

## **“Howbeit With Most Of Them ...”**

*“... God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness” (1 Cor. 10:5).*

These words follow Paul’s description of *“our fathers”*: that generation of Israel that came out of Egypt, following Moses. They ALL were under the cloud, ALL passed through the sea, ALL were baptized unto Moses, ALL did eat of the same spiritual food, and ALL did drink the same spiritual drink. These were *“the church (i.e., the called out) in the wilderness”* (Acts 7:38). Still, despite the fact that these all shared equally the same spiritual blessings, with most of them God was displeased. Most of them never reached the land they started for.

The record here recounted by Paula was no mere reciting of historical facts. *“Now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they lusted”* (1 Cor. 10:6). The objection of Paul’s warning is that the overthrow of a “preserved” people was a stark warning to a preserved people in Corinth, for while the Corinthians had once been fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, etc., they had been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ: in short, the Corinthians had been saved. The apostle’s warning was that as Israel “lost their salvation” so could the Corinthians “lose” their salvation. Jude spoke of the same folk and the end results of their deeds. *“Now I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all, that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not”* (Jude 5). Let none suppose Jude says that unbelievers were saved; believers became unbelievers just as the Hebrew writer declared. *“Take heed brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God”* (Heb. 3:12).

It is possible that Paul’s words, *“We should not lust after evil things as they also lusted,”* is a reference to several incidents which Israel lusted for, for there are several accounts of various failures of them. On the other hand, it is also possible that the phrase is a general one, the specifics of which follows in the next four verses. Whatever the thrust of the words, four examples of specific sins are given, which episodes brought wholesale deaths by the thousands. When he warned, *“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,”* he makes a direct reference to the golden calf Aaron made at Israel’s request (1 Cor. 10:7; Ex. 32:6).

His command, *"Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand,"* recalls the incident when Moabite women invited men of Israel to join them in the worship of their god Baal, which worship consisted in fornication. Read this account in Numbers 25:1ff.

*"Neither let us make trial of the Lord as some of them made trial, and perished by the serpents"* (1 Cor. 10:9). Some translations have *"tempt the Lord"* in this verse which jogs our memory of James' words that *"God cannot be tempted to do evil"* (James 1:13). We cannot tempt God to join us in evil; we can sorely try Him by our flagrant violations of His words. Peter warned Judaizing teachers that their insistence that Gentile Christians must be circumcised and keep the law made trial of God (Acts 15:10). Israel tried the Lord by their dissatisfaction with His provisions of manna, complaining, *"Our souls loathe this white bread"* (Num. 21:5f). God sent fiery serpents among them, causing the death of many.

*"Neither murmur ye as some of them murmured and perished by the destroyer"* (1 Cor. 10:10). The exact occurrence transpired when Korah and his company of dissenters murmured against Moses and Aaron because God had given the priesthood to Aaron. Many of them were destroyed by God (Numbers 16).

Yet all of these who perished, those who committed idolatry, fornication, tried the Lord, or murmured, were God's people, saved from the bondage of Egypt. In view of this Paul wrote, *"Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"* (1 Cor. 10:11f). The Christian, in his war against religious error, needs no passage other than this one to show the utter falsehood of the doctrine called "once saved, always saved". What elaborate explanations Calvinists are compelled to make to "offset" the plain teaching of this scripture.

More importantly, let each of us take personally the apostle's appeal: *"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."* Our eternal destiny lies in the balance.

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