

Good morning! Charles Simpson once told of a time when, as a young man, he was running from God. During this time he also had several auto accidents. In fact, he says that, at the time, he thought that God might be trying to kill him. His father Vernon Simpson, a Baptist pastor, finally confronted him, saying, "Son, you're either going to have to repent or be a lot more careful!" Being careful doesn't help, and we all have our struggles with doing the right thing. We like to judge others though, right? If we measured the conduct of other people by the same measurement we use with ourselves, they could have a lot more room for failure—and we'd give them a lot more second chances. When you read of the moral failure of someone you don't like, are you eager to find out more about it? Do you gloat---even just a little bit--- over their failure? Do you feel just a little superior, or is that just me? We like to think that we would do better and maybe we would...but maybe not. This morning, let's look together at a passage that makes me think about my own moral failures:

I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. A cloud that moved ahead of them guided all of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses. All of them ate the same spiritual food, and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ. Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, or worship idols as some of them did. As the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry." And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day. Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites. And don't grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death. These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age. If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience.

1 Cor. 10:1-13

As I read this passage last week, I thought about some of the advantages that the people in this passage had. They were living in the tangible, visible Presence of God. He guided them and cooled them from the heat of the sun during the day with a cloud. By night, He provided guidance and warmth with a pillar of fire. He provided their food daily with manna. They saw Moses' face glow when he had been meeting with God. And yet, with all of this evidence of God's Presence, they were worshiping idols and indulging in pagan revelry. God judged them and not a single one of the original group was allowed to enter Canaan. Paul ends his commentary with this remark: "These things happened as examples for us. If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience." When I read this it gives me pause. I have the same temptations that those around me have. Pam and I have been married nearly 42 years and have enjoyed abundant happiness, happiness beyond imagining. I thank God every day for our happy marriage...but I could fail in my marriage. I consider myself a pretty honest guy, but in a moment of weakness I could do something dishonest, something unworthy that would bring shame and regret. You and I must face the reality of our own fallen-ness. We must learn to forgive and give grace to those who fail. Do you think you are standing tall? Be careful not to fall!