

Ancient Israel: God's Training Tool

James Smyda

Recorded on May 18, 2024

Years ago, when I was attending Ambassador College, one of my professors used to like to say, *"All learning in life is experiential, but we don't always have to be the ones doing the experiencing"*. The point he was trying to get across is that we don't always have to learn the hard way. We can learn from the experiences of others, both good and bad. We can see positive examples of people's lives that have turned out well and think that's an example to follow and be like them. Or we can see bad examples—situations that turned out badly—and learn from that and say, *"That ends badly, I don't want to go down that road or follow that example"*.

This is a principle that the Bible makes great use of. The New Testament tells us that the stories that we have through the Old Testament—all the accounts of Ancient Israel and the things they went through—that one of the reasons that God not only recorded these, but orchestrated the events of His working with Ancient Israel for this very purpose. It was to be a training tool for all of us so we could learn from the experiences of others and not have to learn everything the hard way. What we're going to do today in the sermon is look at a section of scripture that is very much based on this very principle. It flat out tells us that this is the principle that it's trying to show us with numerous examples in the history of Ancient Israel and lessons we can learn from it.

If you would like a title for the sermon, it is:

Ancient Israel: God's Training Tool

As we're going to see, not only did He record these events but he orchestrated the relationship with Ancient Israel through the Old Covenant to build the foundation for the New Covenant. These also provides these training examples for us to learn from, so we don't have to learn everything the hard way. To turn to the section of scripture I'm referring to, turn to 1 Corinthians 10—we're going to spend a good bit of time in this chapter, turning back and forth so if you have a ribbon in your Bible, you probably want to put it here. We're going to come back and forth to this chapter all throughout this sermon. First thing I want to do is read through the first half of this chapter because it lays out the overview of examples that we want to look at and makes this point show that the whole point it's getting at are these are examples we should learn from and take the moral of the story to practice in our Christian lives today.

1 Corinthians 10:1 *Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,
2) all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,
3) all ate the same spiritual food,
4) and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.*

- 5) *But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.*
- 6) *Now these things became our examples [these are examples for us to learn from], to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.*
- 7) *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."*
- 8) *Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell;*
- 9) *nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;*
- 10) *nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.*
- 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.*
- 12) *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*
- 13) *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. (NKJV)*

Notice in particular, verse 11. Notice there are two concepts—it's important to realize this—that all these things happened to them as examples and they were written for our admonition on whom the end of the ages has come. It's directly telling you the purpose of this is, for those of us in the New Covenant—the end time—who are being called to salvation, is for us to learn from and to glean lessons from the examples they went through. It doesn't just say that He happened to write all this down. It wasn't like these events occurred and then someone thought it would be good if someone recorded these so people in the future could learn from them. It wasn't that simple. It says these things happened for example and they were recorded. It was planned from the very beginning to orchestrate these for this very purpose. It tells us how much work God put into trying to set mankind up to be successful for their opportunity for salvation.

Just think in terms of the big picture. We know the very purpose of creating mankind—the whole point—was to offer salvation to man. They would be given the opportunity to be born into the Kingdom of God, to obtain eternal life and have that opportunity—that's the whole point of making mankind. Just think about it like this: Given that this is the entire point, why wait 4000 years into the movie before you send Christ to be the sacrifice for mankind, to even open up the door for offering salvation for mankind? If the whole purpose of making mankind in the first place was to offer salvation to them—why not just get on with it? Why not just shorten it and jump to the New Covenant and offer salvation to mankind? Why spend so much time in a physical relationship with mankind? Why have a relationship with a nation where salvation is not even offered on the table? They are simply offered physical promises for "letter of the law" obedience. Why go through this whole exercise when offering salvation is not even part of the equation? It's not even a possibility for them. Why do all of that? The whole purpose is not only a teaching tool, we also have to understand that the Old Covenant sets the

foundation for the New Covenant. It's basically the concept of A leads to B. To see this, turn to Galatians 3:16.

Galatians 3:16 *Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. (NKJV)*

Notice verse 16 is directly telling us that when the latter part of this chapter refers to *the Seed*, it's talking about Christ. That's the point that we need to see from verse 16.

Continue in verse 19).

19) What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. (NKJV)

The law that we're referring to is a law that was added until *the Seed* would come—*the Seed* is Christ, we saw that in verse 16. So obviously we're not talking about the 10 Commandments—God's moral law—that didn't cease after Christ came and His sacrifice was made available. But we do know the sacrificial system got replaced by the sacrifice of Christ. When there is forgiveness of sin, there is no longer an offering of sacrifice. That is directly stated in the book of Hebrews. What we're seeing is, there was a purpose for the sacrificial system—the Old Covenant relationship—because that was how you were made right with God in a physical relationship where salvation is not offered, it was through a sacrificial system. It was a symbolic atonement that obviously didn't cover sin because animals can't do that, but that was how you got made right with God symbolically under that system. It's telling us that this was instituted until Christ, until salvation could be offered through the sacrifice of Christ. Let's notice the purpose in all of this. Continue in verse 20.

20) Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.

21) Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

22) But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

23) But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

24) Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25) But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (NKJV)

We're going to see the meaning of this word *tutor*. What does it mean by a tutor? The Greek word that is translated as *tutor* is transliterated into English as *paidagogos* and is [Strong's #3807](#). The definition I'm going to give you comes from [The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament](#) by Spiros Zodhiates. He defines it as:

“an instructor or teacher of children; a schoolmaster; a pedagogue”.

You can see the whole purpose wasn't like the Old Covenant. It was a stopover measure until we could get to the New Covenant and then it doesn't matter. It's a situation where A builds the foundation for B. It helps set people up for success ultimately. That's the purpose of why it was very strategic, very planned from the beginning, that God would start off with an Old Covenant relationship and then advance to a New Covenant because A builds the foundation for B. It involved a very well-thought-out purpose. We can see all the work that went into this. It also tells us how much God cares for us in doing all this work to build a foundation, to build examples that we can learn from. We can learn now from the experiences of others, to learn those lessons that set us up for success. In the New Covenant we are playing hardball. Your salvation is on the line. With Ancient Israel it's:

“Here is how to have a successful physical life and if you obey you will have a successful physical life. If you don't, life is going to be painful and it's going to hurt, but salvation is not on the table.”

For us, we are playing hardball and our eternal life is on the line.

In 1 Corinthians 10 we're going to see, as we go through these examples, each verse refers to a different specific example throughout Ancient Israel's history. First of all, let's deal with the first 4 verses. This is commonly misunderstood—the lesson of this—I'll explain that a little more. Let's start back again in 1 Corinthians 10:1.

1 Corinthians 10:1 *Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2) all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3) all ate the same spiritual food, 4) and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. (NKJV)*

Obviously, this verse is directly telling us that Christ played a role, actively working with Ancient Israel. Often that role gets overstated. Let me just tell you a story from my history. Back in probably 1989, in a class in Ambassador College called Fundamentals of Theology. One of the main doctrines in Worldwide that they had for many years—in fact most of the church of God organizations still teach today—is the idea that Christ is the God of the Old Testament. In other words, whenever you see God interacting with mankind in the Old Testament that has to be Jesus Christ and it can't be God the Father. It's a common idea—a flawed idea—but that's a common teaching. My professor was talking about this idea but he lays out a question—typical of a teaching style in a classroom—and gets discussion going to get people to really thinking about it before he gives his answer. He asked, how do you prove that Christ is the God of the Old Testament? The question got people discussing the subject. After the discussion went on for a little while, he turned to these verses and read this and got to the part where Christ is referred to as *the Rock* and said, *“There it is, there's your proof that*

Christ is the God of the Old Testament.” The logic behind that assumes that only one individual in the Bible can be compared to as a rock. As we’re going to see, that is a very flawed idea. You can turn to a number of scriptures in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament where you see Yehovah referred to and compared to a rock and spoken of as a rock, of Israel’s rock. There are numerous scriptures that do that. But what we’re going to see is that it’s a flawed idea to assume one and only one individual in the Bible is referred to as “a rock” or that expression is used to make a point. In Psalms 18 we see an example where Yehovah is referred to and compared to a rock. There are numerous scriptures that make this particular comparison.

Psalms 18:1 *I will love You, O LORD, my strength.*

2) *The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*
(NKJV)

You can see the idea it’s trying to get across, Yehovah being a rock—it’s a strong foundation, it’s a source of your strength, something reliable powerful and strong to build upon. That’s the idea that is being put across. There are numerous scriptures you can refer to in the Old Testament that refer to Yehovah being like a rock. That’s an easy concept to prove. The thing is, we don’t want to overstretch that and say only one individual can ever be referred to as a rock and that therefore is conclusive proof of identity. That is just not a valid concept. Notice in Deuteronomy 32, we’ll see an example where there is a “compare and contrast” between the God of Israel and pagan gods that other pagan nations look to. It’s going to refer to Israel’s rock versus their rock to see the concept of a rock being used to refer to pagan gods that other pagan nations depend upon. It’s a compare and contrast. What I want you to see is that even pagan gods can be referred to as a rock in using this analogy.

Deuteronomy 32:28 *For they are a nation void of counsel, Nor is there any understanding in them.*

29) *Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, That they would consider their latter end!*

30) *How could one chase a thousand, And two put ten thousand to flight, Unless their Rock had sold them, And the LORD had surrendered them?*

31) *For their rock is not like our Rock ...* (NKJV)

It’s contrasting what the pagan nations depend upon as their strength, versus Israel depending upon God as their strength.

31 continued) *... Even our enemies themselves being judges.*

32) *For their vine is of the vine of Sodom And of the fields of Gomorrah; Their grapes are grapes of gall, Their clusters are bitter.*

33) *Their wine is the poison of serpents, And the cruel venom of cobras.* (NKJV)

You can see the idea of comparing a rock as a source of strength—something strong to build upon and reliable—that’s the concept being referred to here but it’s not an

exclusive concept that is only applied to Yehovah and that analogy is only used one way. Let's notice that the Bible also refers to Abraham as being a rock in Isaiah 51:1.

Isaiah 51:1 *Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, You who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, And to the hole of the pit from which you were dug.*

2) Look to Abraham your father, And to Sarah who bore you; For I called him alone, And blessed him and increased him.” (NKJV)

It's referring to Abraham and comparing him to a rock—something as a strong foundation and example. It's making that same analogy. Therefore, we can't assume just because something is compared to a rock, that can only be Yehovah and there is one and only one individual being referred to as that particular analogy. Just basic Christian principles—spiritual truth—is referred to as a rock and compared in that matter. We'll see an example of this in Matthew 7. We're going to start in verse 24 toward the end of the chapter. Just to get the context that leads up to this, because this will be important when you start reading the first verse as to what is being referred to. This is the end of the sermon on the Mount that Christ gave. They are a very common set of scriptures that I'm sure we've all read numerous times. In Matthew 5, 6, and 7, Christ expounds the sermon the Mount and goes through a lot of basic, foundational Christian principles throughout these chapters, about how to live your life and how Christians should behave. It's important to understand that when we start reading in verse 24 as to what He is referring to when He says, “these sayings”. He's referring to all the principles and concepts that He has laid out throughout this sermon.

Matthew 7:24 *Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: (NKJV)*

He's saying if you follow these principles and live your life in the manner that I've laid out, it's like you've built your house on a rock. It's something solid, firm, and stable that you can build upon. We're referring to a rock as a concept.

25) and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

26) But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

27) and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

28) And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching,

29) for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (NKJV)

He is comparing Christian principles—living in Godly principles according to His teachers—as building your house on a rock. Something solid, dependable, a strong foundation. It's not a concept of everything that is referred to as a rock is only Yehovah

and can only be applied in one way and that therefore proves identity. That is significantly over stretching the concept.

Let's also notice another example in Matthew 16. We'll see a conversation between Christ and the Apostle Peter. When we dig into the meaning of the words that are being used and understand what is being said in this example, we're going to see that Christ is saying to Peter, you are like a stone, like a little rock, but I'm the big rock. He's going to refer to Himself and we'll see that when we get into the meaning of the Greek words. Here He is referring to Peter—another carnal human being—with a similar concept and just making a compare and contrast.

Matthew 16:13 *When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"*

14) *So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."*

15) *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"*

16) *Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

17) *Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. (NKJV)*

Notice what He says in the next couple of verses.

18) *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*

19) *And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

20) *Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. (NKJV)*

To fully get this, we need to dig into the meaning of the Greek words here. First, He said, *you are Peter*. The Greek word that is translated as Peter and Petros. It's transliterated into English as *Petros*, it's Strong's #4074. This word and the next word I'm going to use, both definitions are coming from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates. He defines *Petros* as Peter, meaning "stone". He's saying Peter, you're a stone. Notice He says, *on this rock I will build my church*. What He's saying to him is, this rock He is referring to Himself. He's saying, you're Peter—you're like a stone—but I am Petra, which is the word He uses when He refers to, *upon this rock*. That's transliterated as *Petra*, Strong's #4073 and the definition is coming from Zodhiates. He defines it as "a rock, a projecting rock cliff". In such cliffs rock sepulchers were hewn. Houses and villages were built for security. Figuratively of someone possessing firmness and stability, one like a rock. Notice He's saying, "you're like a stone, but I'm like a big rock that they built homes out of." He's saying "Peter, you're a small rock but I'm a big rock."

What I want you to see in the lesson in all of this is the idea of taking that one scripture—1 Corinthians 10:4—saying Christ is compared to a rock—and He is, and yes that verse proves it. Did Christ have a role with Ancient Israel? Was He actively involved in working with them? Yes, it directly says that. Does Him being referred to as a rock constitute dogmatic proof that Christ is therefore Yehovah? No, that's way over stretching the point being made there. Numerous individuals in the Bible can be referred to as a rock because it's an analogy as something strong, firm, and dependable. It's not an exclusive title that applies to one and only one individual; that's greatly overstating the concept.

Let's return to 1 Corinthians 10 and pick up in verse 5. As a side note, before we go through some of these examples notice these examples are being addressed in more of a topical fashion. What I mean by that is, it's going to be referred to as a number of stories that we will see the original stories that are being referred to in the Old Testament, but they are not in time order. It's more of a topical order of the subject that they address. If you look at these in terms of sequence of time events in Ancient Israel's story, they are not covered in time order. They are more of a topical order. The point is teaching spiritual lessons.

1 Corinthians 10:5 *But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.* (NKJV)

This is referring to that first generation that came out of Egypt. Completely failing, trying to take the Promised Land and wound up dying in the 40 years wandering in the wilderness. The spiritual lesson—I'm getting a little ahead of the story, but just so you see where we are going—is basically what the New Testament directly tells us in the phrase, *many are called, but few are chosen*. That's basically the whole idea of what it's getting across here. In Numbers 14, we're going to break into the middle of the context—this is the story where they have already made the covenant at Mount Sinai. They have moved on from there and are heading to try and conquer the Promised Land. Initially they send out spies—one from all the tribes of Israel. They basically send 12 spies out to do reconnaissance on the land to check out what they are taking on. When they come back, Joshua and Caleb still have faith in God.

"We saw giants in the land but we have God on our side. He's already promised us a successful outcome and promised us that if we believe in Him then He's going to deliver everything into our hands. So we don't have anything to worry about."

But the other 10 spies came back and say:

"No, there are giants in the land, we're going to get slaughtered. We're all going to die, let's just give up, we can't overcome all of this."

It's like us when we initially get baptized and think "Now I'll be a Christian and receive God's Holy Spirit and everything will be smooth sailing." Then you get hit with some hard trials and realize that this is a lot harder than I thought it was going to be. Then you want to give up—that's part of the lesson that is happening here. We'll see the people get very disillusioned. Pick up in Numbers 14:1.

Numbers 14:1 *So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night.*

2) And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!" (NKJV)

They are very discouraged and just want to give up and walk away from everything they had committed to and all the rewards that they could receive.

3) Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"

4) So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt." (NKJV)

The equivalent for us is just giving up our Christian life and just go back into sin. Go back to my original life and pursue sex, drugs, and "Rock and Roll"—this Christian life is just too hard.

5) Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

6) But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes;

7) and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land.

8) If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey.'" (NKJV)

They are thinking of this from a standpoint of faith. God has already promised a successful outcome, all we have to do is trust in Him and follow His instructions, He's going to get it all worked out. But that's not what the majority of people are thinking.

9) Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them."

10) And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. (NKJV)

They just didn't want to hear it. Let's just give up, go back to Egypt and give up everything we've committed to. This ultimately results in God sentencing them to have the vast majority—with the exception of Joshua and Caleb—die during the 40 years in

the wilderness. When Corinthians is talking about their bodies being scattered in the wilderness, this is what it's referring to. Look at verse 26.

- 26) *And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,*
27) *How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me.*
28) *Say to them, As I live, 'says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you:*
29) *The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above.*
30) *Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in.*
31) *But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised.*
32) *But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.*
33) *And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness.*
34) *According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection.*
35) *I the LORD have spoken this. I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die. " "*
36) *Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land,*
37) *those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the LORD.*
38) *But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land. (NKJV)*

There was a very ugly attrition rate because the people couldn't just trust in God and follow through on what they committed to. It all sounded great at Mount Sinai, being told

"You're going to have this wonderful land and life is going to go great for you— God is going to make everything wonderful; you're going to have a land flowing with milk and honey and riches."

That sounded great but as soon as they realized there were some difficulties they were going to have to overcome to get there, they were ready to give up. This is a lesson we need to learn in our spiritual lives. This is the whole point that 1 Corinthians 10 is trying to tell us. It works very similarly for us. We can see this if we turn to Matthew 7. The New Testament makes this point repeatedly. Unfortunately, throughout my life growing up in the church of God, I have found ways where people do mental gymnastics around this and try to soft pedal it. It's not an emotionally satisfying conclusion. I don't have the

exact quote in front of me but I've quoted it in a number of sermons from Thomas Sole. He's a famous academic. The best I can remember is,

"The reason so many issues are so misunderstood, is not because these issues are so complex, but that people do not want logical, analytical answers that leave them emotionally unsatisfied. "

Often times we read through Bible and we want an answer that is emotionally satisfying. The idea that there is a very ugly attrition rate—*many are called, few are chosen*—doesn't feel very good. Throughout my life I've heard people saying that it's trying to say that only the *Firstfruits* are called right now. It's true that only the *Firstfruits* are called right now, but that's not what these verses are talking about. The same mental gymnastics get played with these verses as well.

Matthew 7:13 *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.
14) Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (NKJV)*

It flat out tells you that there is an ugly attrition rate when it comes to mankind being called to salvation. It's going to be the few who make it and not the many. The Bible says this repeatedly. It's not an emotionally satisfying conclusion, but it's all throughout the New Testament—if we just read the words on the page and accept them. There's a reason why this is the case. Notice Acts 14:21.

Acts 14:21 *And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,
22) strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."
(NKJV)*

In other words, the path to the Kingdom of God is painful, it's difficult, it's a struggle. It's something that requires going through much tribulation. There is no such thing as an easy slide into the Kingdom of God. That's an emotionally satisfying conclusion, but it is simply not what the New Testament teaches us. We have to realize it's a universal principle that applies to everyone. The easy way to see this is in 2 Timothy 3:12. This clearly illustrates this. All you have to do is just think about what is stated on the page and take it for what it says.

2 Timothy 3:12 *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (NKJV)*

Is there any other name by which you can be saved? No, everyone has to accept Christ as their Savior. We all have to accept His sacrifice and follow His example. It flat out tells us that everyone that does this is going to face persecution. Satan is our persecutor, that's what we have to overcome to make it. That tells you the whole

process of pursuing salvation is a struggle—it's painful. That's why it is, *he who endures to the end will be saved*. It's literally an endurance. There is no such thing as an easy slide into the Kingdom. It's something we all have to take into consideration. That's why you are counseled for baptism, you have the Luke 14 conversation. You have to be willing to give your life, to be willing to give up everything else—your family, your friends, your job—whatever is required of you. You have to be willing to put God first and sacrifice everything else in your life. All too often what happens is, there is some point when a person says they can't give that up. God wouldn't want me to lose my job; He wouldn't want me to lose my friends; He wouldn't want me to lose my life. He wants it to feel good. That is the opposite of what it says. We have to be willing to sacrifice everything. Otherwise, we wind up like the majority of Ancient Israel and not making it into the Promised Land. We have to trust in God that He is going to get us through whatever difficult trials we are put through. He will be faithful to deliver us through it but promises us that it's going to be a struggle and painful. That's just how the process works.

If you look at the lesson that we see in 1 Corinthians 10, it starts off by telling us that it's going to be a struggle, it's going to hurt, so realize there is an ugly attrition rate. It makes that overall big point and then breaks it down to a number of lessons we need to learn to avoid the pitfalls where we can get tripped up on. Go back to 1 Corinthians 10:6.

1 Corinthians 10:6 *Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.* (NKJV)

When we think of the subject of “lust” in our current world, we immediately think of sexual lust and that is an application of how lust can trip us up. But that's not actually what this particular example is referring to. In Numbers 11, we'll see that this was an issue of food—what they are lusting after. We are going to see this is Israel complaining about having to eat Manna all the time and is specifically related to food. But we can learn a lot of general lessons about “lust”. What it does to our mental health, to our lives and relationships in general, just from reading this example.

Numbers 11:4 *Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving;* (NKJV)

In my New King James, there is a little “1” next to *intense craving* and if you look in the margin it says *lust intensely*. In other words, they were *lusting intensely*. If we notice it's in regard to food, what is consuming them.

4 continued) ... so the children of Israel also wept again and said: 'Who will give us meat to eat?' (NKJV)

The issue here is “*We don't have any meat and have to just eat this Manna.*”

- 5) *We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic;*
6) *but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!” (NKJV)*

There’s another example in the book of Numbers 21, we won’t look at that right now, we’ll look at it later, but they refer to this Manna as *worthless bread*. *All we have is this worthless bread to eat*. Notice how much they are glamorizing having this tasty food in Egypt. It tasted so good—the leeks and onions—it was so wonderful. They forgot about the slavery part. The part that they have these harsh task masters who made their life difficult, who tried to murder all their male children. All the boys that are born, throw them in the river and kill them. All of this stuff that they quickly forget about. *But we had good food to eat*. Notice how their perceptions are totally warped because they are totally focused on one thing and it’s consumed them. What I want you to see in part of this example is how being consumed with lust like that ruins their mental health and even destroys their relationships with others involved in their lives. We’ll see this with Moses’ reaction as well.

This can happen whether a person is consumed with their lust for alcohol, drugs, sex, money, fame and power—whatever it is. When we get so focused on something that everything else gets blocked out and we glamorize the thing we lust after. It distorts our view of the world. Whatever that thing is that we are lusting after becomes the most glorious, glamorous, attractive thing in the world and we lose the big picture and focus. That’s what is happening with these folks. Here they are, out of the harshness of slavery, out free and can live their lives as they want to, no one is trying to murder their babies—all of this has gone away—but we don’t have the tasty food we used to have. Notice that tunnel vision that is taking place.

- 7) *Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium.*
8) *The people went about and gathered it, ground it on millstones or beat it in the mortar, cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil.*
9) *And when the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it.*
10) *Then Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent; and the anger of the LORD was greatly aroused; Moses also was displeased. (NKJV)*

Notice how their behavior completely wears out Moses. The point I want to make that if you see someone who is consumed with something like this, for an easy example, someone’s life has been consumed in alcohol or drugs or obsessed with pursuing money and fame, what happens over time is they destroy all the other relationships with their life. Later it ruins their family and friends and wears everyone else around them out. Notice how the people’s mental health has been distorted by their lusts and the effect it has on Moses.

11) *So Moses said to the LORD, "Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me?"*

12) *Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child, to the land which You swore to their fathers?"*

13) *Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.'*

14) *I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me.*

15) *If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—if I have found favor in Your sight—and do not let me see my wretchedness!" (NKJV)*

It absolutely wore out Moses dealing with this. This is often what happens when a person becomes totally consumed with lust. It could be alcohol, drugs, sex, whatever the issue is. It becomes the sole focus of their life and they lose focus on anything else and it destroys the relationships around them.

A good friend of mine used to put it like this. It was a lesson of sin in general but I've always loved the analogy he would make.

A good way to think of sin is it's kind of like going out to a still pond or body of water and you take a rock. You throw it in the water and if you watch what happens, when the rock goes into the water, there is a shock wave that goes out in every direction away from where the rock hit. The larger the rock, the bigger the shock wave.

The point he would make with this analogy is, sometimes sin can create this shock wave and you can be a person that gets hit by the shockwave, but you didn't commit the sin. You didn't have the particular problem but because of someone else's sin, it created a shockwave that hit your life and you were affected by it as an innocent bystander. That's the nature of how sin works.

The way that God deals with this problem—this example is kind of ingenious—He creates a plague that just selectively goes after those who were consumed with the lust. We're going to see that He winds up sending them lots of quail because they are complaining for meat. We want meat and all we have is this *worthless bread*—this *Manna*. He provides them with meat but also sets up a situation where these people who were so consumed with this that they gorge themselves with the quail and it winds up creating a plague that kills them. As a result of how He does the punishment, it's obviously just the people who are consumed with this lust that are going to be affected by it. It protects innocent bystanders who were not consumed with the problem. If you pick up in verse 31 we'll see how this plays out.

31) *Now a wind went out from the LORD, and it brought quail from the sea and left them fluttering near the camp, about a day's journey on this side and about a*

day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the ground.

32) And the people stayed up all that day, all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers); and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp.

33) But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was aroused against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague.

34) So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving. (NKJV)

It specifically attacked the people who were consumed with the lust. It was an ingenious way of punishing them for the issue. It avoided attacking the innocent bystanders. Now turn back to 1 Corinthians 10:7.

1 Corinthians 10:7 *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." (NKJV)*

That quote at the end of the verse makes it very obvious what example we are referring to here. We are going to see, if you read through Exodus 32 and the golden calf incident, that direct statement is made—*Them rising up to play*. We know that's obviously referring to this. Let's turn to Exodus 32 and see this example. What is interesting about this story, is that often times when we think about idolatry we think of the golden calf and that is blatant idolatry. They were forming a pagan god to worship—but that's actually not where idolatry started here. Pay attention to the story; the people were paying attention to Moses and not to God. When Moses is gone too long, and they say that we don't know what happened to Moses, God isn't in the picture—they've already made an idol out of Moses. Moses is gone too long and they aren't sure what's going on with him. So they say "*Let's make a pagan idol that we can worship.*" God is not in the equation. The idolatry started in putting a man up to follow and not following God.

Exodus 32:1 *Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." (NKJV)*

Notice they aren't mentioning God—He's not in the equation. "*We don't know what happened to Moses and he's the one who brought us out of Egypt.*" That's not the voice they heard thundering from the mountain and giving the Ten Commandments. At the time they said that God was too scary.

"Moses, you go and get His instructions and tell us because we will die if we have to listen to this powerful voice."

That got their attention, but here they are just listening to a man. They are following a man and it doesn't dawn on them that they made this covenant with God Who spoke from the mountain, not with Moses. So even if Moses went away, this God who parted the Red Sea and reigns this food down from the sky to feed us, then maybe He is still around because the food is still falling from the sky six days a week. That isn't registering for them. The idolatry starts by them following a man and God not being in the picture.

2) And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

3) So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

4) And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

5) So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD." (NKJV)

He's making up a fake holy day.

6) Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. (NKJV)

That's the quote we read directly in 1 Corinthians 10; that's how we know it's obviously referring to this story because it's a word for word quote.

7) And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.

8) They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

9) And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people!

10) Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation." (NKJV)

God's saying, "Step aside Moses I want to get them all with one shot." I think one of the big lessons for us to learn in this, is we often look at them making a pagan idol to worship and that is blatant idolatry—that's a lesson we can learn—but that's not where the idolatry started. They had already been committing idolatry—they had already made an idol out of Moses. They put up their physical leader and made an idol out of him and God wasn't in the picture. When Moses disappeared, they thought, we don't know what happened to Moses. We need to make a pagan idol to worship. What about God? What about the God who spoke from the mountain, who parted the Red Sea, who is still reigning food down from the sky six days a week even though Moses wasn't there.

What about Him? They've totally missed that because as carnal, physical human beings, they are looking to a man to be their leader and forgetting about God. That's one of the big lessons for us. In our modern-day church of God, we can commit idolatry in a number of ways. One of the ways we are probably not as likely to commit idolatry is the blatant form of making a golden calf and wanting to bow down to that. People might fall into that, but it's not the common way we do that.

A more common means of idolatry that we might do in our world today is making an idol out of man. Holding up a physical leader or organization and looking to that and forgetting about God. Having that same approach as, Moses is gone so if your physical leader is gone, what are you going to do now? Depend on God maybe? Continue to look for Him because He hasn't gone anywhere? Notice, this is a lesson that Paul covers in the book of Philippians. We won't read the first chapter of this book, but if you read through it, it becomes obvious that when Paul is writing this, he is a prisoner. He is back in chains as a prisoner and it puts some context when he makes the comment to the Philippians, *in my absence now*—in other words he is not able to physically come to them because he can't control his own movements at this point. He's a prisoner.

Philippians 2:12 *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;*

13) for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.
(NKJV)

In other words, I can't be as actively involved in your life because I'm a prisoner. I can't come visit you like I used to, but you made a covenant with God. God hasn't gone anywhere. You need to be faithful to that covenant because your salvation is on the line. Whether or not I'm in the equation really doesn't matter because it may be nice to have that as your physical leader but you still made a covenant with God and He hasn't gone anywhere. He is still faithful and is still going to be there with you and you need to work out your salvation with Him. As Rick has commented a number of times, the ministry is just assistant shepherds. Christ is the Good Shepherd that takes care of us and works with God the Father to shepherd all of us. The ministry is just His assistant shepherds. We serve in that role, but even if you don't have those assistant shepherds in your life, you still made a covenant with God and you still have to follow through on that. That's the commitment we all made at baptism. If we don't, our salvation is on the line.

Back to 1 Corinthians 10:8.

1 Corinthians 10:8 *Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell;* (NKJV)

This is referring to an example in Numbers 25, but to totally appreciate the example, I need to give some background and look at a few other scriptures that make it clearer what is taking place. The account of what takes place in Numbers 25 came about because there was a Moabite king whose name was Balak. He is looking at Israel as a

threat to his nation and power. Israel is conquering the Promised Land; they are coming into the area and at that point he sees Israel as a threat to him. They are making him nervous, what do they do about these people? He seeks advice from a guy name Balaam. The advice he gives is what in the modern day—the 20th century—the KGB of the Soviet Union refers to as ideological subversion. How do you overthrow a nation from within, in their own culture to have them self-destruct on their own without having to militarily take them on directly. That's what happens here. Balaam understands that the source of Israel's strength is their relationship with God. It's what makes them a threat and a powerful nation. If you want to weaken Israel, what you need to do is separate them from their God. If you can weaken that relationship, that's the way to overthrow them. What he does is advises him—*Have the attractive, hot women of the area seduce the men of Israel and play upon their sex drive to get them involved in relationships, and then encourage them to be involved in idol, pagan worship.* Undermine their relationship with God and that will help overthrow the nation from within. That's the philosophy he is using. Start off in the book of Revelation, because it more clearly lays this out. It helps if you read through these scriptures before we go to Numbers 25 to understand what is taking place here. This is part of the letter to Pergamos, but I want you to notice the reference in verse 14 because it's referencing this particular story.

Revelation 2:14 *But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. (NKJV)*

He mentions the idolatry and sexual immorality. What we're going to notice when we get to the story in Numbers 25 is the sexual immorality comes before the idolatry. He gets the good-looking women of Moab and the Midianites—two nations that have an alliance with each other trying to deal with Israel—and they are trying to use ideological subversion to throw them from within. They use the women of Moab and Midian to seduce a lot of the men of Israel and once they get the relationship going, then it's, come and join us in our pagan worship. Now that they have the men thinking with their hormones and sex drive and not thinking clearly, it creates an internal problem. Notice in Numbers 31—this is after the initial story we are going to refer to—it also helps clarify the details. This is after the story we are going to read in Numbers 25, but what happens is, after the initial event and God brings a curse upon them for having been involved in the idolatry they were involved in, Israel retaliates against the Midianites. Again, the Midian and Moab people were in an alliance together in doing this. The soldiers that go in and take on all the men but leave the women alive. Moses is correcting them, telling them they didn't grasp what the problem was. It was these women who were used as a tool to create the problem. If you want to keep them around, that's not solving anything.

Numbers 31:15 *And Moses said to them: "Have you kept all the women alive?"*

16) Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD. (NKJV)

He's saying, these women were used as a tool to try and create a wedge in Israel. With that overview, turn over to Numbers 25 and see the event it's referring to.

Numbers 25:1 *Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. (NKJV)*

That's where it starts, with the men of Israel being seduced into being involved with the women of Moab.

2) They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. (NKJV)

The sexual immorality was the gateway drug that led them to idolatry.

3) So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.

4) Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel."

5) So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor."

6) And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

7) Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand;

8) and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel.

9) And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand. (NKJV)

This is specifically the example that 1 Corinthians 10 is referring to. One of the spiritual lessons of this that we can learn today is, as I pointed out through this story, the sexual immorality leads to the idolatry. Balaam was smart in this in the advice he gave Balak when he wanted to pull some ideological subversion. He understood that young men tend to have a weakness of thinking with their hormones and sex drive. He said we can play upon that and get them involved with women. Once we have them hooked with that, then we use step number two—worshipping pagan gods.

It reminds me of a conversation I had a number of years ago with a good friend of mine. We were talking about Satan's attacks and how he will come at you to try and tempt you into sin. My friend made an interesting comment that intrigued me. He smiled and said,

“I can even tell you how it’s going to come at you.” He stopped and grinned. I said “Ok, I’m intrigued, tell me more.” He grinned and said, “Wherever you are most vulnerable. Whatever is your weakness and he will get under your skin—your weak spot to pull you into sin—that’s how Satan will do it.

That’s why this was very strategic. He knew particularly with younger men who are very testosterone driven, their sex drive could be a weakness. He played upon that and then once they were hooked with that, he lead them into further sin. That’s just something as a general lesson that we need to learn, be aware of whatever your weakness is.

Wherever is your vulnerable spot, because that is what Satan will come after. He’ll use that as a gateway drug to not only get you there, but sin is like leaven and will increase into other things and pull you further and further away from God.

Let’s turn back to 1 Corinthians 10 and finish up here.

1 Corinthians 10:9 *nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; (NKJV)*

The example it’s referring to here is in Numbers 21 and you can clearly see that if we read the example; it refers being destroyed by serpents. You will notice as we read through this, that I made a comment earlier that there was another example where the Israelites referred to the Manna a worthless bread. We’re going to see in verse 5 that that’s stated in this example. We’ll start reading in verse 4.

Numbers 21:4 *Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way.*

5) And the people spoke against God and against Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.” (NKJV)

They’re being fed and kept alive by a miracle of food that falls from the sky six days a week but their attitude is, it’s worthless bread.

6) So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

7) Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

8) Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.”

9) So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived. (NKJV)

There is another common misunderstanding from the verse here in 1 Corinthians 10:9, notice it referred to not tempting Christ. When you turn back to this particular example in Numbers 21, it becomes very obvious that this is the example it's referring to but no reference is made to Christ. Just to Yehovah and His interaction with Moses. The reason I point this out is this is another verse where people say, see, Christ is the God of the Old Testament. It says Christ and then you turn over here and it mentions Yehovah and nobody else so Christ and Yehovah must be the same person. The problem is, there are numerous manuscripts of 1 Corinthians 10 that translate that verse in three different ways. It's a very questionable argument to dogmatically say that it's referring to Christ and therefore make that argument from.

To illustrate this let me quote from Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers. This is their commentary on verse 9.

Neither let us tempt Christ, better neither let us tempt the Lord as some of them tempted and perished by serpents. There is much controversy as to whether the word here is God, Christ, or the Lord. Each having a certain amount of manuscript support.

In other words, there are manuscripts that have it worded three different ways. To use that one verse to make a dogmatic argument like that is a very weak way to do it. There's a mountain of evidence that Christ is the servant of Yehovah, He's His *Companion*, He's His *Anointed One*—they are not one and the same. There is a lot of scriptural evidence to support that.

That's about all the time we have today. The point I wanted to make in this whole sermon is, as I started off saying, that all learning in life is experiential. But we don't always have to be the one doing the experiencing. We don't have to learn everything the hard way. This is very much the point that 1 Corinthians 10 is trying to teach us. God not only recorded the example of Ancient Israel, but He also orchestrated these events as a teaching tool so that we could learn from their example. We can learn these lessons and apply them in our spiritual lives so we can successfully make it into the Kingdom of God. As we go forward in our spiritual lives, let's learn the lessons that this chapter teaches us to help us be successful in our Christian lives.