

# ***“Learning From Bad Examples!”***

## ***1 Corinthians 10:1-13***

**Intro.** – Has it ever struck you that the Bible records some of the most embarrassing events with the most vivid detail and accuracy? Why? This is a testimony to the Holy Spirit inspired nature of the Bible. Only that which is God-given would include the sins and mistakes of God’s people. A “man inspired” Bible would carefully omit anything that would tinge the reputation of God’s people. Note also with me that the Bible is filled with examples – many of which are *bad examples*. My message title suggests how important these examples can be for us: “*Learning From Bad Examples!*”

Illus. – A man had a plate made in China he valued much. One day it fell and cracked right down the middle. He ordered six more made and to insure the exact pattern, he sent his cracked plate as a copy. When he received the package from China six months later, he was astounded to find the Chinese crafter had so faithfully followed the pattern of the broken plate that each new replicated plate had a crack right down the middle.

Some of the most dramatic lessons to be learned from Scripture come from the children of Israel and the way they exercised and did NOT exercise their faith in God. If we were to construct a *Bad Examples Hall of Fame* the children of Israel would be our first inductees. Our text deals with this very matter – how that there is much for us to learn from the lack of faith on the part of the children of Israel:

*Purpose: to learn from the bad example of Israel*

### **I ISRAEL HAD ADVANTAGES (vv 1-5)**

- there is much we can say concerning Israel that is positive and most promising – e.g.:
- A. Israel Had God’s Guidance (v 1)
  1. “*Our fathers were all under the cloud...*” i.e. every Israelite had the miraculous guidance of God – the very presence of the Lord was with them as they left the bondage of Egypt.
  2. During the day a cloud guided them and during the night a pillar of fire directed their course...
  3. There was no doubt God was leading them on their journey.
- B. Israel Had God’s Deliverance (v 1)
  1. “*All passed through the sea...*” i.e. each Israelite miraculously delivered from Egyptian slavery...
  2. What an experience it must have been to witness parting Red Sea... walk on dry ground...
- C. Israel Had God’s Provisions (vv 3-4)
  1. “*All ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink...*”
  2. In other words every Israelite ate the miraculous food and water = God met their needs beyond their wildest imaginations!
- D. Israel Did NOT Have God’s Approval (v 5)
  1. “*...nevertheless, God was not well pleased with most of them.*” i.e. with all the advantages which Israel had, such wasn’t enough to assure them of God’s approval.
  2. Here’s a people had miraculous guidance/deliverance/provisions; yet, they lacked God’s approval!
  3. My point? A person can be actively involved in a church, a good citizen, engaged with their community and by the world’s standards good as good can be; yet, they can lack God’s approval!
  4. Israel literally had everything going; yet, in the final analysis they failed to have God’s approval!!!

### **II ISRAEL DID WHAT WE MUST NOT (vv 6-10)**

- how did Israel get off track? With all their blessings, how did they miss God’s approval?
- A. Craved Worldly Things (v 6)
  1. “*...we should not crave evil things as they also craved.*” (NASB) – craving evil things will lead a person away from the path where the Lord’s approval is to be found!

2. Israel *craved* food, water and other things like they were use to in Egypt (Num 11:5-6; 31-35)
3. What of our *cravings*? – the more we have the more we want and material things become gods!!!
4. Luke 12:15 “...watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”
5. The call of Christianity is to partake of those *intangibles* which are eternal and most satisfying!

B. Idolatry (v 7)

1. “Do not be idolaters, as some of them were...”
2. Remember the golden calf episode? *Idolatry* comes from the root word *idol*. By definition *idolatry* is anything that comes between a person and their relationship with God.
3. Today, we all are tempted to hold our jobs, houses, families, cars etc. in high esteem...
4. Here’s the point: you need not pray to the golden calf to be an idolater – simply need to let something(one) be more important to you than God!

C. Act Immorally (v 8)

1. “We should not commit sexual immorality as some of them did...”
2. Numbers 25:1-9 = Israel men committed acts of immorality with Moabite women.
3. Sexual immorality has always been a temptation... it led Israel away AND it can lead us away!
4. So serious matter, Bible says “flee... run” from sexual sin (1 Corinthians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:22).
5. Sexual sin will ALWAYS take a person out of step with God’s approval!

D. Test the Lord (v 9)

1. “We should not test the Lord, as some of them did...” – reference to Numbers 21, when the bronze serpent was made and anyone who looked at the serpent was spared...
2. People had become impatient with their journey; so, they spoke against God and Moses...
3. Pivotal word here is *impatient* – their timetable was quicker than God’s... began to question the wisdom and power of God as a result...

E. Grumble (v 10)

1. “And do not grumble, as some of them did...” -- Israel experts in grumbling...
2. People who find little if anything else to do but complain are out of step with God...
3. Israel hadn’t liked anything which Moses and God had done, grumbling was a way of life for them
4. If you seek the approval of God be the kind of person that finds it difficult to complain...

### III ISRAEL IS GOOD AS A BAD EXAMPLE (vv 11-13)

A. Be a Good Example (v 11)

1. “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us...” i.e. “A word to the wise is sufficient.”
2. Begin by suggesting it is RIGHT to acquaint ourselves with Biblical examples – both good/bad!
3. You’ve heard it said, “Know history and make it! No history and repeat it!”
4. Vital part of study in the Word is to read of those who messed up and not make same mistakes!

B. Take Heed (v 12)

1. “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” – Pride is a pitfall = bad examples are good in so far as the warning they can convey.
2. The Corinthians were cocksure of their position, so had the Israelites been; yet, they reaped nothing but disaster. Lesson: let the self-confident take heed, lest he too fall.
3. None is more liable to fall as those who, thinking themselves strong, run headlong into temptation!

C. Trust in the Lord (v 13)

1. “...God is faithful...” - Paul closes this section with how to deal with temptations that WILL come
2. Ultimately, how we’ll see the Lord’s approval – being enabled to do that which He ask of us!

3. Sin is our choice, BUT so is resisting sin. God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are personally able to bear! WE HAVE HIS WORD!

**Conclusion:** General H. Norman Schwarzkopf (Desert Storm renown) said following at the United States Military Academy: “Some of the best leadership examples I received as a young officer were from terrible officers. I mean, absolutely morally bankrupt officers who had no redeeming qualities. People followed them out of sheer wonder for what they would do next... You learn far more from negative leadership than from positive leadership. Because you learn how not to do it. And, therefore, you learn how to do it.”

I don't agree that you learn “far more from negative leadership than from positive leadership” but you certainly do learn. This helps illustrate and summarize our text. Even the worst examples (such as Israel) can be used to accomplish the purposes of Christ if we, the people of Christ will carefully and faithfully learn good from bad examples!