

Don't Miss Either Point

By John R. Gibson

Are you more of a “take heed lest [you] fall” or a God “will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able” person?

As Paul dealt with some questions about meats offered to idols in 1 Cor. 8-10, he began by encouraging the Corinthians to be considerate of others and not be a cause for stumbling. Then at the end of chapter 9 he made a transition to warning them about involvement in idolatry. 1 Cor. 10:1-13 is part of this warning section and I want us to use some things said there to think about two dangers that can confront disciples today.

The focus of this part of 1 Cor. is a warning that just as Israel missed out on the reward, so can disciples today. Have you been baptized? So had they (1 Cor. 10:2). Have you been the recipient of numerous spiritual blessings? So had Israel, but their bodies ended up scattered in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:3-5). By inspiration Paul used the story of Israel to sound a strong warning against a number of sins and saying these things happened to them as examples to us, he concluded with a call to attention: “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

Do we take this warning seriously? When Christians can casually fail to take advantage of every opportunity to assemble with the saints, spend little time strengthening their relationship with God through prayer and study, become reckless in their choice of companions, or give little thought to that which entertains them and fills their minds, it makes me wonder if they somehow feel they are immune to the danger of falling. Do we think all 603,548 Israelites who perished in the wilderness were weak? Could we be guilty of overestimating our own strength and thus have a false sense of security? It is essential that we understand the strength of temptation, the seriousness of sin, and thus be on guard every day. Spiritual hosts of wickedness are seeking our overthrow (Eph. 6:12). Take heed!

But while we are to beware lest we fall, 1 Cor. 10:13 closes that section with a note of encouragement. “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.” While the danger is real, falling is not an inescapable inevitability. Yes, we are only human, but the Almighty knows our limitations and will not allow Satan’s power to simply overpower us. If we learn from the examples of old, build our faith through study, find strength in our association with fellow-Christians, guard the mind, avoid unnecessary dangers, etc., we can find the way of escape. Or as it is put in Eph. 6:10-13, as we put on the Lord’s armor, we can stand by His power and might. While the way of escape may require us to flee (1 Cor. 10:14) and, like Joseph in Gen. 39, we could pay a price for our resistance, the Lord does not want us to fall and will make certain the way of escape is there.

This little section of 1 Cor. makes two equally important points, but getting back to our opening paragraph—what kind of person are we? Do we see failure as inevitable and at times find ourselves giving it less than our best effort because we believe our efforts are doomed to be a futile failure? Or could we be like those who so focus on the “able to bear it” that we see ourselves as exempt from danger? Have we become careless or less guarded than we once were because we are counting on the Lord to pull us back from the edge of danger?

Let’s be sure that we don’t choose one to the exclusion of the other or so emphasize one choice that the other becomes insignificant. To overemphasize the danger is to run the risk of discouragement, while thinking only of the way of escape can produce the kind of carelessness Paul warns against. Let’s see clearly both points that we might be a people who are diligent in holiness and confident in the Lord’s assurances.

If You've Never Been Called A Fanatic...

By Bill Hall

Webster defines the word "fanatic": "A person affected by excessive enthusiasm." Its definition indicates that it is a relative term, dependent upon one's judgment as to what is a proper degree of enthusiasm in contrast with what is excessive enthusiasm. Anyone who has any knowledge at all of the world and its standards knows that to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and to "love the Lord with all one's heart, soul, and mind," and to "present one's body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" is to be in the eyes of the world a fanatic. But before becoming too concerned, one should realize that every Bible character whom he admires— Paul, Peter, Eunice, Hannah, Jesus—would be looked upon by the world as a fanatic were he or she living today. While on the other hand, the world would smile approvingly on those of whom the Lord said, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I would spue thee out of my mouth."

If you've never been called a fanatic, you might need to reconsider your spiritual condition before God!

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