

“Lest He Fall”

1 Corinthians 10:6-13

Although we included verse six in the last series of messages on 1 Corinthians, the last part is more a part of this section than the previous – it is the first point in the series of sins that Israel committed that are used as examples for the believer, and the church, NOT to follow.

That brings us to a particular point to be considered here: this whole text is given to the church and is intended for the leadership to teach to the believer. That said, it is possible, then, for believers to fall into these sins, and that is the point here – to keep them from falling (vs. 12) and making a way of escape (vs. 13) when we are tempted. This comes, as will be seen in chapters 12-14, through the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Another point to be made is that this text shows the value of comparing Scripture with Scripture (*analogia scriptura* – analogy of Scripture). As is said often, “The Bible is its best own commentary,” and if we want to know what a passage or text means then it is often helpful to see what God did or said about that point before. As stated already, this is dealing with believers, and the Apostle Paul uses illustrations from the Old Testament history of Israel to teach these points. Remember, the leadership of the church at Corinth would have been of a Jewish background, as many of them were in the first century church. Not all of them would have been Jewish, but enough of them would have been, and enough of the church itself would have been, for these examples to resonate as of great value to their understanding and life. The fact that God still views sin as sin and wants His children to understand the

consequences of sin, is of great importance to our understanding this text.

Verse 12 is used by those that believe one can lose his salvation as a text verse to support their view. They interpret the context of Israel's sin and apostasy as an example of falling from grace and from salvation. First of all, we need to be careful that we don't interpret every point or illustration used of Israel by the New Testament writers as proof-positive of doctrine, per se. This text clearly states that the purpose of these examples is "for our admonition" – for our warning of the consequences of sin. The issue of salvation is already settled in this letter, and in these believer's lives – it is not the issue here – faithfulness as a believer is, just as that was the issue in the historical accounts related here.

That said, there is a warning here to those that are mere "professors" of Christ rather than true "possessors" of Christ. For those that exhibit a complete disregard for inspired truth from the Word of God and live their own lives their own way are at risk of "falling away" from any hope of biblical salvation. That is what is meant by "fallen from grace" in Galatians 5:4.

Another thing of note is the use of the personal pronoun in these verses. The Apostle Paul alternates between the second-person plural – "ye" – and the first-person plural – "us." The significance of this is that he is including himself in this. The tense of the verbs (i.e., "Neither be ye," "neither let us," etc.) are in the present, showing that he considered this possible at that present time in the church at Corinth (and we know it was already happening – ch. 5), as well as at any "present" time in his life and their lives. That's the purpose of the admonition of verse twelve.

This text shows the believer, and the church, the potential we all have – negatively and positively. The issues at hand in these verses are things that CAN happen but don't necessarily have to if we follow the leading of the Spirit of God and the teachings of the Word of God.

I. POTENTIAL FOR SIN – VS. 6B-10

A. This, of course, is not an all-encompassing list of the possible sins that a believer can commit. These are listed (and not in chronological order of the historical events) here because this is apparently what the church at Corinth was struggling with, and still today, these are areas that we continue to struggle with the most, it seems.

B. "Lust" – vs. 6b; Num. 11:4, 31-34

Numbers 11:4

⁴ And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?

Numbers 11:31-34

³¹ And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth.

³² And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

³³ And while the flesh was yet between their

teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague.

³⁴ And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah [graves of lust]: because there they buried the people that lusted.

1. The phrase “should not lust after” is unique to this text. The verb is “should [not] - εἶναι μὴ,” and the word for “lust” here (ἐπιθυμητής) is a noun rather than a verb, and as a noun it emphasizes the description – literally, “a luster, or craver” – and here, they craved “evil things” (worthless, bad).
2. The believer is not to be seen as someone who craves something he does not have to the point that he will do whatever he can to get it. This is not speaking of sensual or sexual lust (that is in verse 8) – this is more general in its application.
3. “As they [Israel] lusted” – the illustration the Apostle uses here, as we read out of the book of Numbers, is where they craved something that God had not provided for them. They were simply not content with what they had but wanted more – and were willing to do anything to get it.

Philippians 4:11

¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

1 Timothy 6:8

⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

Hebrews 13:5

⁵ Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

4. The word for “lusted” (ἐπιθυμέω) comes from two Greek words: the first (ἐπι) is a preposition with a primary sense of *upon*; and the second (θυμός) points to the area of the mind that controls passion. Put together, “to have the affections directed toward something, to lust, desire, long after” (Zodhiates). Or, it is seen as setting one’s heart on something passionately, or with burning desire, where everything else seems less important.
5. Questions: What do you think about the most? What consumes your affections? What do you “lust” after? Is it evil things or are your affections on Christ?

Colossians 3:2

² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

C. Idolatry – vs. 7; Ex. 32:6-8

Exodus 32:6–8

⁶ And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

⁷ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:

⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made

them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

1. The text under review here is part of a greater portion of this letter that began in chapter 8, in things offered to idols. That issue of idolatry comes back to focus here.
2. “Neither” – this word connects this verse, and the next three (via the same word – μηδέ) with the previous one. Although we studied the issue of “lust” as a separate point, it does not stand so much in distinction from these next four. Rather, “lust” is expounded, to some extent, in these verses.
3. “Be ye idolaters” – doesn’t take much explanation – simply, don’t set something in the place of God for our worship. The word “idolaters” in the English is simply a transliteration of the Greek (ειδωλολάτρης). It is a unique word in English – used in this sense for a servant or worshipper of idols.
4. As we stated when we studied chapter eight, we, in this country, may not have trouble with idol worship – we may not have that in our culture or background – the early church surely did, and especially in the city of Corinth. It was a problem, even among believers. That’s the right interpretation here.
5. As to an application, considering the previous verse and the term “lust” or

“lusted,” for the believer and the church today, at least in this country, the issue of serving or worshipping false gods or idols is not in view. What is in view is anything that takes our affection away from Christ, His word, and His will. To the church today, that is, broadly applied, “idolatry.”

6. The end of the verse is a direct quote from Exodus 32:6. I read one author that said of this that it points to gross sexual immorality that took place during this event. There is no case to be made for this in the use of the word “play,” and it is not likely that’s what is in view (considering that that is precisely what is in view in the next verse). The use of the word “play” (only time in the New Testament the Greek word is used and it seems that is because that is the word used from Ex. 32:6 in the Septuagint) is most often used of children playing, or playing a sport, and is used in the Old Testament (Septuagint) for singing, leaping, and dancing that is connected with worship (good or bad).

2 Samuel 6:5

⁵ And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

1 Chronicles 15:29

²⁹ And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him

in her heart.

7. The illustration given here is of Israel as they worshipped the golden calf Aaron made for them – they did all the things, acted in the same way they would have had they been worshipping the false gods of the land.
8. By application, when believers today do what the world does and acts like the world acts and worships like the world worships, then there is something wrong with what is being done – they are getting dangerously close to “idolatry.”

D. Sexual immorality – vs. 8; Num. 25:1-9

1. We dealt with this issue in detail when we studied chapter 5 and 6 so we won't spend a lot of time on it here other than to say it was a big problem in the church and a big part of people's lives and culture so it was difficult to gain victory over it.
2. The illustration used is from Numbers 25 and the immorality with the Moabites, in a situation that we find the story about Balaam.

Numbers 25:1-9

¹ And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

² And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

³ And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled

against Israel.

⁴ And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.

⁵ And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.

⁶ And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

⁷ And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;

⁸ And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

⁹ And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

Numbers 31:16

¹⁶ Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

Revelation 2:12-14

¹² And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

E. Unbelief – vs. 9; Num. 21:4-6

Numbers 21:4-6

4 And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

1. The point to be seen here is that because of their simple unbelief in the provision of the Lord in their lives, and their necessary reliance upon Him, they chose to push Him to see what they could get. What they got, as will be seen, was not something they had "bargained for," so to speak.
2. "Neither let us tempt Christ"
 - a) The word for "tempt" in this verse -

ἐκπειράζω – is a compound Greek word:

- (1) *The first part is the preposition ἐκ – primarily pointing to position from which someone or something comes – out of, from, etc.*
- (2) *The second is the word for “test” – πειράζω – often, as here, it is translated “tempt,” in some form, in the KJV. The majority of other translations have it “test” – the ESV has it “We must not put Christ to the test...”*
- (3) *Literally translating the two words together would be something like “tempt or test from,” or “tempt or test out of” – the use of the word both here and elsewhere in Scripture is demonstrating the person doing the “tempting” as wanting something out of the Lord that He either refused to give them or that He had held back from them for their good.*
- (4) *The standard understanding here is to “tempt thoroughly” – “tempt beyond endurance” (Alford). “The Corinthians were in danger of provoking God’s long-suffering by walking on the verge of idolatry, through overweening confidence in their knowledge.” (J-F-B)*
- (5) *“Sinners are said to tempt God, putting Him to the test, refusing to believe Him or His Word until He has manifested His power.” (Zodhiates) This is what happened to Israel that invoked the wrath of God.*

b) “As some of them also tempted”

- (1) *"Some" – not all Israelites failed in this incident but many of them did.*
- (2) *The word for "tempted" here is the second part of the previous one – to try, or tempt for the purpose of gain (used in a negative sense here, although the word is neither bad nor good).*
- (3) *There's an interesting note to make here. The word translated "also" (kai) in the KJV is not found in the Greek text from which most of the Bibles today are translated (and those of the past 75 years or so). That might not seem like a big deal but it is an important word here in this text because it connects what the believer does today in attempting to circumvent the Lord's will in our lives, and "tempting," as it were, the Lord to demonstrate His power for our own selfish desires, with what the Israelites did in the Old Testament, in the referenced incident from the book of Numbers. It may not seem like much, and the connection is still made clear, but the word "also" inserted here not only makes the connection stronger, it makes the emphasis much more specific in that connection.*
- (4) *The importance of this little word "also" is maybe more relevant to the "tempt Christ" portion of the first clause. The connection is made here between the LORD (Yahweh) of the Old Testament and our Lord Jesus Christ of the New, showing again that Christ was, is, and always will be, God. There are some theologians (and a few translations of the Bible) that take issue with the translation "Christ" here instead of*

"Lord," and make a point to argue it's the "better" translation, but almost all language experts, and most English translations have it as "Christ" – pointing to the person of God the Son in the Old Testament.

c) "And were destroyed of the serpents"

(1) *The word for "destroyed" points back to the episode in Numbers 21 and to the word "died" in verse six. It is also a compound word (as many are): ἀπό, with the primary idea of separation between two things; and ὄλεθρος, to destroy. This compound word is stronger than the single word for "destroy," and has to do with complete and utter separation from life. They didn't just die – they were destroyed in a deliberate manner. "Destroyed," or "lay a-perishing," transports us to the scene of misery resulting from this experiment upon God!" (Dunagan)*

(2) *"Of the serpents" – there is a connection in this episode in Numbers with the substitutionary work of Christ, which is also a connection to our Savior being יהוה of the Old Testament.*

Numbers 21:7–9

⁷ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

⁸ And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it

upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

⁹ And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

John 3:14-16

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

¹⁵ That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 12:32-33

³² And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

³³ This he said, signifying what death he should die.

F. Murmuring – complaining – vs. 10; Num. 14:27-30; Num. 16:41-50

1. “Neither murmur ye”

- a) The word for “murmur” – γογγύζω – is a word that means to grumble about something, as well as to complain about something that is not liked or appreciated, with the intent to stir up opposition to the person or thing one is displeased with. Some see this word as one that comes from the sound that would be made when

muttering in a low and indistinct voice (an onomatopoeic word, as Zodiates has it). There may be truth to that, but the complaining and murmuring done by the Israelites of the Old Testament was not done in a low voice that was hard to hear – it was done often times loudly for all to hear. It wasn't the sound that was important in the word but the principle behind the murmuring – they didn't like what God was doing.

- b) One thing of note here is that the way this, and the ones before it, are worded, the Apostle is implying that some in the church were "murmuring," either against him or against the leadership of the church – or both. It is most likely that the ones in the church that were guilty of the sins mentioned in the previous verses were the ones doing the "murmuring" against the pastor/overseer in the church, which meant they were "murmuring" against the Lord, considering the pastor is in the position as a representative for the Lord.

2. "As some of them also murmured"

- a) There are numerous times in the Old Testament historical accounts of the Israelites' wilderness wanderings that they are found "murmuring" against Moses and Aaron, and against God directly. As representative of God to the people, when they complained to, or about, Moses, they were doing so against the Lord Himself.

Numbers 11:1

¹ And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them,

and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.

Numbers 14:27–30

27 How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

28 Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:

29 Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,

30 Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

Numbers 16:41–50

41 But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.

42 And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.

43 And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation.

44 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

45 Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

46 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun.

47 And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

48 And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

49 Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah.

50 And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed.

- b) The Hebrew equivalent of this word (as translated in the Septuagint) – כָּמַתְּאֲנִיּוֹם, נִלְנָה – is translated “complained” in Number 11:1. It gives a good idea of the meaning and application of the word.
- c) To “murmur” against the Lord is to complain with the intent to demonstrate one’s displeasure with what He says or does, whether that be directly to Him or directed toward those that are given the

responsibility of teaching truth to God's people. It is critically important that we understand the difference between murmuring and complaining to the Lord about our situation in life, or our disinterest in following the prescribed path for the believer as outlined in Scripture (as represented in the Old Testament by the Israelites' discontent with following the Lord), and that of voicing our concerns for the purpose of clarity and understanding.

3. "And were destroyed of the destroyer"

- a) "Were destroyed" – in context, this is speaking of people that died or perished physically.
- b) "Of the destroyer" – this same Greek word (or the same root word, as it were) is used in the Septuagint in Exodus 12:23 for the destroying angel.

Exodus 12:23

²³ For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer **the destroyer** to come in unto your houses to smite you.

- c) The Hebrew word from Exodus 12:23 is the word הַמְשִׁחֵת – it is a verb participle used as a noun here with attributes of personification. The verb in this stem (hiphil) means to spoil, decay, ruin, or destroy; and as the participle it means "destroyer."
- d) The same Hebrew word (hiphil participle of שָׁחַת) is used in 2 Samuel 24:16 with the

word for “angel” connected with it. Comparing Scripture with Scripture, we can see that “the death angel,” or “the destroying angel” is what the Apostle Paul is referencing in First Corinthians.

2 Samuel 24:16

¹⁶ And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to **destroy** it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to **the angel that destroyed** the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite.

4. The warning here is that of making sure we don't get to the point where we blame God for everything bad that happens to us and that we learn to trust in His word and follow the teachings of His servants (the pastor/teacher) as the Old Testament Israelites were to do with Moses and Aaron.

Conclusion to this point: As we've seen so often in our study of First Corinthians (as well as our study of other portions of Scripture), the Lord wants us to live a holy, separated, sanctified life for Him so that there is no hinderance on the part of the believer to the work of the Holy Spirit in the church and the work of the gospel in the world. In efforts made by many of the writers of Scripture (and in certain ways, all of them) to get the servant of Christ to walk right with Him, there is, in this text, an outline for the church to use in understanding the consequences of sin. Consider: there is always going to be a consequence for our action, no matter what they are – good or bad – and that is what is in view

here.

II. POTENTIAL FOR SANCTIFICATION – VS. 11

A. *The definition of "sanctification," theologically, is "the process of being set apart for God" (Bancroft). The Greek word used (αγιάζω) means to make clean or render pure. "To regard and venerate as holy, to hallow" (Zodhiates).*

B. *"For our admonition" speaks to the issue of "sanctification."*

III. POTENTIAL FOR STUMBLING – VS. 12

IV. POTENTIAL FOR STABILITY – VS. 13

A. *The positive aspect is found in this verse more so than in the others. In any teaching platform or method, the teacher will quite often use both positives and negatives to both teach truth as well as emphasize the importance of following that truth – that is what is taking place in this text.*