

# A STROLL DOWN MEMORY LANE

## 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13

There once was a man who loved to play golf. But he had a problem... His eyesight was terrible and getting worse. He could still hit the ball, but he was having a tough time seeing where it went. He was spending way too much time searching for it in the fairway grass.

One day, he mentioned his problem to the golf pro on duty. He had just talked to a gentleman who had gotten up in age, and had outlived his former partners, but the guy could still play, and he had 20/20 vision.

The golf pro put the two men together - *the younger man with the good health and the older fellow with the perfect eyesight*. They seemed like an excellent fit.

On the first tee, the younger guy with the poor vision, hit his drive a mile! It was a beautiful shot - right down the middle of the fairway. *But he shook his head in exasperation, "I'm so sorry, I lost sight of that ball as soon as it left my club. I have no idea where it went."*

His new friend chimed in, *"Don't worry, I've got it. I see it."* He pointed his finger, *"It's right down there."*

The older man hit his shot, and the two men walked down the fairway to hit their second shots. Of course, they couldn't find the younger man's ball. They looked and looked. Finally, he yelled at his new partner, *"I thought you said you saw my ball!"* The elderly fellow replied, *"I did, but now I don't remember where it was."*

And the moral of the story *is*... **good vision doesn't matter if you've got a bad memory!** And this was a problem with the Christians in Corinth. They'd forgotten important lessons they should've remembered.

The church at Corinth had a bad memory.

Throughout history, God had taught His people vital principles. The Corinthian's had been given numerous examples. But they'd forgotten the lessons learned, and were repeating the mistakes of their forefathers.

This is why in Chapter 10 Paul takes this church **on a stroll down memory lane**. He recounts the history of the Hebrews, as examples to the Church...

Verse 1, **“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud...”**

When the Hebrews exited Egypt they followed *a cloud by day* which turned into *a pillar of fire by night*.

Wherever the cloud stopped, the people camped. It would rest over the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle.

This fiery column of smoke was God's glory among His people. This is what they were called to pursue. The Hebrews called it **“Shekinah,”** or **“that which dwells and settles.”** It was God settling in among His people.

And it must've been quite a sight. Artists envision it as a pillar that spread out like an umbrella over their camp. Like a heavenly blast, the pillar exploded at the top and covered the tribes with a mushroom cloud.

It seems the psalmist was referring to this cloud in Psalm 121, **“Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor**

sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.”

Imagine traveling the hot sands of the wilderness, under a blistering sun. The Sinai Peninsula isn't known for its towering oaks. There's no such thing as shade trees. The tallest vegetation are shrubs and sagebrush.

*How do you keep several million people from over-heating?* God's answer was **the cloud**. As long as they stayed in His presence - as long as they followed His will - *they stayed cool*. God's will and presence was the cool place to be! **And God is still *the cool place to be!***

If you want to be “cool...” At least it was “cool” in my day... Today it's “epic,” or “tight,” or “sick,” or “dope.”

Hey, if you want to be in a desirable, refreshing, envious place - then walk in God's will. Live under His jurisdiction, in His neighborhood. Seek His presence.

Paul is encouraging the Corinthians, “**Don't forget, it's cool to walk with God.**” It's where you want to be.

In this chapter Paul will talk about temptation coming from three sources: **the lust of the flesh, the lure of the world, the lies of the devil**. And Satan's first lie is this, *it's not cool to live for Jesus...* To the contrary, it's the coolest thing to do! It's shade from the heat, and shelter in the night. “**Living under God's glory**” is cool!

Well, they all were under the cloud, **and they “all passed through the sea...”** I don't care how many times I watch the

"The Ten Commandments" I always get goose bumps when Moses Heston raises his rod, and the sea rolls back before Israel's astonished eyes.

Imagine, if you had been there! It took faith to climb down the bank into the seabed. I'm sure you had one eye on the ground in front of you, and one eye on the walls of water around you. *How could the ground be so dry? Would the curtains of water hold and not close?*

I realize the Hebrews had no other choice... the Pharaoh had a change of heart, his army was being held off by the pillar of fire... but crossing the Red Sea wasn't as easy as you might think. You had to believe that God was for you! That He would get you through!

And that's when Paul brings it all home to these Corinthians. He writes, "**all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea...**" It was like a baptism!

Here's the first implication that what happened to *Israel historically* is a type, or analogy, of what happens to *us spiritually*. In the cloud and in the sea the Hebrews were baptized or initiated into Moses.

They took a new identity. They were no longer slaves of Egypt, but followers of Moses... And this is what happens to the Christian... *We too take a new identity.*

We leave our Egypt - we renounce this world as our home - and become followers of our Deliverer. And Jesus works a miracle. He parts a sea of forgiveness.

When the Hebrews stepped off the bank and into that supernatural crosswalk they were dying to their past life. This

was a new experience for them. They would never go back. They were crossing over.

**But it took faith!** And it takes faith for us to follow Jesus. We too embrace a new identity. We die to ourselves and our past. We're no longer slaves to sin, but we emerge new people - under new management.

In Christ there's now a vast sea between *your past* and *your future* - *your Egypt* and *your Promised Land*.

*And there's no going back... there's no need...* Just as there was no reason for the Hebrews to go back to Egypt. God would provide everything they'd need...

Verse 3 tells us, they **"all ate the same spiritual food..."** Recall how God satisfied the Hebrews' hunger in the wilderness? For forty years He supplied them **"wonder bread"** or **"manna."** Psalm 78:25 calls it **"angel's food."** It was *the first angel's food cake!...*

Whenever I go to grocery store these days I buy an angel's food cake, and keep it in the kitchen for my grandkids. Whenever they want, I'll take them into the kitchen and they can pull off a chunk of angel's food.

It's a G-daddy treat, and this was God's treat for His kids. Every morning, the people walked outside their tent and there on the ground was that day's groceries.

It was a miracle! I'm sure the manna was tasty enough, *and imagine the nutrients packed into a manna wafer?* It had all the USDA daily requirements.

And in the same way, Jesus provides His follower today with spiritual food to eat. He compared Himself to the manna. In

John 6, Jesus spoke, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger...” It’s fellowship with Jesus that satisfies our deepest needs.

For the New Year, Jesus is better than black-eyed peas and collard greens. If you want nutrition, don’t just settle for *soul food*. Jesus Christ is *food for the soul*.

This New Year make a point of getting into His Word.

Seek to know Him. The knowledge of Jesus is *faith food*. It’s the protein that adds muscle to our faith.

And the analogy continues, verse 4, “And all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”

Twice in Israel’s wilderness wanderings God drew water from a rock to quench the thirst of His people.

The first time Moses was told to strike the rock. He did and water gushed out... The second time God told Moses to “speak to the rock...” but at the time, Moses was angry with the Hebrews. He was so fed up with their complaining and grumbling that Moses disobeyed God’s order. He misrepresented God... rather than speak to the rock, *he struck the rock a second time*.

For this one act of defiance God barred Moses from the Promised Land! *He looked on, but he didn’t get in*.

We read of Moses’ punishment, and we’re left to wonder if God wasn’t excessive? *Did this punishment really fit the crime?* It seems so severe. That is until we get to 1 Corinthians 10:4. Here the picture clears up...



Paul tells us that the rock in the wilderness was a type of Christ. Apparently, quenching the thirst of a few million folks turns out to have been a peripheral issue.

God's main objective was to paint a picture of *the Christ*. Jesus had to be struck, but once - *on the cross*.

Now all we have to do is speak to the Rock, and God pours out waters of spiritual refreshment into us. But Moses blew the analogy. That's why he was punished!

Thankfully, God delivered us the good news in other ways. In John 4 Jesus told the woman at the well, “**whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.**” Jesus offers us an endless source of refreshment. *Bottomless blessings. Everlasting refills.*

The purchase was made at the cross. Now all we have to do is ask the Lord to fill us and drink deeply!

This year stop filling up on junk food this world offers, and feed on the manna from heaven... stop drowning yourself in distilled spirits and let the Holy Spirit slake your thirst... Jesus is the ultimate thirst-quencher!

The Hebrews of old were such a blessed people.

*They passed through the sea, lived under the cloud, ate supernatural food, drank life-giving water, yet all their experiences didn't translate into holy living and an enduring faith. It didn't guarantee a successful finish...*

Verse 5 tells us, “**But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.**”

And here's the understatement of all understatements - **“Most of them God was not well pleased”** How about all but two!... *Caleb and Joshua.*

A couple of million Hebrews died in the wilderness. Their bodies were littered across the desert floor because of their unbelief! And Paul's point is this - **a good beginning doesn't insure a good ending.**

And like the Hebrews of old, the Corinthians were a blessed bunch of people. They'd been delivered from sin and a former life. They had a new identity in Christ.

Jesus had satisfied their spiritual hunger and thirst.

Yet, that didn't mean they wouldn't die in a spiritual desert if they grew arrogant - *and stopped trusting, and following, and needing, and depending on Jesus!* It's not *how we start* that matters most, but *how we finish!*

Last Sunday we had a memorial service for our good friend, Bonnie Basher. Bonnie went to be with Jesus in December. When I read Bonnie's obituary I was struck by the unusual phrase, **“Bonnie died loving the Lord.”**

She didn't just love Him for a while. Her Christianity wasn't just a passing fancy. Bonnie's passion for Jesus wasn't just a phase she was going through. No, she made it across the finished line. *She died loving Jesus.*

Paul warns the Corinthians *and us* that no amount of *past piety* will assure a *victorious finish*. You've got to persevere, endure, stick-with-it. As Paul said to the Colossians (1:23), **“Continue in your faith.”** The Hebrew skeletons scattered in the desert sands were proof.



Paul continues, “**Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.**” In the next few verses Paul is going to warn the Corinthians of the danger of not finishing. And he uses the Hebrews in the wilderness as an example. They pulled up short and quit too soon.

This past April in a collegiate track meet, [the Pepsi Invitational](#), a University of Oregon runner appeared to have the race won. Down the final stretch he gestured to the crowd, coaxing them to cheer. He thought a victory was in the bag. Suddenly a Washington runner came out of his blind side, and beat him at the wire.

Don’t let that happen to you! Spiritually, we’re in a race. Don’t get distracted. Don’t think you can put it on cruise and coast to victory. We’ve got to stay vigilant.

The Hebrews made five mistakes that cost them...

As I list them, jot them down, “[wicked wants, wicked worship, wicked works, wicked ways, wicked words...](#)”

Their first error was **wicked wants**. In verse 6 Paul warns, to “**not lust after evil things as they also lusted.**”

The Hebrews got bored with God. Rather than dive deeper into Him, they became complacent. They cultivated evil desires and were attracted to evil things.

And spiritually, if you’re not moving forward, you’re sliding backwards. Christianity is like climbing a sliding board in your socks. As long as you’re going up your fine, but the moment you stop, you’re back-sliding.

Realize, a person gets bored with God, *not because God is boring, but we get distracted*. Our flesh is so feeble and fickle. Our physical side is never satisfied.

It's always looking for more, or better, or newer.

That's why you have to decide to live in the spirit, not in the flesh. Dive deeper into God. Trust Him to satisfy your needs. If instead we live an earthy, here-and-now kind of life our eyes will wander and our heart will stray.

Our lusts will pull us from God's stuff - *the cool place*.

Hey, don't be deceived, sin is attractive. If it wasn't it wouldn't create a temptation. We turn our backs on God because we think we're missing out on something this world has to offer. Settle it once and for all, your heart was made with tastes that only God can satisfy!

Don't give in to **wicked wants**, for what often follows is **wicked worship**. Paul says, **"And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."**

He quotes Exodus 32:6... *Remember the occasion...*

Moses was on the mountain meeting with God, while the Hebrews grew impatient. They couldn't wait forty days, so they made a substitute god - a golden calf.

When Moses returned with the two tablets of God's commandments the people were partying in the worse way - they were dancing and drinking... Exodus says, they **"rose up to play."** In Hebrew it means **"sex-play."**

Here's what follows when a person lusts for evil things... he or she adopts a **wicked worship** to justify their **wicked wants**. They either water down their God, or they just throw Him out and adopt something new.

This is why a college freshmen rejects the Christianity in which they've been raised. It's not that the arguments of a secular university are so conclusive that it undermines 18 years of training in three months.

It's that the kid is bombarded by a partying lifestyle that looks *so fun, so free*. They choose to indulge their flesh, and they need a god who'll justify their choices.

After Moses' brother, Aaron, made the golden calf, he proclaimed, "**Tomorrow is a feast to Yahweh.**"

It's interesting, that in Aaron's mind he didn't make another god - he was still worshipping the Hebrew God. He just portrayed Him in a more lenient light.

And this is what's happening today... People dilute God's commands and holiness. They refashion Him. Give God a makeover. He becomes more inclusive.

But that's **wicked worship!** God is who He is! God isn't some chameleon. He doesn't change colors, or adopt the flavor of the day. God created mankind and knows best how life should be lived. God desires - *in fact, He demands* - that we adapt to Him and His will.

The faith of the Hebrews got derailed by **wicked wants**, **wicked worship**, and **wicked works...** Verse 8 says, "**Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell...**"

Here, Paul is referring to the story of *Balaam, the ancient Harry Potter*. Again, in Numbers 22-25 the Hebrews showed their propensity for lust and idols...

The incident began when Balak, king of Moab, hired an oriental psychic, a wizard named Balaam, to curse the Hebrews. But every time Balaam opened his mouth to utter a curse, God saw to it a blessing came out.

Balaam was about to be fired - lose his retainer. When he came up with a suggestion. God wouldn't let him *curse* the Hebrews, but Balak could *corrupt* them.

He told the king to send in the Moabite cheerleaders. Go down to the Hooters and draft the waitresses - and send them in to tempt the Hebrews with sexual sin.

God had prohibited Balaam and the Moabites from cursing the Hebrews, but that didn't mean they couldn't shoot themselves in the foot, and allow themselves to be corrupted by their own lusts and **wicked works**.

And the lesson for the Corinthians, as well as us, is crystal clear... As much as the enemy wants to curse us, the Lord is determined to bless us. He can even turn the enemy's attempted curse into a blessing.

**The only way Satan can defeat us is if we let him!**

The primary cause of our compromise is not the *enemy's subtlety*, but *our own stupidity*. We get drawn away by **wicked works**, and fall into the devil's trap.

Beware of **wicked works**, and also **wicked ways**.

Paul writes in verse 9, “Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents...” For forty years, God sustained His people in the desert through supernatural means. Unable to farm, every morning they awoke to “wonder bread.”

The Hebrews walked outside their tent and collected that day’s manna. There was enough food for a nation!

Imagine, God catering three meals a day for three million people. You’d think the Hebrews would be grateful - but instead, they grumbled continually. They “tempted Christ” - they pushed the Lord’s patience.

And it didn’t just happen once, they grumbled over and over. Like a child on a long drive, “Dad, when are we going to get there?” When we get there! All the incessant asking isn’t going to speed up the trip.

No sooner had the Hebrews left Egypt that they started murmuring and complaining. They became disgruntled with the Lord’s provision. The manna was too bland. *How about the leeks and onions of Egypt?*

What they really wanted was *meat!* So God sent them quail. Not just a day’s worth, or two days worth, or five days worth, but a thirty day supply of quail.

Numbers 11 tells us they ate the meat until it was coming out their nostrils. It was “loathsome to them.”

But the Hebrews didn’t learn. Now they’re at the end of their forty year ordeal, and still bellyaching to God.

As one author writes, “The discontented heart has the attitude that everything he does for God is too much, and everything God does for him is too little.”

This time though, God brings a swift discipline.

Poisonous snakes slither into the camp, and bite those who were spreading this poison of a bad attitude.

**Wicked ways** are the end result of **wicked wants** and **wicked worship** and **wicked works**. Then finally, Paul warns of **wicked words**, “**Nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.**” It wasn’t just the ungrateful attitude they had in their hearts, it was the disrespectful words that came out of their mouths. Be careful of *wicked words*.

Realize, for some people the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. A sure way to heighten a desire is to put the thing out of reach - just beyond your grasp. We desire the forbidden fruit... *until we get it!*

A recent Gallup Poll reported that 33% of Americans would like to move to another state. They think they’d be happier elsewhere. Yet when asked how likely it is they’ll relocate this next year, only 6% said it’s *extremely* or *very likely*. 73% said there’s *no chance!*

An observer concluded, “**It appears that many of us would rather complain about our lot in life than actually take action to improve it.**” And this was the Hebrews!

They could’ve entered a bountiful land, flowing with milk and honey - but that move would required faith.

Through their endless complaining and grumbling they convinced themselves that it couldn’t be done.



There is a Jewish tradition that says God has a single angel He's designated to do all His dirty work.

In verse 10, Paul calls this angel "*the Destroyer.*"

He's like a divine battleship! Here's an angel you don't want to meet in a dark alley! "*The Destroyer...*"

But the surest way to *rumble* with "*The Destroyer*" is to *grumble* about God's provision. Murmuring and complaining is nothing but a lack of faith. If we really believe God is in control, we'll stop our bellyaching.

Paul concludes his trip down memory lane in verse 11, **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.**

The Corinthians needed to humble themselves. If it can happen to Hebrews of old, it can happen to them...

And it can happen to us! We too should take heed.

I'm sure you've heard it said, "**Experience is the best teacher!**" But it doesn't always have to be *our own experience*. Why keep slamming our head against the wall, when we can learn from other people's mistakes!

This is why Paul rehearses Hebrew history, he wants to save the Corinthians *and us* a bruise to the noggin.

At Dachau Concentration Camp near Munich, there's a museum of Nazi horrors. On display are photographs and relics documenting the atrocities done to the Jews.

A sign is posted near the exit, "Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat its mistakes." And the same is true in the Christian life.

We also need to guard against wicked wants, wicked worship, wicked works, wicked ways, wicked words...

For we're told in verse 12, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." Stay sitting on a high horse, and you'll eventually get bucked off.

Pride is a dangerous posture. It's like standing on one leg for a while. You're prone to topple and fall.

It reminds me of Jose Cubero - *once one of Spain's most brilliant matadors*. There's a sculpture of him outside a bullfighting ring, in Madrid's *The Plaza of the Bulls*. And notice the bull is right behind Cubero...

The story goes, after thrusting his sword into the bull one last time, Cubero, the great matador, spun around to acknowledge the adoring cheers of the crowd.

What Jose didn't realize was the bull was still alive. It made a final lunge, and ran its horn through his heart.

I had the pic, but opted not to show it. It's ugly, but so is pride. *It's led to many a downfall!* Remember, when you think you're *invincible* you're most *vulnerable*.

But verse 13 offers us hope, "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.” Humble yourself... for God helps the humble!

*The Hebrews* of old were tempted with unbelief. *The Corinthians* were tempted to drift away. *We're* tempted by compromise... **but God helps us with temptation.**

Based on verse 13 take note of four truths we need to recall the next time we're in *a temptation situation...*

First, **you're not alone.** Temptation is *“common to man.”* Everybody is at some point tested by temptation. It's said, *“Temptation is the price for being human.”*

Even the holiest, and most spiritual among us, are prone to temptation... And the type of temptation isn't unique to you. Don't think you're the only person in the world who's tempted by a particular sin, or you alone have been besieged by such perverted thoughts...

Satan's strategies don't change all that much from person to person and age to age. He uses the same tools he always has. He's just gotten good at his trade.

If *we had the time* and *you had the courage* to tell us about your temptation I promise a whole host of people would be able to relate. You'd find that you and scores of others are in the same boat. *We all get tempted.*

Second, when you're tempted, Paul tells us to remember that **“God is faithful.”** God doesn't get upset. He doesn't abandon us when we're tempted. Often, it's God who orchestrates the temptation in the first place.

When the Union Pacific railroad ran its first line from St. Louis to California it built a trestle bridge over a deep gorge.

To assure the bridge's safety, the chief engineer parked a train of boxcars - loaded with twice a normal payload - on top of the bridge for two weeks.

One of the workers who had labored so hard on the bridge was upset, "*What are you trying to do - break it?*" The engineer answered him, "*No, I'm showing the world that it's unbreakable.*" And this is why God allows us to be tempted - it showcases His ability to keep us!

Remember, even Jesus was tempted. In fact, Luke 4:1 tells us, "*Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit... was led by the Spirit into the wilderness... (to be) tempted by the devil.*" It was God's will that Jesus be tempted.

Don't ever think it's a sin to be tempted. The sin is yielding to the temptation - it's giving in, not fighting.

And third, remember, "*God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able...*"

Even though temptation is inevitable, **it's winnable!**

God is sovereign over our circumstances, and won't allow us to be tempted beyond our tipping point. But He measures that point by factoring in His power.

In our own strength, all temptation would be fatal.

But we have *God's Spirit, God's Word* - certainly *God's Son*. We're called an "**overcomer**" in Christ.

That's why when we trust in Jesus it moves the needle on what is that tipping point. Our resistance increases. What we can handle ends up much greater.

And one of the ways God keeps temptation within our range of resistance is by providing us an escape.

Paul puts it, “with the temptation (He) will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

God is faithful to provide us *an escape hatch!*

Sometimes God keeps the enticement within our range of resistance *by tempering the temptation*. He lessens its attraction, or He hinders the devil’s tactics.

*You were thinking about going there*, when the phone rang. Saved by a Christian friend... *In a weak moment you were about to just do it*, when your child came into the room... *You’d figured out a way to make it happen* - only to get sick, and have to stay home.

In retrospect none of that was an accident. It was God giving you an out... it was His “way of escape.”

At times God *tempers the temptation*, but at other times, He works in us *to fortify our resolve* to say “No.”

He strengthens us for the struggle!

Imagine, the pressure on Joseph. Here was a young man, full of vim and vigor. Mrs. Potiphar had to be a knock-out. Potiphar was a powerful Egyptian, and powerful men always seem to marry beautiful women.

Day after day she’d been flirting - making suggestive remarks - baiting him to bed. Finally, she picked her moment. She’d waited until they were alone - Joseph was probably tired - perhaps his defenses were down - who knows what she was wearing, if anything at all.

Yet, when she grabbed his robe, he left it in her hand and fled. I have no doubt, God came to his rescue. God gave him a lucid moment, and a surge of strength. God does that for His people - it's His *"way of escape."*

A tourist out west stopped at an Indian Reservation where he was introduced to an Native American chief.

This man was said to have a perfect memory.

The tourist was a skeptical man. He tested the chief, *"Well, if you have a perfect memory, tell me, what did you eat for breakfast on August 2, 1954?"* The chief answered, *"Eggs."* The skeptical tourist scoffed at his answer, *"Well sure, everybody has eggs for breakfast."*

The tourist left unimpressed.

Ten years later the same tourist stopped at the same Indian Reservation. As he exited the bus, *guess who he saw?* That's right, the chief with the perfect memory.

The tourist slapped him on the back, and jokingly said, *"How, chief!"* The Indian answered, *"Scrambled!"*

We too, need to have a good memory! Let's learn from history - from the examples of God's people.

It's good to take a stroll down memory lane.

Beware of *wicked wants*, and *wicked worship*, and *wicked works*, and *wicked ways*, and *wicked words...*

Let's remember if it happened to the Hebrews it can happen to us... Be humble and continue in your faith.