



Croatian
Evangelistic
Outreach

Kneza Branimira 11
10000 Zagreb, Croatia
ceo@cce.hr

T+385 1 4920 726
F +385 1 4813 871
www.cce.hr

THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL AS A WARNING

Mario Dučić,

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Moreover,, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. (1 Corinthians 10:1-6)

Some time ago while reading the book of 1 Corinthians I believe that the Lord wanted to point out to me the sad truth of the situation of God's people. Many Christians living in these last days, while having experienced new birth, Christ's supernatural power and presence, freedom from sin and the power of His Word, because

of their current poor spiritual condition and sin that they do not wish to relinquish they are not pleasing to God. In fact, many are not aware that the sin they hide in their hearts is grave and the dangerous consequences it brings in life. Each day we see many people burdened down with the consequences that have befallen them because of their poor decisions resulting from disobedience and sin. That is why I wish to exhort us all in order that eternal judgment will not befall us and that we will not be given over to the "destroyer".

The Christians in Corinth were as many Christians are today. They daily fought against the perversity

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and immorality around them and were under the constant pressure to acclimate to their environment. Although they knew freedom in Christ their faith was tested and many of them fell away. For this reason the Apostle Paul wrote them this letter. Paul, as usual, confronted them with their sin and pointed out the need to correct their attitudes and behavior in order to be once again devoted to Christ.

In the 10th chapter he used a very well-known example from the book of Exodus which reveals to us how the Israelites under God's leadership crossed the Red Sea. It is very obvious in the scriptures that these are people who heard the good news. In Hebrews 4:6 the writer, while writing about the disobedient Israelites, says, *"Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience."*

They had also been set free. In Exodus 6:6 we read, *"Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.'"*

★ Albeit, they may still go to church, yet their life and service is simply destroyed. They continue to live their life according to the desires of their own heart, while on the outside they wear a mask of godliness.

The Word also confirms to us that they had godly leaders such as Moses of whom the Word recognizes among the heroes of the faith and says that, *"esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward."* (Hebrews 11:26). They received supernatural food, mana, which literally fell from heaven.

That is why with certainty we can conclude that these were people who experienced God and His power; people who saw God's powerful works. They saw miracles everyday; starting from the miraculous signs before the hard-hearted Pharaoh to the crossing of the Red Sea, where the Word says that, *"Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left."* (Exodus 14:21-22)

When they were hungry God gave them meat and bread from heaven; water in the desert and victory over their enemies. Yet the astonishing thing is the statement found in 1 Corinthians 10:5, *"But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness."*

The Greek word used to express, "not well pleased" is *eudokeo* which means "they were not preferred".

Dear brothers and sisters, I don't want to be that kind of Christian – who is not well pleasing, who is not preferred!

Unfortunately, there are many Christians who have experienced God's supernatural touch; who have been healed and set free from sin and bad habits; they have been baptized in water, they have

listened to sundry of teachings under God's best servants, teachers, and pastors. They have received the same spiritual food and power of Christ as the rest; they go to the best churches that have the best worship. God has done many works for them; nevertheless they are not pleasing to God.

Albeit, they may still go to church, yet their life and service is simply destroyed. They continue to live their life according to the desires of their own heart, while on the outside they wear a mask of godliness. The Word clearly states that they are nevertheless displeasing to God. When He looks at them He unfortunately says, "Not preferred".

But we are not called to be that way. That's why He left us this example as a word of correction and warning; to us who live in these last days; who reside under the New Testament in order that we don't assume that we can live according to our own discretion and lust for evil things while at the same time be pleasing to God.

That's why we are looking briefly at those "evil things as they also lusted" (1 Corinthians 10:6) and those whose bodies were "scattered in the wilderness". What are those deadly things for our souls and our churches?

► 1. IDOLATRY

"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.'" (1 Corinthians 10:7).

Paul quoted from the book of Exodus, "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!'" and on the

tomorrow, on the holy day, "sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." They danced around the idol, the calf, and afterward ate and drank before it. Their judgment is written for us in Exodus 32 titled in some Bibles, "The Devotion of the Levites".

The Levites out of their devotion to the Lord glorified Him in their service. They executed God's judgment on those who worshiped the golden calf. "Then Moses said, 'Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, that He may bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother.'" (Exodus 32:29)

Martin Luther once said in regards to idolatry, "Whatever man loves, that is his god. For he carries it in his heart; he goes about with it night and day; he sleeps and wakes with it, be it what it may – wealth or self, pleasure or renown."

John Calvin also said about idolatry that, "Mans mind is like a store of idolatry and superstition; so much so that if a man believes his own mind it is certain that he will forsake God and forge some idol of his own brain."

We may ask ourselves what are idols of today? They are not just calves to which the Israelites bowed down before, statues or relics to which people bow down today in worldly religions. An idol is actually

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something that we love the most; something or someone that we think about day and night.

Are we thinking about God and His will or about our new computer, car, boyfriend or girlfriend, or career? That which we go to bed thinking about wake up with on our minds is our idol. It can be our university studies, our children, our wedding, our real estate, ambitions or our partner.

I believe that this golden calf here represents all our impatience in those things that we take in our own hands when God does not answer in our time. Unfortunately the world is full of Christians in whose lives God is not number one. Their ambitions, and desires, positions are their idols.

Church, we don't give God precedence to fulfill our own dreams, rather because we love Him and desire to do His will. For some God is used as a way to fulfill their unfulfilled wishes. What idolatry! These people and their behavior are met with God's wrath, these are Christians who are not well-pleasing to God and their life simply ends in failure. When you look at them you can truly say, "Not preferred."

► 2. FORNICATION

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

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Paul here wants to remind the Corinthians of what we read in Numbers 25:1-9 when God's people chose to esteem Baalpeor and fell into fornication with the Moabite women. The Bible does not actually tell us how they became immoral with the Moabites but we know that at that time religious prostitution was a common practice among the Canaanites. I personally believe that at first they did not want to worship Baalpeor. Possibly they said, "We will worship only Jehovah!" But underneath their religious exterior they had secret sin - they were in bondage to sexual immorality.

People cannot have sexual relationships and not become intertwined with the person they have relationships with. Likely they accompanied these women to various festivals that included idol worship. After a short time, using excuses of "honoring the parents" they found themselves entangled in the net of pagan culture and customs. Their desire for entertainment and lust weakened their spiritual dedication and discernment for sin weakens one's spiritual discernment making them blind. The punishment for this fornication was the death of 24,000 Israelites.

Today many Christians lower their standards in order to justify their own desires using the excuse of honoring their parents, friends, colleagues or other such excuses. They integrate into the culture around them to simply be more "relevant" while at the same time they slowly forsake God.

Many Christians enjoy worldly pleasures, they lower their standards, and premarital sex becomes normal behavior. If you tell them that you saved your first kiss for the wedding day they call you legalistic! According to statistics, we find very few Christian couples who sexually abstain until marriage.

According to the research made by *George Barna Institute*, sexual immorality is becoming more common among Christians. Many boundaries have been moved: 49% of born-again Christians cohabitate before marriage; 35% have sex before marriage; 33% have abortions; 20% have same-sex relations; 28% watch porno films. *(In this statistics the notion of "Evangelical Christian" and "Born-again Christian" are differentiated)*

You simply see it in their behavior. These couples are too free in their behavior toward one another. Rather than meeting together to serve the Lord they spend time together alone in their apartments, and it is only a matter of time before they buckle at the knees and fall into fornication. Today we have different levels for fornication; however, we should consider seriously what the word actually meant and what it reveals in our culture today. Sexual immorality is like a religion these days. It is spreading like a wild fire and sells everything. Pornography, pedophiles, fornication, adultery, and homosexuality – it is all immorality. Such people, and especially Christians, will experience God's judgment. You cannot be in His presence and be slave of sexual immorality at the same time. Sexual immorality will sap your strength, discernment, your testimony and finally your service. Small pleasures yet great consequences.

Apostle Paul clearly says: *"Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body." (1 Corinthians 6:18)*

► **3. TESTING THE LORD
- IMPATIENCE**

"...nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also

tempted, and were destroyed by serpents."
(1 Corinthians 10:9)

Apostle Paul here talks about the event described in Numbers 21:5-6 when the Israelites complained about the food provided by Lord. *"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. 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." So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. "*

Their spirits were not grateful to Lord and therefore were tested. They refused to follow God's law and forgot the miracles He had done for them.

Asaph in his Psalm describes these Israelites: *"...And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God." (Psalm 78.8)*

There are a lot of Christians with whom the Lord is not pleased. They are never satisfied. When they don't get what they want, they give up or start testing the Lord. Because of their impatience they usually take situations into their own hands for

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quicker results; they cannot wait on the Lord to do it in His own time. Or, they are no longer grateful to Lord for what He is giving them. They become bitter, argue about circumstances and situations and forsake Him.

One thing is certain – we must be grateful and not challenge the Lord for He sends judgment by means of disorder, an uneasy spirit, famine and closed doors, which will lead to complete failure. After all, we are not the one who tests the Lord, He is the One who tests us.

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience!” (James 1:2-3)

► 4. COMPLAINING

“...nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the Destroyer!” (1 Corinthians 10:9)

The apostle Paul further talks about the event when the Israelites complained about Moses and Aaron as described in the Book of Numbers:

“So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. 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! So they said to

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one another, “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.”(Numbers 14:1-2, 4)

Because of their complaining and arguing Lord decided that some must die while the others wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. The Israelites could have arrived in the Promised Land after only two weeks. Do you see how our disobedience can be fatal and bring long-term consequences? Complaining and disobedience always destroy God’s work. Do not forget that God opposes such people and destroys them at the end.

Let’s see what Lord said: *“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. 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. 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.” (Numbers 14:33-35)*

The Corinthian church faced a problem and the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 5 clearly rebuked some believers and gave instructions of what to do if there were fornicators, idolaters, slanderers, drunkards or robbers. This, of course, bothered those about whom it was written, so they began complaining and murmuring against Paul. The apostle Paul clearly says that Lord is not pleased with them.

According to my pastoral experience, those who complain are those who are not willing to change and submit to God’s leadership. They say that they have been submitting to God but in fact they cannot submit to the people God put in authority over their lives, whether they are employers,

governmental officials, husbands or pastors.

So it is not unusual in these last days for Apostle Paul to say: *“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”* (2 Timothy 3:1-4)

As Winkie Pratney said – *“to be a pastor today means to take cyanide and die.”* It is becoming more and more difficult to work with people; they don't look to pastors as God's servants but as an individual who prevents them from fulfilling their sinful intentions; they want to follow their heart and fulfill own desires; they don't see authorities as those who give protection and guidelines but as an obstacles.

When they are rebuked for their sinful behavior most often they attack and complain about pastor and other leaders in the church as if their authorities are to blame for their condition. But they do not stop there. They go on to bring unrest, doubt and distrust among young believers and disrupt the good spirit of fellowship.

Rather than contributing to the growth of the community and the vision which God has given to the leadership their attitudes and spirits stop God's work so that what could take 3 years to accomplish now takes 30. Unfortunately, some need that much time to understand how Lord is working. They, in fact, desire to have their own way, without being told what to do by anyone.

For such people nothing is left but God's

judgment – snakes which destroy their lives because of their wrong decisions and disobedience.

At the end, apostle Paul says what happened to Israelites as example: *“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.”* (1 Corinthians 10:11)

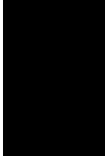
We don't have to convince ourselves that we are living in the last days. Paul wants us to know that these things are not only historical events but reality to us who live at the end of history. The same things can happen to us.

We can be baptized in the water, listen to teachings, experience the supernatural spirit of Christ but if we have an idol in our heart, sexual immorality, impatience with Lord or are complaining about our pastors and one thing is for certain – the Destroyer will destroy us!

Don't be lulled into fleshly security or take advantage of God's grace. Lord of the Old Testament is the same Lord of the New Testament and He will have to punish all our disobedience.

Many think that they can safely live as believers without turning from their unrighteous behavior

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or worldly desires. However, I must emphasize that Lord doesn't allow anybody to "laugh at Him". For, as you sow you will reap!

We must repent, turn a new page in our life and in the church's history and become people that Lord is pleased with.

Many Christians who fall into sin no longer wish return to Lord again. They think they cannot; they feel unworthy. Maybe you simply need die to yourself so that everything will be easier. One thing is for certain: *"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."* (1 Corinthians 10:13) In these words we have hope and encouragement.

The trials and temptations that meet us on the path to which we are called happen to everyone. Don't think you are the only one experiencing trials and temptations. Many have resisted and so can you. If we truly repent, confess these temptations and truly believe in Lord He will help us for sure. But if we neglect these words, nothing

remains but God's judgment. Today it is up to us to make up our mind.

Only Lord can help us. Apostle Paul confirms this when he says: *"then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority."* (2 Peter 2.9-10)

My prayer is that our history be changed and that following be written *"But Lord was well pleased by most of them, something special though, as they were"*

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