

The key to understanding the purpose of this chapter is found in 10:12. Apparently some Corinthian believers were going too far in what they thought were areas of liberty and thought that God's discipline was highly unlikely. Perhaps ritual practices were perceived as giving some sort of immunity to divine disfavor or the blessings which they experienced were perceived as proof of God's continuing favor. Paul warns that this was dangerous thinking and illustrates from the history of Israel that such thinking was wrong. Such false security could lead to spiritual failure. But he gave them hope also with the promise of God's provision in the midst of temptation.

Paul's warning against false assurance (10:1-12)

The "fall" of which Paul speaks in 10:12 is probably the disqualification or failure to find approval mentioned in 9:27, i.e., coming into disapproval and discipline. Being a child of God is not a guarantee against God's disapproval but it is guarantee of God's discipline when we sin. God disciplines his children (cf. Hebrews 12: Proverbs 3:12). Israel's history is a valid warning against wrong thinking in this area.

1. Israel's history illustrates that God's general blessings do not guarantee His continuing favor.
 - a. Five specific blessings are mentioned which all of Israel experienced: guidance (the cloud), miraculous deliverance through the sea, Moses as their leader, being fed with manna, and having abundant water miraculously provided twice .
 - b. It is possible that Paul wanted the Corinthians to make certain inferences from these experiences to their own: not to rely on their baptism, on their spiritual gifts, or the protection of the church (cf. Acts 18).
 - c. None of those blessings which all of Israel experienced guaranteed them continuing divine favor. Only two out of 600,000 men who left Egypt entered the promised land.

Believers today also gather to themselves false assurances of immunity against God's discipline. Some misunderstand the love of God. Others rely on their Christian activities or earlier profession. But Israel who had experienced so many clear miraculous blessings of God still fell largely into disfavor and God ultimately brought death upon the large majority. It can happen to believers today as well.

2. Israel's history records typical failures which can bring God's discipline.
 - a. Five specific failures among many possible choices are mentioned by Paul: craving the food they had left behind and despising the manna God provided, idolatry, sexual immorality, testing God, grumbling.
 - b. Paul may have expected the Corinthians to infer a connection to eating food offered to idols is obvious, a dangerous craving, to their own immorality, and to their grumbling against leadership.
 - c. All the failures of Israel brought the same result, i.e., divine discipline.

Many who profess faith in Jesus Christ today also fail miserably to stand up to God's expectations for righteous living. Permissible things may be pushed to the point that it leads to sin. Good things are sinfully abused. Etc. It seems we have so little fear of God's disapproval.

3. Israel's history contains a valid warning for us today which is seen in three observations from this text.
 - a. It is stated explicitly that the events and their record were intended for us (10:6, 11).
 - b. Paul refers to the Israelites as our forefathers (v 1), probably referring to the spiritual heritage which all believers have in Israel, e.g., justification by faith, the Scripture, the Messiah, etc.
 - c. Their blessings had a spiritual source as do ours.

It would be disastrous to write off the history of Israel as something that just happened then and which had no lesson for us. It is a warning not to assume that the blessings which we have experienced guarantee God's continued approval. If we sin, God will not approve and he will discipline.

The promise of God's provision in the face of trial and temptation (10:13)

1. Temptations and trials are of common character. Nothing is unique.

We cannot use the uniqueness of our situation as an excuse. But we can take encouragement from the fact that others have gone through the same and been victorious.
2. Temptations and trials are divinely limited to what we can handle.

We cannot use the excuse that any trial or temptation was too much for us. But we can take encouragement from God's perfect knowledge, loving control of all things, and His restriction of all trials and temptations to bearable levels. God is faithful!
3. Temptations and trials will be accompanied by escape valves to keep the pressure from becoming too great and to allow us to bear what we must.

We must take advantage of that release. We cannot blame God for our failures in trials and temptations when we have neglected His provision to escape. The Proverbs illustrates provisions which we can take against temptations before they become too great.

God is faithful to His children. They have His provision to resist temptation and stand strong under trial. Like earthly children we need to work at living properly, not to become children, but to be pleasing to our heavenly Father. Our response to Him and He to us is demonstration of the relationship which we have.