

This Behavior Is Dangerous To Your Health

1 Corinthians 10:1-13
WEFC April 25, 2010

In 1969, in Pass Christian, Mississippi, a group of people were preparing to have a “hurricane party” in the face of a storm named Camille. Were they ignorant of the dangers? Could they have been overconfident? Did they let their egos and pride influence their decision? We’ll never know.

What we do know is that the wind was howling outside the posh Richelieu Apartments when Police Chief Jerry Peralta pulled up sometime after dark. Facing the Beach less than 250 feet from the surf, the apartments were directly in the line of danger. A man with a drink in his hand came out to the second-floor balcony and waved. Peralta yelled up, “You all need to clear out of here as quickly as you can. The storm’s getting worse.”

But as other joined the man on the balcony, they just laughed at Peralta’s order to leave. “This is my land,” one of them yelled back. “If you want me off, you’ll have to arrest me.”

Peralta didn’t arrest anyone, but he wasn’t able to persuade them to leave either. He wrote down the names of the next of kin of the twenty or so people who gathered there to party through the storm. They laughed as he took their names. They had been warned, but they had no intention of leaving.

It was 10:15 p.m. when the front wall of the storm came ashore. Scientists clocked Camille’s wind speed at more than 205 miles-per-hour, the strongest on record. Raindrops hit with the force of bullets, and waves off the Gulf Coast crested between twenty-two and twenty-eight feet high.

News reports later showed that the worst damage came at the little settlement of motels, go-go bars, and gambling houses known as Pass Christian, Mississippi, where some twenty people were killed at a hurricane party in the Richelieu Apartments.

Nothing was left of that three-story structure but the foundation; the only survivor was a five-year-old boy found clinging to a mattress the following day.

Christian Values Quarterly, Spring/Summer, 1994, p. 10

As followers of Christ we have been given a tremendous amount. Jesus has accomplished so much and released us into a life that is rich.

His goodness poured into our lives makes winning the lottery look like pennies.

Our minds go on to put two-and-two together.

- since God has done so much for us...
- since we have been given such a huge gift ...
- since He gave His only Son to save us ...

... we conclude: we have it made with God. God is not going to dump us in any way, shape or form.

God has invested too much in us too much to pull out.

- our sins, He’ll forgive, even if we do a little extra sinning
- our wrongs, He will overlook
- our arrogance, He will chalk it up to us being human

Last week, we noted at the end of **1 Corinthians 9** that we need more than just good intentions and good will in handling our rights and freedoms.

What is required is discipline ... keeping ourselves in check.

To show us just how important that is, we come to **1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

Key Thought:

God's grace requires our sweat.

This is reality check material.

This blows out the "fairy tale" stuff of God's Word that somehow creeps into our brains, telling us that once we accept Jesus everything is okay; we don't need to be overly concerned with how we behave.

God's grace is great, but grace is not for personal exploitation. ... and just in case we might be leaning that way, take a look at these 13 verses.

Important Background Understanding:

- this is "post"-salvation, after we come to be accepted by Jesus Christ and accept Him ourselves
- not earning anything, but we are responding wisely to God's huge investment in us and making the most of God's investment.

What is the reason that the author is angling in this direction?

Why does **God's grace need to be responded to with our sweat?**

1. God majorly supplied, yet decisively rejected ... the same people 1-5

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.

They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

God's plan in the past included one nation through which He would reach out to the world – the people of Israel.

The historical account of the birth of the nation and what it has gone through in history is phenomenal. ... and the story is not yet complete.

In their early years as they took on nationhood, the things that God did to keep them going are unparalleled in history.

Their outstanding advantages can be compared to what the Corinthians experienced in **baptism** and the **Lord's Supper**.

In other words, the old material has present relevance.

As God initially formed the nation of Israel, He did so by leading them out from under Egypt's powerful, though oppressive hand.

This was obvious to all that this was God's doing because of a visible cloud that led the people where they should travel.

That cloud led them to the water's edge and then as the sea opened up for them, the cloud led them through the sea.

It was like a **baptism**, the initial step of becoming free in God.

They went into what was the sea and should have been their death, but instead it became the escape route into a new life.

When they travelled in the wilderness without the conveniences of grocery stores, God supplied them with food and water in such eye-catching ways, that it was again obvious that this was God confirming that He really did care for them.

God daily kept them going.

There was manna that came with the dew in the morning for some 38 years, day after day after day, six days out of seven.

When out of water, God brought water to them out of a rock.

Food and drink ... comparable to the two parts of the **Lord's Supper**.

Jesus Christ, even before He had come to earth, Himself was involved in providing for the people of Israel.

God was so concerned for Israel that He took on the world's superpower, Egypt, and brought it to its knees ... resulting in the release of the people of Israel.

God bent over backwards, spent heavily on His people, and led them where they needed to go.

God continues to spend ... big time spends ... on His people.

He does for them the extra-ordinary.

It is clear to all that God is pulling for His people.

Whatever they needed, He supplied.

When you have invested that heavily into someone, you know that you aren't going to pull out at the drop of a hat.

The folks in Corinth knew the information that had been passed on to them. They had learned that "in Sunday School".

But they were missing on how this connected with them.

We go on to read:

Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

God majorly supplied, yet decisively rejected ... the same people.

These people that God called, HIS OWN; those that God loved and plodded with for years ... were rejected by God Himself.

Let us clarify one important matter:

This is not saying that these people never made it to heaven.

We are definitely saying though, that they lost a significant part of their reward.

Heaven, yes; reward in heaven, greatly reduced from what it could have been.

Understand “rejection” in this limited sense – not as eternal destination, but loss of reward.

Some years ago a former American astronaut took over as head of a major airline, determined to make the airline’s service the best in the industry. One day, as the new president walked through a particular department, he saw an employee resting his feet on a desk while the telephone on the desk rang incessantly. “Aren’t you going to answer that phone?” the boss demanded.

“This isn’t my department,” answered the employee nonchalantly, apparently not recognizing his new boss. “I work in maintenance.”

“Not anymore you don’t!” snapped the president.

Transition:

There was something that took place that caused God to pull out from supporting His people

Whatever it was, so serious was the reason that God took an entire nation, minus two people, and buried them all over a desert.

They were not given the privilege of entering their new homeland that God was preparing for them.

What happened that so turned God off on the very people that He had so gone out of His way to help?

It had to be something that was major.

God’s grace requires our sweat ... because of ...

2. Unguarded choices that overpower better judgment 6-10

10:6

Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

The issue that turned God off on His own was that they became “**lusts after evil**” ... not the most complimentary description that we have had of ourselves.

They developed strong desires for that which was beyond the fence.

The “game-breaker”, the “straw that broke the camel’s back” was not one specific issue, but a pile of issues, choices, unguarded choices that overpowered better judgment.

They were running a race ... getting to the land promised by God. But the “race” was long and at times difficult. And in order to keep their sanity and give themselves a break from time to time, they made choices on the basis of ...

- Hey, I like that. I deserve a break today.
- I’ve been good for a long time, I’ll indulge just a bit

They forgot to keep themselves in check ... and allowed themselves the freedom to express themselves.

They were not always thrilled with being God's representatives ... or with God's script for them

When mom, Kathy, was participating in a parenting class at her church, she explained to her 6-year-old daughter, Kayla, that she was taking a course to help make her a better mommy.

The next Sunday, after church, Kayla became upset and had a tantrum because she was not getting her way. Both parents tried to calm her. But with tears streaming down her face and in a loud voice, Kayla announced to her mother,

"You told me you were taking a course to make you a better mommy. Well, it's not working!"

Shirley Ratcliff, "Kids of the Kingdom," Christian Reader (July/August 2003)

God wasn't being nice.

Pick through what has happened in the past and get the picture.

Four incidents from history are highlighted.

- **Worshipping the LORD in your own way**

10:7

Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry."

Exodus 32 contains the details of the event being recalled.

After making the golden calf – a clear cut case of blatant idolatry - **God's** people, at a religious celebration, a meal, just like back in **1 Corinthians 8**, ate, drank and then engaged in immorality.

The result: approximately 3000 people were put to death.

We could make a number of excuses for why the people did what they did, but God says, "They lost their spiritual edge."

The very God who had done so much for them, turned against them!

Sin ... was significant.

- **Sexual Immorality, no matter how you look at it, is wrong.**

Back in **Numbers 25** a brief sketch of what is being referred to is given.

God's people, mingled with a Moabites, who invited them to worship their gods ... which led to sexual immorality ... and over 20,000 people lost their lives

10:8

We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died.

- **Not liking what God is doing in your life and letting Him know it.**

Number 21:4-9

They didn't like the shortage of good food and water, and they were tired of manna.

The best seller in the top ten books was, "Mrs. Moses' Manna Cookbook" with the subtitle, "One hundred and one ways to prepare manna."

Their complaint was directed at God and Moses.

Having heard that enough, God went into action and dispensed snakes among the people

10:9

We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes.

They did not approve of the way God was handling their lives. They decided they deserved better.

- Grumbling

Possibly **Numbers 16:41**

10:10

And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.

They were given it all; it was theirs for the taking, yet they gave it all up.

The script had it all written out and the details confirmed it. These were God's people and God was going to bless them.

But they lost it.

Incredibly, they let it slip through their fingers. Their strong evil desires tugged and won out.

Couldn't they see what they were doing?

God re-evaluated their situation. He looked at what He had done ... and then He looked at what they had done.

He did not expect them to balance out, by any stretch of the imagination.

He didn't even expect them to match Him at ten-to-one.

... and when God did that audit, checked over the results, looked at their marks and how they had done on the tests, He flunked them.

In each of these situations the grind of life had rubbed through to expose the rawness of the people's heart.

There is nothing exceptional in any of these. This is what we all face in the grind.

Sure ... we tire out, get bored, are disappointed with the way things are turning out ...

... but this is a race ... what else should we expect.

We don't expect people running a 10 kilometer race to stop just because they get a bit of a side-ache; nor do we expect them to stop the race and chat with friends who are cheering them on, nor do we expect them to have a party at kilometer 5.

It would be highly presumptuous of any of us to enter a 10 km race, run 5 km and then argue with the officials that we should get a prize and a certificate for having completed the course.

Somewhere in the process, our thinking veers off from God's truth.

We at times approach God with the following kind of attitude:

Manager: "I'm sorry I can't hire you, but there isn't enough work to keep you busy."

Applicant: "You'd be surprised how little it takes."

Sin is still sin, regardless of who does it. God still hates sin.

(... Christ follower or not)

Sin is never separated from the sinner – sin is never committed anonymously, it is committed by people.

As a recipient of God's benefits, we automatically accept accompanying responsibilities.

Is there really any other way to interpret life? ... any other way to see things.

No.

We presume that we have the right to free speech, worship as we choose, use our bodies as we wish ... these are our constitutional and human rights.

But God's people found that they were ...

- not free to worship as they liked
- not free to have sexual relationships as they liked
- not free to speak as they liked

That generation lost it because of **unguarded choices that overpowered better judgment.**

What was missing?

... Godly self-control

They were God's people, but they gave up on personal discipline and became "lusters of evil".

In a September 20, 1998 segment of ABC's news magazine show "20/20," reporter John Stossel interviewed Dr. Roy Baumeister of Case Western Reserve University.

Baumeister said, "If you look at the social and personal problems facing people in the United States—we're talking drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, unsafe sex, school failure, shopping problems, gambling—over and over, the majority of them have self-control failure as central to them. Studies show that self-control does predict success in life over a very long time."

The report included video of an experiment Stossel conducted at a nursery school. "By testing how well four-year-olds can resist temptation," Stossel explained, "researchers say they can predict what kind of adults they're likely to be.

In the experiment, the kids are given a choice: They'll get five pieces of candy if they can wait ten minutes until the teacher comes back into the room—or just two pieces if they can't wait and give in to the temptation before the ten minutes are up.

"So the kids tried. It wasn't easy. Most fidgeted and looked as if they were being tortured. Some touched the candy. One boy counted the candy—maybe to remind himself that five is more than two. One girl looked heavenward as she waited, seeming to ask for God's help. Seven of the nine kids we tested lasted the full ten minutes. Most spent some time with their hand hovering over

the bell." Ringing the bell meant the temptation to take the candy was too strong.

Stossel was recreating an experiment conducted thirty years earlier at Columbia University. Using a much larger group of children, the Columbia study found out which kids had the self-control to resist temptation and hold out for the full reward later—and which did not. The children were checked on over the next few decades to see which group tended to do better in life. The result of the study, Stossel said, was astonishingly clear-cut: "Kids who did well on this test years ago tended to do better in life. Better in lots of ways. Their SAT scores were higher. As teenagers, the boys had fewer run-ins with the law. The girls were less likely to get pregnant."

The person who noted this event wrote:

Self-control, then, is a key indicator of whether or not we will be successful. We can't control everything in life, but if there is one thing we can control and must control, it is the self.

As Dr. Baumeister concluded on "20/20,"

"If we're concerned about raising children to be successful and healthy and happy, forget about self-esteem. Concentrate on self-control."

Pat Williams with James D. Denney, A Lifetime of Success, (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2000), pp.106-108

... now what do we do with this?

1. There are no discounts or shortcuts in responding to God's goodness.

God is serious about helping us gain what He came to give. To experience it, though, will require self-control.

All of us have at times presumed upon God ... to give us a break, to cut us some slack.

We've hoped that He won't deal with our particular sins with His normal severity.

We've thought: God, I've followed you fairly faithfully, so if I stray a bit here or there, it shouldn't really matter much.

History indicates that God does care ... He does notice ... much more than do we.

Self-control is difficult ... but so necessary.

Our lives change as we begin to ...

2. Tone down confidence in ourselves to handle matters

10:12

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Overconfidence ... believing that we can do whatever and it won't affect us ... is being unrealistic with the evidence ... in the past and presently.

We may have had experience after experience.

But our confidence is not in our experiences and in our ability to handle them, but in the God who directs us through them.

While she was enjoying a transatlantic ocean trip, Billie Burke, the famous actress, noticed that a gentleman at the next table was suffering from a bad cold.

“Are you uncomfortable?” she asked sympathetically. The man nodded.

“I’ll tell you just what to do for it,” she offered. “Go back to your stateroom and drink lots of orange juice. Take two aspirins. Cover yourself with all the blankets you can find. Sweat the cold out. I know just what I’m talking about. I’m Billie Burke from Hollywood.

The man smiled warmly and introduced himself in return. “Thanks,” he said, “I’m Dr. Mayo from the Mayo clinic.”

Just because we have been baptized, just because we join in the Lord’s Supper, does not mean that now God owes us.

Because he cares for us, does not mean that He will not critique our behavior.

Just because He loves us does not mean that we do not need to be disciplined; that we can get away with anything.

God does not raise spoiled brats.

The tone of this section has been heavy and serious.

We are under stress because of work conditions, there is strain in a relationship or two ... so where do we turn if not to our own wisdom?

... how are we to approach life when it is filled with things like complaining, thinking we deserve a break and living as if no one can tell us what to do?

3. We are not in control of the events of life

“No temptation / test has seized you ...”

Difficulties find us ...we don’t have to go looking for them.

They get attached to us, or attempt to attach themselves to us.

But just because something or someone comes knocking on our door, they do not need to be let into our lives.

The choice to practice godly self-control, or godly discipline starts when we recognize who or with what we are dealing.

We may not be in control of the events of life, but we are in control of our response.

When William Sangster was told he was dying of progressive muscular atrophy, he made four resolutions and faithfully kept them:

1. I will never complain;
2. I will keep the home bright
3. I will count my blessings
4. I will try to turn it to gain.

.

4. We are not being singled out.

No temptation / test has seized you except what is common to man.

Everyone of us has our fair share of difficulties and abnormalities.

Underneath our challenges are the same essential issues.

- the desire to replace God
- sexual purity
- complaining, grumbling
- personal arrogance

Not only is the test common, but so is the solution.

Life was given to us, not to fail, but so that in Christ, we might succeed.

5. It's not just us keeping ourselves in check; ... it's God

God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

God has helped thousands before us, and He is desirous of to keep on helping us through trials.

We can count on God for this.

This is one of God's specialties.

God does not abandon His own.

He does not push us beyond our breaking point.

He, in these situations, provides a way to take us to the end without failing ... without giving in to sin.

There we need to know God's Word and be sensitive to His Spirit.

Please do not misunderstand what is being said. We are not saying, "When you are having a difficult time and struggling ... then pray and God will extricate you from that dilemma."

That is not what is being said here.

... putting it all together ...

To get the right answer to how to handle trials, we need the end of **1 Corinthians 9** along with this verse.

(Dallas Willard info ...)

Becoming Christlike never occurs without intense and well-informed action on our part.

Our good intentions are not strong enough to "save" us in the situations in which we find ourselves.

We need to be "in shape"; "in condition"; "toned" to handle the pressures.

If we are not ... then "trying" will most often end up in failure.

We must do **1 Corinthians 9** – discipline, train, get our minds and bodies into spiritual shape.

Training is for the purpose of getting these bodies into readiness to face the pressure when it comes.

We have a pre-determined, a practiced response.

We are not taken by surprise.

We discipline ourselves for precisely these moments, these challenges.

A DISCIPLINE is an activity that is in our power, which we work at, in order to do what we cannot do by direct effort.

Examine for a moment army training:

You discipline yourself. You do push ups, running with a 75 pound back pack on, learn how to shoot, go on survival trips ... none of that is necessary though ... you are not in battle.

This is all done in the safety of not being shot at or pursued by an enemy.

You learn to do things through discipline, while in training ... SO THAT ... when you get sent into battle and the bullets whiz by your head, you do not high-tail it and run. You stick in the battle, fight and win.

Why?

... because we have been trained in a new response.

A DISCIPLINE is an activity that is in our power, which we work at, in order to do what we cannot do by direct effort.

With that in place, then **1 Corinthians 10:13** works.

When we are trained, disciplined, ... when we have God's Word understood and digested in our minds, our responses to various scenarios figured out ... then when we are tested ... the Spirit of God brings into recall the appropriate response ... and the trial is successfully handled.

Why this necessity for discipline?

In our fallen world this body of ours is pre-possessed by evil, so that we do not even have to THINK too do what is wrong.

But, we MUST THINK and PLAN and PRACTICE – and receive GRACE – if we are to succeed in doing what is right.

God is faithful ... He does change us.

Back when the telegraph was the fastest means of long-distance communication, there was a story, perhaps apocryphal, about a young man who applied for a job as a Morse code operator. Answering an ad in the newspaper, he went to the address that was listed. When he arrived, he entered a large, noisy office. In the background a telegraph clacked away. A sign on the receptionist's counter instructed job applicants to fill out a form and wait until they were summoned to enter the inner office.

The young man completed his form and sat down with seven other waiting applicants. After a few minutes, the young man stood up, crossed the room to the door of the inner office, and walked right in. Naturally the other applicants perked up, wondering what was going on. Why had this man been so bold? They muttered among themselves that they hadn't heard any

summons yet. They took more than a little satisfaction in assuming the young man who went into the office would be reprimanded for his presumption and summarily disqualified for the job.

Within a few minutes the young man emerged from the inner office escorted by the interviewer, who announced to the other applicants, "Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming, but the job has been filled by this young man."

The other applicants began grumbling to each other, and then one spoke up saying, "Wait a minute--I don't understand something. He was the last one to come in, and we never even got a chance to be interviewed. Yet he got the job. That's not fair."

The employer responded, "I'm sorry, but all the time you've been sitting here, the telegraph has been ticking out the following message in Morse code: 'If you understand this message, then come right in. The job is yours.' None of you heard it or understood it. This young man did. So the job is his."

Gary Preston, Character Forged from Conflict (Bethany House, 1999)

We train ... so that when the message comes ... we are able to respond.

This is not being presumptuous or over-confident. This is God-confidence, where **“the grace of God is accompanied by our sweat.”**