

Learning to Live in the Spirit

Key Verse: Those things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who are living at the time when God's work is being completed. So be careful. When you think you are standing firm, you might fall. First Corinthians 10:11(NIRV).

The New Testament writers often appealed to the lessons, positive or negative, that are to be learned by the experience of the Israelites as recorded in the Old Testament. This is just one reason we have the Old Testament in our Bible. It will do us well to consider what Paul is saying and resolve to learn the lessons. They are many and they are beneficial. They can give us joy; help make us a fruitful branch thus saving us the pain of being pruned John 15:2.

First, Look Again at First Corinthians

10:1-13. It begins with 'For', or 'because of this'. Because of what? Paul has just told us that we ought to strive to win in the Christian life like an athlete strives to be at his personal best 9:17-26. In a race there is only one winner, but in the Christian life all can be winners. Dedication of purpose, not winning is Paul's point.

This concept is in harmony with the need to walk by faith in the same way that we received Christ by faith.

There are some who feel that we can do nothing, the 'Let go and let God' philosophy: that *all* must be done by the Holy Spirit. There is a sense in which this is true, and a sense in which it is not. We are redeemed by faith in Christ's sacrifice alone, and we are sanctified wholly by faith in Christ's risen life Romans 5:10. We cannot do His work, we trust Him for that John 6:28. It is also true that God has put into our hands an intelligent service, as a labourer together with God Romans 12:1, First Corinthians 3:9.

Where is this balance found? What does God expect of me? What should I expect Him to do, and then leave Him to do it? How do I intercept, interpret and follow the Spirit's prompting? How do I reconcile

freedom and obligation? How can we become 'disqualified for the prize?' We will begin to answer these questions in this study series.

We cannot look under every stone, but hopefully our studies together will take each of us further in our walk with and service to the Lord.

We are all included. Notice the word 'all' in First Corinthians 10:1-4. It means 'everyone' as it is used here. Everyone had the lesson, but only some benefited. God, says Paul, is taking you through ordeals too. Allow them to lead you to a closer walk with God; you will be blessed. Paul says that these trials the Israelites encountered then are God's object lessons for us now. He is wise who can learn from the experiences of others. The God of the Old Testament is also the God of those who stand on this side of the cross:

But you are the same, and your years will not come to an end Psalm 102:27.

His nature, His character, His purpose has not changed with the passing of the old order. What was pleasing and acceptable to God then is pleasing and acceptable to God now. Remember that there were many who did not please Him

then and there are many who do not please Him now! Where do you stand? What is the desire of your heart? It is this that is important.

Moses and his staff. Consider the elements of his calling Exodus 3:
 God came to where Moses was v1.
 God caught his attention v2.
 God spoke clearly and audibly v4.
 God indicated the solemnity of the occasion v5. Contrast with v3.¹
 God clearly identified Himself v6.
 God clearly stated his intention v7-9.
 God clearly told Moses what God wanted him to do v10.

This is a classic call of one charged with a mission. Moses' problem was not misunderstanding, it was that he just did not want to do it.

Note his reluctance, his excuses:
 Who am I . . . v11.
 They won't who know you are v13.
 They will not believe or hear me 4.1.
 I am not a speaker v10.
 Please Lord, send someone else v13.

It was in all this that God endowed Moses' staff:

What is that in your hand? Exodus 4:2.
 A staff; a common shepherd's staff. This endowed staff, sometimes called a rod, was to become the channel, the support and symbol of Moses' power in his leadership of Israel for 40 years. It was God's gift to him for these purposes.

Footnotes: 1 Matthew Henry writes: He must express his reverence, and his readiness to obey: *Put off thy shoes from off thy feet(AV)* , as a servant. Putting off the shoe was then what putting off the hat is now, a token of respect and submission. "The ground, for the present, is *holy ground*, made so by this special manifestation of the divine presence, during the continuance of which it must retain this character; therefore tread not on that ground with soiled shoes." Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. Eccl. 5:1. Bible quotations in this study are from the NASB, unless otherwise acknowledged.

Exodus 4:17.
 Look up these references:
 Exodus 7:9-12, 15-20, 8:5-6, 16-17, 14:16, 17:5-7, 17:9-13, Numbers 20:11.

We learn a lot from Moses' staff.
 The Egyptians of rank carried a staff but despised shepherds and their staff or rod which was the symbol of their trade. God took the despised thing and used it for His purpose First Corinthians 1:28.

It was only a piece of wood; it had no value in itself. God has a way of taking simple things; a widow's oil, a small boy's lunch and doing mighty things through them.

The staff became the symbol of leadership in the service of God. Numbers 17:1-13, Matthew 23:11.

The endowed staff was God's gift to Moses for all his days for 'The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.' Romans 11:29.

Moses trusted the gift rather than trusting and obeying the giver Numbers 20:8&12. God told Moses to take his rod (symbol of Divine authority) and speak to the rock.

Moses relied upon experience and struck the rock twice (we will see why in a later lesson). Moses' sin was similar to the sin of Saul. The lesson is ever:

To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed than the fat of rams First Samuel 15:22.

God honoured His servant before his people, but limited his future sphere of service. Numbers 20:12. His ministry was in time given to another.

Welcome

Glen Park Gospel Church
 Lower Road, Eltham North
 Sundays 10.30 am

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