

The Wreckage and the Fire Pt 17

A Warning from the Wilderness

Fire in the Wreckage — 1 Corinthians 10:1–14

1 Corinthians 10:5 (NLT) - Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

1 Corinthians 10:12 (NKJV) - Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV) - No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Introduction:

April 14, 1912. 11:40 PM. The North Atlantic – (Put up picture of Titanic) The RMS Titanic was the most advanced ship ever constructed.

- She was 882 feet long, displacing 52,000 tons of steel.
- She carried the wealthiest passengers in the world and the most sophisticated technology the age had produced.
- Her builders had declared her virtually unsinkable.

- Her crew were among the most experienced sailors on the ocean.

What is less known is this: the wireless operator received **six separate iceberg warnings** from other ships throughout the day of April 14. **Six.**

- The warnings were logged.
- Some were delivered to the bridge.
- The Titanic continued at nearly full speed into the night.

Not because the crew was reckless but because they were overly confident:

- **The ship was unsinkable.**
- **The warnings were inconvenient.**

And confidence, unchecked by caution, sailed straight into the dark.

The deadliest disasters in human history are almost never caused by ignorance. They are caused by overconfidence that outruns caution.

At 11:40 PM the lookout spotted the iceberg. It was too late to turn. In less than three hours, 1,500 people were dead.

Paul opens 1 Corinthians 10 with an iceberg warning on a clear night. He points the Corinthians — this gifted, Spirit-filled, knowledgeable, privileged congregation — to a people who had everything they had. And he shows them what happened.

(CHANGE BACK TO SERMON BACKGROUND)

- Israel had the cloud — the Corinthians had the Spirit
- Israel had the sea — the Corinthians had baptism
- Israel had manna — the Corinthians had the Lord's table
- Israel had water from the Rock — the Corinthians had Christ

Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

That was their iceberg. Six warnings could not have said it more plainly:

PRIVILEGE IS NOT PROTECTION. GIFTS ARE NOT GUARANTEES AND THE MOST DANGEROUS PERSON YOU WILL EVER KNOW IS THE ONE WHO THINKS THEY CANNOT FALL.

Paul makes some powerful points in this chapter for all of us to learn from: Their privileges. Their presumption. Their provision.

1. Their Privileges

1 Corinthians 10:1–4 (NLT) - *I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. **All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and **all of them** walked through the sea on dry ground. In the cloud and in the sea, **all of them** were baptized as followers***

of Moses. All of them ate the same spiritual food, and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ.

- Paul opens with a history lesson — but it is not about the past. It is a mirror held up to the present.
- **"All of them" — five times in four verses.** Every person. No exceptions. Nobody was left out of the privilege.
- **baptizo** — immersed, identified with — Israel's crossing was their baptism; they were fully initiated into the covenant
- The Rock that followed them was Christ — the pre-incarnate presence of the Son of God sustaining them in the wilderness
- This congregation had every spiritual advantage imaginable:
 - **Divine guidance** — *the cloud led them*
 - **Divine deliverance** — *the sea parted for them*
 - **Divine provision** — *manna fell for them*
 - **Divine presence** — *Christ traveled with them*

They were the most privileged people on earth. They had a cloud overhead, a miracle beneath their feet, bread from heaven in their hands, and the Son of God walking beside them.

And it was not enough because... Privilege without obedience produces presumption and presumption is a killer!

1 Corinthians 10:5 (NLT) – Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

- **"Nevertheless."** One word that carries the weight of a graveyard. Despite the cloud. Despite the sea. Despite the manna. Despite Christ himself walking with them.

Jonathan Edwards — Religious Affections, 1746

*Nothing is more dangerous to the soul than **the presumption that past experience of grace is a sufficient substitute for present watchfulness.** The man who rests on what God has done for him, rather than walking in what God requires of him, has mistaken the nature of grace entirely.*

Your privilege is not your protection, your present obedience is.

2. Their Presumption

1 Corinthians 10:6–12 (NKJV) - Now these things became our examples, to the intent that **we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And **do not become idolaters** as were some of them... Nor let us **commit sexual immorality**, as some of them did... **nor complain**, as some of them also complained,**

*and were **destroyed by the destroyer**. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. **Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.***

- Paul names four specific sins that destroyed Israel in the wilderness:
 - **Idolatry** v. 7 - *they sat down to eat and rose up to play*
 - **Sexual immorality** — v. 8 — *23,000 fell in one day*
 - **Testing God** v. 9 - *destroyed by serpents*
 - **Grumbling** v. 10 - *destroyed by the destroyer*

typikos - v. 11 - written as types, patterns, warning examples - **their history is our textbook**

- **Idolatry at temple banquets.**
- **Sexual immorality in chapter 5.**
- **Testing Paul's apostleship. Grumbling about spiritual hierarchy.**

The wilderness generation and the Corinthian church were not separated by a thousand years. They were separated by a single word: presumption.

Then comes the most important verse in the chapter:

1 Corinthians 10:12 (NKJV) - Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

dokeo — to think, to suppose, to be self-confident — the one who is certain of their standing is the most vulnerable

- "Thinks he stands" — the person most at risk is not the doubter. It is the confident one.
- The Corinthians were confident in their knowledge, their gifts, their freedom, their spiritual maturity.
- Israel was confident in their history with God, their covenant status, their divine privileges.

Confidence is not the problem. Confidence that stops watching, stops guarding, stops taking the warning seriously — that is the iceberg at 11:40 PM.

THE PERSON WHO SAYS, "I COULD NEVER FALL INTO THAT" HAS ALREADY TAKEN THE FIRST STEP TOWARD FALLING INTO EXACTLY THAT.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer — The Cost of Discipleship, 1937

*Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. **It is grace without cost to the one who presumes upon it — and it is the most dangerous thing in the world.***

I refuse to be presumptuous about the goodness of God. Just because God has been good to me, I still need to walk worthy of it!

3. Their Provision

1 Corinthians 10:13–14 (NKJV) - *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*

- **After the warning comes the word of grace. Paul does not leave them in the wreckage. He gives them the exit.**

Three things God guarantees in verse 13:

- **Your temptation is not unique** — *others have faced it and survived*
- **God is faithful** — *the faithfulness of God is the ground under the promise*
- **There is always a way out** — *always, without exception*

Ekbasis - the way of escape, the exit. An architectural term for a door built into a structure; **God builds the exit into every temptation**

- **He builds the door into the temptation before it reaches you.**
- **The exit is always there. The only question is whether you are willing to walk through it.**

Then verse 14 – **A very important verse for us all:**

1 Corinthians 10:14 (NKJV) - Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

***pheugete* – flee: present imperative, continuous action; not a one-time decision but a sustained, active, daily running**

- **"Therefore" — the escape route is not passive. It requires a decision and then a direction.**
- God provides the door. You have to walk through it.

God is faithful to the limit of temptation, but you have to be faithful to the exit.

GOD WILL NEVER LET THE TEMPTATION BE BIGGER THAN HIS FAITHFULNESS. BUT HE WILL NOT WALK THROUGH THE DOOR FOR YOU.

Abraham Heschel — The Prophets, 1962

The prophet is a person who, seeing the world from God's perspective, cannot be silent about what threatens to destroy it. The prophetic word is not pessimism — it is the most profound act of love. You warn the ones you love. You give the iceberg warning to the ship you are sailing on. The warning itself is the proof that God has not given up.

Paul is not condemning the Corinthians by showing them Israel's failure. He is loving them. The warning is the mercy. The history is the gift.

Conclusion - The Titanic had six warnings. Israel had forty years of provision. The Corinthians had the Spirit, the gifts, the knowledge, and nine chapters of apostolic counsel.

Warnings are not insults, they are invitations to exit the trap and to walk in Heaven's provision!

The wilderness is not where God abandoned Israel. It is where Israel abandoned watchfulness. Don't make the same mistake on your shore of life.

You are not as strong as you think you are, but God is infinitely more faithful than you can believe.

I am going to run to the promise He built and not look back:

- I didn't come this far to die in the wilderness.
- I refuse to build a monument to what God delivered me from.
- The Egypt behind me is not greater than the Canaan before me.
- I will not miss my future grieving over my past.
- The God who opened the Red Sea is still opening doors.
- What God promised is bigger than what I lost.
- I did not survive the battle just to surrender at the border.
- Fear may be loud, but faith has the final word.
- I will not camp where God only intended me to pass through.
- My history may explain me, but it will not define me.
- I am not returning to chains God already broke.

- I am not going back to what I prayed to get free from.
- The wilderness was a season, not a destination.
- My pain has an expiration date, but His promise does not.
- I hear the giants, but I hear God louder.
- The promise is worth every battle.
- The opposition is proof that the territory matters.
- If God brought me out, He intends to bring me in.
- I did not come to the edge of destiny to retreat in fear.

I will not trade tomorrow's promise for yesterday's comfort. The bridge behind me is burned. The promise before me is calling. I'm crossing over. I'm taking ground. I'm possessing what God said was mine. And if nobody goes with me, I'll still march. Because the promise is not behind me. The promise is in front of me. And I'm running toward everything God said!