

Finishing the Race Strong **1 Corinthians 10:1-12**

Introduction:

1. Paul used the analogy of a race in chapter nine. The prize is precious souls. We are to be a light to the lost world around us and be a source of positive impact with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. What do you think is Satan's desire for you, Christian? Satan, of course, desires for you to trip, stumble, and fall in this race. He wants you to be a non-factor in this race for souls. He wants you to be as a castaway and be as one who has fallen out of the race.
3. Here in chapter 10, Paul will now use a series of illustrations from Old Testament Israel to make a point to the Corinthians. Israel started their race strong, but didn't finish strong. They got proud and haughty and fell in their race, thus the exhortation on verse 12.
4. Some of you tonight may feel so strong in this race, but there is not one of us who is above falling. Just as Israel was overthrown, we can be too. vs. 5
 - Paul says that these Old Testament stories are examples to us today. vs. 6, 11
 - Our race, of course, is different than Old Testament Israel, but the same things that knocked them out of their race will cause us to fall also.
5. God's plan was for them to become a great source of influence and impact on the earth, but they failed. God's plan is for us, likewise, to become a source of impact on this earth with the gospel of Jesus Christ, but we must take heed.
6. God in His grace has provided three wonderful things to help us to finish our race strong.

First, God has given us new life. vs. 1-2

1. When Israel passed over the Red Sea on dry ground, this was a miraculous deliverance. In the place that looked like sure death, God provided for them new life.
2. This was the spiritual birthday of the nation of Israel. They received newness of life. They came out of the other side of the Red Sea as a nation that had been given life. The old life was dead and buried in the Red Sea. They were redeemed!
 - They **all** had a new identity with new life (notice the word "all"). They all started this race on the same terms.
3. God's desire was for Israel to be planted in their land and be a light to the world. They could now run the race because God had given to them new life. They were now standing on new ground.
4. Christian, this is what God has done for you. Just as Israel was baptized (identified, united) unto Moses, the Holy Spirit baptized you **into Jesus Christ** the moment you trusted Christ. **Romans 6:3**
5. You now possess the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. You are dead to the old life and you have been given newness of life. **Romans 6:4, 11, 8:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17**
 - Just as God gave **all** of Israel newness of life, God gives every member of the body of Christ the same position in Christ and His very life.

6. You can never lose this life you've been given because you have been made one with Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit baptized you into Christ. You are united **with Him** and identified **in Him**.
7. Therefore there is no reason why you cannot finish the race strong. You possess the new life of Jesus Christ and will always possess it.

Second, God has graciously provided everything we need. vs. 3-4

1. When Israel journeyed into the wilderness on the way to their promised land, they obviously would have many great needs. **Illustration:** trying to move a family of five is a big deal. They were moving an entire nation of people.
2. After entering the wilderness, Israel experienced five different trials. God met their every need. Paul mentions two of these in verses 3 and 4.
 - They needed food and God graciously provided for them bread from heaven. Psalms calls it angel's food. Every morning God gave them fresh manna.
 - They needed water so God graciously provided all that they needed by bringing water out of a rock. This rock was a picture of Christ, the One who was smote so that He could give to us the water of everlasting life. **John 4:14**
3. God intentionally allowed these trials to come so that He could demonstrate to Israel that He was their provider. Whatever they needed, they could look to Him and He would be what they needed.
4. What a lesson for us today. Did you know God has graciously provided for us all that we need in Christ? We lack absolutely nothing. You never have to say, "If I just had this or that, I could run this race victoriously."
5. **Colossians 2:10** says that we are complete in Christ. **Philippians 4:13** says, "*I can do all things...*" **Philippians 4:19** states, "*But my God shall supply all your need...*" **Ephesians 1:3** says that God has "*blessed us with all...*" cf. **1 Corinthians 1:4-5**
6. Christian, God has graciously provided everything you need in Christ in order for you to not only start this race well, but to also finish strong.

Third, God has admonished us with examples in His Word.

1. Israel had such a wonderful beginning. They all did. Notice how many times the word "all" is used in the first four verses. What a glorious start they had in their race. They were redeemed at the Red Sea and took off running.
2. But notice verse 5. What a sobering verse. As we study this in God's Word we learn that only two men out of the entire nation made it into Canaan land.
3. God had redeemed them and graciously provided in abundance, but only a few chapters later we see them wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. They all died except Joshua and Caleb. The rest were overthrown. They were tripped up in the race by Satan.
4. Paul will detail how they were tripped up. Why does he do this? It is to teach and admonish us in our race v. 6, 11.
 - They desired the old life of Egypt. vs. 6; cf. **Numbers 11:4-6**
 - They allowed their fleshly appetites to control them. vs. 7-8; Exodus 32; Numbers 25
 - They became dissatisfied with God's provision. vs. 9-10; cf. Numbers 21

5. All of these things brought Israel into an overthrown condition. Israel was focused on themselves and wanted things their way rather than valuing and appreciating what God was doing.
6. Paul said that God has graciously provided these events in Israel's history as examples to us today.
7. Israel had a wonderful beginning, but a very sad and pitiful ending. They wound up forsaking God's plans and opposing what God had wanted to do through them.
8. It is a very dangerous thing to walk by sight and not by faith in God's Word. Israel ended up wasting their lives and going through so much unbelievable heartache simply because they were so hard-headed and were determined to do things their way.
9. They started the race fantastically, but were overthrown in the wilderness by the adversary's program.
 - Paul warns Christians, "*Wherefore (based on the previous examples) let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*"
10. Christian, will you make a decision today that you want to finish the race strong?