which I have fixed my eyes upon and for which I labor, strive, and contend?
 - iii. Is that prize worthy of my labor, my power, my love, my affections, my glory?
 - iv. How shall I battle the temptations of my very heart to wander to worthless idols?
- b. See the Cross of Christ as your provision, His resurrection as your assurance, and His return as your hope for true and abiding joy

Conclusion:

God has said that with each of these temptations to idolatry, to inordinate and evil desires, that He will provide a way of escape. What is that escape? He says it in v13 – “GOD IS FAITHFUL”. The Israelites didn’t believe it. They wanted meat, and God could not be trusted to fill their bellies, so they *longed for* Egypt. They wanted joy, and God’s command of sexual purity could not be trusted to bring it, so they *longed for* the daughters of Moab. The meat of Egypt and the beauty of exotic women only became dangers when their hearts were dissatisfied with God.

So, the power to stand up under temptation is to behold the *faithfulness* of God. He can be trusted, idols cannot. His Word is true, our hearts are deceitful. That tub of ice cream? It’s not faithful to deliver comfort. That perfect house? It’s not trustworthy to deliver security. That man’s physical affections? It is not ultimately faithful to fill your soul with joy. They can’t deliver on their promises. But God can and He does. The cross and the empty tomb prove this. God provides a way out from your fears and anxieties, the depths of your sinful desires, and your foolishness. His name is Christ Jesus, who loves you more deeply than you can even fathom. Yet, let us not presume on this grace, but let us strive to please Him, for He is worthy, having brought us through the sea of death, under the Spirit of God’s holiness, and provided for us the sustenance of our souls and the life-giving water of His Spirit. He is faithful, and He alone is worthy of our adoration, our delight, our fear, our joy, our allegiance, and all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength.

Idolatry is always the reason that we ever do or feel anything wrong. Why do we ever lie, or fail to love, or keep our promises, or live unselfishly? Of course, the broad answer is that we are “weak and sinful.” But, the particular answer is always that there is something else that we feel we must have other than Jesus Christ, something more important to our hearts than God, some promise that is more trustworthy than God’s Word, and that something has enslaved us through inordinate desires. So the way out is not to start a 10-step plan to defeating sinful habits, but rather to fill our eyes with the faithfulness of God. Behold His perfections as He has revealed them in His Word. Behold the depths of His grace, His patience, His absolute dedication to you as the joy of His heart and the apple of His eye until your affections for Him are ignited, your logic is on fire, and your works are the works of God.

More on idols of the heart next week.