

How To Avoid Sin

(1 Corinthians 10:1-13)

In this passage, Paul warns that lack of self-discipline leads to sin, which results in consequences. Apparently, some of the Corinthians think that, since they go to church and observe the Lord's Supper, they can live any way they want. Therefore, in this passage, Paul reveals **three** requirements for avoiding sin, beginning with ...

Reflect on God's provisions (10:1-5)

Paul begins this section with an Old Testament illustration of what God does when His children persist in sin. He writes, *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea (10:1).*

Paul uses the word *all* five times in the first four verses of this chapter. The point is *all* the Israelites experienced God's blessings and miracles as they were delivered from Egyptian bondage and wandered in the desert. According to Psalm 105:39, what daily miracle did they *all* experience?

Every day they walked through the desert under the shade of a divine cloud. At night, because God provided a pillar of fire in the sky, they were never in complete darkness.

Next, Paul writes, *And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (10:2).* This means the Israelites were identified as followers of Moses through the cloud and Red Sea miracles. The same is true of believers' baptism; it identifies a person as a follower of Christ.

Paul adds that they *all* ate *the same spiritual meat (10:3)*. Every day, God rained down food from heaven. When the Israelites first see this food, what do they say to each other (Exodus 16:15c)?

They call it *Manna (Ex 16:31)*, which means "what is it." It is called *spiritual meat* because it was given by supernatural means.

They also *did all drink the same spiritual drink (10:4a)*. In the desert, God provided drinking water for them by commanding Moses to strike a rock with his staff and water came forth (Ex 17:6). Then, Paul writes: *for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ (10:4b).*

Paul identifies both the *manna* and water as *spiritual* because they were supernaturally provided. They also have spiritual symbolism because both were shadows of Christ. Jesus told the woman at the well He would give her a perpetual spring of water, imparting *everlasting life (Jn 4:14b)*. What did Jesus also say of Himself in John 6:33?

In spite of all God's miraculous provisions, Paul writes: *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness (10:5)*. Of the fighting men (twenty years and older) who left Egypt, all but two died wandering in the desert (Num. 32:11). Only Caleb and Joshua had the faith that pleased God and the discipline that obeyed God, so they were allowed to enter the Promised Land (Num. 14:30).

Like many Christians today, most of the Israelites didn't understand that God doesn't just save us **from** something, but **for** something. Therefore, many Christians today are living and will die in a spiritual desert. They forget God's provisions of salvation, empowerment of the Holy Spirit, divine purpose for their lives, and His divine guide, the Bible. They also forget what promise found in Philippians 2:13?

As a result, many—if not most—Christians never experience the fullness and victory God wants to give them. To avoid sin, **reflect on God's provisions** and ...

Remember God's punishments (10:6-11b)

Since the Corinthian believers were lacking in self-discipline, Paul writes: *Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted (10:6)*. Even though they all received God's provisions, not all loved and served God in return. Instead, Paul warns: *Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play (10:7)*.

Paul is quoting from Exodus 32:6, when the Israelites made a golden calf to worship and then *rose up to play*. The word *play* suggests sexual *play*, or even an orgy. Therefore, referring to Numbers 25:1, what does Paul write next (10:8a)?

Because of their sexual immorality, *three and twenty thousand* Israelite men died in one day (10:8b). The comparison is obvious because much of the pagan worship in Corinth involved sexual immorality of all kinds. Paul's warning is that God's judgment on sexual immorality is harsh. This example and that of Sodom and Gomorrah are warnings to all of us.

Next, Paul warns against whining and complaining. He writes: we should not *tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted (10:9a-b)*. This refers to the account in *Numbers* of the Israelites complaining against the Lord and Moses, accusing them of bringing them into the desert to die. They complain they have nothing to eat or drink and hate the horrible food (Num. 21:5).

God provided them with water and manna. But they wanted more! Like many people, they want to see how much they can get from God and how far they can push God. Because of the Israelites' complaining, what happens (Num. 21:6)?

Next, Paul refers to the time the Israelites grumble against God's appointed leaders, Moses and Aaron (Num. 16). He warns we shouldn't *murmur ... as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer* (10:10). God was so disgusted with their complaints, almost 15,000 Israelites died in divine judgment (Num. 16:49).

In verse 11a-b, Paul restates the principle he has already made in verse 6. Personalize and write it below:

Like the Israelites, if we sin with no repentance, we too will receive divine punishment.

To avoid sin, **reflect on God's provisions, remember God's punishments**, and ...

Rely on God's promises (10:11c-13)

Referring to the time of the Messiah, or redemption, Paul writes *upon whom the ends of the world are come* (10:11c). Primarily, he is writing about the death of Christ on the cross for the sins of the world (Heb. 9:26b).

When we become over confident about not falling into sin, Paul warns that anyone *that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall* (10:12). This means if you think you can be careless in your Christian life and be free from punishment, you are "dead" wrong!

Reading of the Israelites' failures under Moses' leadership might cause us to think sin is inevitable in our lives. Therefore, Paul writes one of the most famous and important verses in *1 Corinthians*. How does it begin (10:13a)?

This means your temptations are not unique. Others have faced the same temptation you are facing and have resisted successfully. You **can** resist temptation because *God is faithful* and will not desert you or fail to keep even one of His promises (10:13b). Therefore, *He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to resist* (10:13c). Instead, *He will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it* (10:13d-e). God doesn't remove the *temptation*; He gives you a way out.

What is the way out of temptation? Does God send an angel to snatch us out of the situation? No! Does He cause the temptation to miraculously disappear? No! In Mark 14:38a, what does Jesus say is the way of escape?

First, *watch* means to be alert to spiritual dangers. Be careful about the friends you choose and the places you go. Second, *pray* for sensitivity to sin and to the leadership of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14). If you *watch* and *pray*, the promise is God will *make a way to escape*.

To avoid sin, **reflect on God's provisions, remember God's punishments, and rely on God's promises.**