

“These Things Were Our Examples”

1 Corinthians 10:1-6

The first word of verse one (“moreover,” or, “for”) connects this chapter which what preceded, and the context of the previous two chapters in which the Apostle Paul defends his ministry and demonstrates to the church leadership and membership of Corinth, by both his words in the letter as well as the life he lived among them, that what he did he did for the sake of the gospel and for the cause of Christ.

In the first part of this chapter he seems to be addressing the Jewish segment of the church primarily – possibly because they were the primary leaders of the church (the pastor/teachers, pastor/overseers/ deacons, etc.) and they would be able to use the example to teach the Gentiles and the weaker believers in the church. According to most scholars that have studied the historical and cultural background of the New Testament churches, the church at Corinth was made up of primarily Gentile believers. “The members had a varied background – Greeks, Romans, Jews, and perhaps some other nationalities. While some Jews had been won (Acts 18:8), the majority of the members were from the Gentiles” (Hiebert, pg. 109).

To whom this text was written is not as consequential as the reason for its writing. Paul was using his own national and historical religious history to demonstrate how abusing liberty can be devastating, reminding all that would read (and hear read) this letter what had long been forgotten – the desire the Lord has, and always had, and will always have, for His children to be obedient to His word and

follow Him. From chapter eight through chapter eleven the issue is the believer's use of their liberty in Christ and how to make their life effective for Christ. This text, and the several verses following, give a vivid pictorial illustration of what happens when God provides the means of obedience and His children reject that means.

The first clause of verse one shows that the believers in the church – at least the Jewish ones – had forgotten what the Lord had done for their ancestors. This is something that they should have been very familiar with, a teaching that was to be handed down from generation to generation – but it had not been. The phrase, "I would not that ye should be ignorant" points to this. The word for "ignorant" (ἀγνοέω) is a compound word from the privative alpha, which negates what follows, and a word that means to perceive or understand. Strong defines it as "not to know (through lack of information or intelligence); by implication to ignore (through disinclination) ...

Of interesting consideration is the use of the word "ignorant" in relation to the claimed "knowledge" of the Corinthians. Although the church had a large portion of its membership from the lower classes of people, the issue of knowledge was well known by all in Corinth.

What this text shows is that all of us need to be reminded of what God has done for us once in a while so that we can remember from where we came and to what God wants from us; namely, our obedience.

This is also, within the connection to the text of chapter nine, given so we remember what the gospel did for us and from what we were saved so that we can better relate the gospel to others. We

need to be reminded now just like the Corinthians were.

I love to tell the story

For those who know I best

Seem hungering and thirsting

To hear it like the rest;

And when in scenes of glory

I sing the new, new song,

It will be the old, old story

That I have loved so long. (A. Catherine Hankey)

I. DIVINE GUIDANCE (OR PRESENCE) – VS. 1 – “ALL OUR FATHERS WERE UNDER THE CLOUD”

A. “All” – one thing to note in the repetition of this word in these verses used five times) is that there is a correlation with the fact that the gospel has been given to “all.” God wants “all” to be saved and “all” have been given the same gift of grace – but “many” (vs. 5) will not believe. As will be seen, only two (Joshua and Caleb) believed, showing the few that will believe of any generation.

1 Timothy 2:4

⁴ Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Titus 2:11

¹¹ For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

2 Peter 3:9

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

B. The word order in some English Bibles is slightly different than the Greek (some have the word order the same) – the Greek order would read “our fathers were all under the cloud,” “giving the all its proper emphasis” (J-F-B). The “all” is emphatic in each instance in this text.

C. “Our fathers”

1. “Our” – including himself in this he brings to mind the history of Israel, but not just to the Jewish contingent in the church but to all those that are followers of Christ, making them part of “Abraham’s seed.”

Galatians 3:16–17

¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

¹⁷ And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

Galatians 3:28–29

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

²⁹ And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye

Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

2. "Fathers" – all those that came out of Egypt is clearly to whom he is referring, but the fact that he's writing to a predominately Gentile church, he was making the application that the examples of the Old Testament that were demonstrated by Israel and their history were meant for the New Testament church, whether Jew or Gentile.

Though writing to a Church mainly Gentile, he calls the ancient Israel "our fathers," not so much because some of them had been proselytes to the Jewish faith before their conversion, but because—as he says to the Galatian converts (Gal_3:29), who were also mainly Gentile—"If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise;" and to the Ephesians (Eph_2:19), "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (*A Popular Commentary on the New Testament, Philip Schaff, editor*)

D. "Were under the cloud" – this is where we find the Divine Presence and guidance.

1. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night was there to both guide and comfort the Israelites with the knowledge that the cloud was to show them His presence. The presence of the cloud is where we get the word "Shekinah" (the

Hebrew word שכינה does not appear in the Bible). The word means dwelling or one who dwells, and the words "Shekinah Glory" means "he caused to dwell."

Exodus 13:21-22

21 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:

22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

Exodus 14:19-20

19 And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:

20 And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

Exodus 40:34

34 Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

Numbers 9:15-17

15 And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning.

16 So it was alway: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.

17 And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents.

Numbers 14:14

14 And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

Deuteronomy 1:33

33 Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.

Nehemiah 9:12

12 Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.

Nehemiah 9:19

19 Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go.

Psalms 105:39

39 He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night.

2. The cloud was to them an indication of His presence, that He would dwell with them. To the church, the Holy Spirit's presence

indwelling every believer, and the written Word of God, is our "cloud." When Jesus came to earth to take human flesh, the word used in John 1:14 is that He "dwelt" among us (literally, He "tabernacled" – He "tented" among us). In His payment for sin He satisfied all the requirements for believers to dwell in the presence of God now and forever.

John 1:14

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Colossians 2:9–10

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Hebrews 2:17

17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

3. The pillar of cloud by day and fire by night is a picture of Christ from the Old Testament. He was there to stand between the world and the child of God, to be the protector and guide, just as He is today – that has never changed. The work of Christ on the cross stands between us and condemnation, between us and destruction, and because of the Holy Spirit, we are continually guided by that

holy Presence.

**II. DIVINE DELIVERANCE – VS. 1 – “ALL PASSED
THROUGH THE SEA**

III. DIVINE UNITY – VS. 2

IV. DIVINE PROVISION – VS. 3-4

V. DIVINE REJECTED – VS. 5-6