

What Does the OT Have To Do with Christian Living?

1 Corinthians 10¹⁶

Illustration of viewing *The Night Watch* at the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam. The first impression is this is a huge painting. At a certain distance, you were just looking at a painting. Or you could walk up very close and see the jewels on the sword hilts or laces on the boot cuffs. But at just the right distance, the picture seemed to come alive. You could almost sense the figures ready to move.

That's the challenge in coming to this text. From a distance it is a huge text. At close inspection, there are details that beg for investigation. But hopefully, we find just the right place to make it come alive. We'll save jewels and boot laces for another time.

At first, verses 1-13 and possibly to verse 22 seem to be a parenthesis. But the opening word construction *for* requires us to see an underlying connection to chapter 9 and a unity in the whole chapter.

In chapter 8, Paul **instructs** the giving up of ones liberty in view of edification. There is a warning to the experienced believers to an anchoring of their knowledge in love.

In chapter 9, Paul **illustrates** the giving up of ones liberty in view of evangelism. There is a warning to the experienced believers to an acceptance of diversity in the means of ministry.

In chapter 10, Paul **implements** the exercise of ones liberty in view of experience. There is a warning to the experienced believers to an awareness that their liberty may lead to license.

So watch carefully how Paul develops this implementation in liberty.

The Pattern of Failure to be Avoided

(v.1-13)

The apostle begins by taking us back into the Old Testament to warn us that identifying with God's people and participating in spiritual privilege do not guarantee individual purity.

¹ For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

⁶ Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷ Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." ⁸ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹ We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

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Spiritual Privileges of God's People**(v.1-4)**

These were the grand spiritual privileges that the Israelites experienced. They were delivered from their slavery and their enemies by the presence of God with them and identified with Moses by passing through the sea. They participated in Christ by drinking the water and eating the manna with its spiritual, topological significance. Paul is seeing the Old Testament as salvation history and interpreting it in the light of the church's ordinances.

Sobering Problem for God's People**(v.5)**

If this was their privilege, why are their bodies scattered across the wilderness? In spite of all that God had done for them in visible demonstrations of His presence, provision and power, He was not pleased with them.

Sinful Practice of God's People**(v.6-11)**

Paul says that the recorded history of Israel is written for us to observe and learn not to imitate their sinful desires and actions. He draws on several incidents all of which were true in Corinth. The church there was guilty of the same sins that Israel had committed.

Idolatry**(v.7)**

Drawn from Exodus 32:6 and exposed in 1 Corinthians 8...

Immorality**(v.8)**

Drawn from Numbers 25 and exposed in 1 Corinthians 6...

Testing**(v.9)**

Drawn from Numbers 21 and exposed in 1 Corinthians 10:22...

Grumbling**(v.10)**

Drawn from Numbers 16 and exposed in 2 Corinthians 12...

Verse 11 reminds us forcibly that the Old Testament is profitable in powerful ways for the New Covenant believer. Israel sinned under Law and that was bad. It is even worse to sin under grace in this final age of redemptive history.

Significant Provision for God's People**(v.11-13)**

What does it mean for us that God's people experiencing spiritual privilege can be under God's displeasure because of their sinful practice?

¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Warning against Spiritual Pride**(v.12)**

It is just when we think that we are most secure and safe that we standing on the slipperiest ground.

Encouraging for Spiritual Purity**(v.13)**

This is a statement of the facts.

No temptation is ever too strong for the believer.

Every temptation may be escaped and endured by the believer.

So here it is. The experienced believer must understand that his very experience of spiritual privileges does not make him immune to temptation. All believers must take heart in their temptation for there is a way to avoid sin.

So, now what? How does this relate to their liberty? Well, the exercise of their liberty was tempting some to commit idolatry.