

The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians

Do Not Be Unaware

1 Corinthians 10:1-11

1. A Present Ignorance (v.1)

One of the most significant dangers that any local church faces is the danger that it does not recognize. The Corinthian church had tolerated the presence of divisive factions (1 Cor. 1:11ff) and turned a blind eye to flagrant sexual immorality (1 Cor. 5:1ff) all while boasting of their wisdom and maturity in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 4:8-10). Many in the church are also unconcerned about the dangers of participation in the various activities in their culture which are directly linked to idolatry (cf. 1 Cor. 8:10).

2. A Striking Similarity (vs.1-4)

It is common for Christians to read the familiar Bible stories and see themselves standing alongside the faithful and not in the company of those who rebelled. Paul is pointing out to the Corinthians that the very same danger that awaited Israel in the Exodus was present with them in Corinth. The entire nation of Israel saw and survived the plagues that destroyed Egypt (Ex. 7:14-12:32), walked across the dry ground of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:13ff), saw God annihilate the greatest army of the day (Ex. 14:26ff), witnessed the giving of the Law (Ex. 20:18), and were the beneficiaries of decades of God's miraculous provision for their need of food (Ex. 14:1-21, 35) and water (Ex. 17:1-7; Num 20:1-13). And yet, these same people were constantly dissatisfied with God's provision (Num. 11:6) and rebelled against His appointed leader (Num. 16:1ff) and His revealed plan for them (Num. 14:1-4). The Corinthians flirtation with the idolatry and worldliness of their culture is as dangerous to them as the presence of the Canaanite peoples and religions were to Israel.

3. A Devastating Judgment (v.5)

God promised to give the land of Israel to Abraham (Gen. 15:12-21), and He sent Moses to his descendants into this inheritance. On account of the way in which they behaved on the journey from Egypt, only two adults who began the exodus lived to enter the promised land (Num. 13-14). The Corinthian believers are to take note of these similarities, learn the lessons from the failures of Israel, and not repeat them (v.6).