**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 2-19-2023
Learn From Our History**

One of the subjects in school that I really enjoyed while growing up is history or social studies. In fact, I strongly considered being a social studies teacher before God directed me in a different direction. How about you? Did any of you find history to be a favorite subject?

While God had different plans for me than to be a history teacher, history is still very interesting to me. And it’s for two main reasons.

First, I just find it fascinating to learn about different times and places and people. Sometimes we can be so focused on the here and now and we forget that there were many, many generations that have come before us. The study of history can help us to kind of travel through time, in the sense that we can get to know people from many different generations.

But second, and more important, the study of history can help us learn lessons from the past. And there are many lessons to be learned. We can learn from good decisions that were made and seek to do likewise. And we can learn the lessons from poor decisions that were made as we seek to avoid making those same or similar mistakes today.

There is a saying that goes something like this: ***Those that do not learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.*** So, there is a benefit, even if we don’t enjoy history, to learn from history.

I am also grateful that my enjoyment with history fits perfectly well with Christianity. One of the things that I love about Christianity is that it is historical. By that I mean that it is grounded in history. The events truly happened in time and space in our world. Our great God has acted to redeem us from our sins and bring us into His family.

This is so different from the religions of the world. The religions of the world, excluding Christianity, are simply not based on history. Rather, they are based on things people made up out of their imaginations.

But friends, Christianity is historical. God did create a new people called Israel. God really did deliver them from Egyptian slavery. And ultimately, God really did become a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ in order to offer salvation to everyone. There really was an empty tomb Easter Sunday. There really were multitudes of witnesses to Jesus’ miracles, including His resurrection.

I just love that about our faith. It is not just wishful thinking – it’s putting our trust in a God who has acted in history. I remember one of my professors said that he is a Christian because Christianity is true.

While obviously not everyone in the world would agree with such statements, their lack of belief does not make Christianity any less historical and true.

Paul certainly wanted the believers in Corinth to be grounded in the fact that Christianity is historically true. And not only everything connected with Jesus and His coming, but also in the Old Testament as well. The coming of Christ is the culmination of God acting in many ways through the long history of Israel.

Let’s turn to 1 Corinthians 10:1-14 to see how Paul instructs them.

**1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3They all ate the same spiritual food 4and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.**

**6Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.”[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+10%3A1-14&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28575a)**] 8We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9We should not test Christ,[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+10%3A1-14&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28577b)**] as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. 10And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.**

**11These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. 12So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! 13No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. 14Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.**

I love how verse one says **For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.**

Paul does not say “my ancestors” all passed through the sea. Instead, he says “our ancestors” all passed through the sea. In other words, he is telling these Christians in Corinth, which were mostly non-Jews, that their ancestors passed through the sea.

Now that may seem a bit odd. The Christians in Corinth may have been hearing or reading this letter and thinking, “now hold on here, Paul, we are not even Jewish, how did our ancestors do these things?”

But what Paul is telling them is so significant. I believe that Paul is using the language of “our ancestors” because everyone who puts their faith in Jesus as their Savior and Lord becomes a part of the people of God.

In Paul’s letter to the Galatians, he refers to all Christians as “the Israel of God.” So now, because of Jesus Christ, Israel’s history has also become their own. It is now part of their heritage. And they are to learn from this heritage.

So how are they to learn from their history? The Old Testament. The New Testament was still largely unwritten, but with Isael’s history now being part of the Corinthians own history, they had a treasure-trove of sources in the books of the Old Testament.

They were to learn from their history. They were to learn from both the good and the bad. In Paul’s second letter to Timothy, Paul tells Timothy **“all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness**.”

Paul wrote those words knowing that he would likely soon be killed for his faith in and testimony about Jesus. One of his final words to his spiritual son, Timothy, was to remember that all of the Bible is valuable and can and should be used to help Christians grow as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Going back to today’s passage from 1 Corinthians, Paul is instructing them to learn from Israel’s history. Paul highlights how sadly, even though Israel started out well, many didn’t’ finish well.

There were those that passed through the Red Sea and saw God do miracles, any yet they didn’t continue trusting in the Lord. Instead, many in Israel turned to worshipping idols and to grumbling and complaining against God and Moses. And those who did these things fell under God’s judgment for doing so.

What did this mean for the Christians in Corinth? It meant that just because they said yes to Jesus, it didn’t guarantee that they would stay loyal and faithful to Jesus. Present godliness does not guarantee future godliness.

Corinth was a city in which idolatry was all over the place. It was the norm in that place to worship these false gods. And Paul is telling the Christians in Corinth that just because they have started off well does not mean that they are guaranteed to stay faithful to the Lord. Paul did not want the Christians in Corinth to have one foot in the church and one foot in the world.

This did not work well in the Old Testament with the nation of Israel and it would not work well if the Corinthians would do the same thing.

So again, what will help these Christians in Corinth to stay faithful? One way is to learn from their history. Israel’s history had become their own and they were to actively learn from it. This would enable them to grow in their love and knowledge of God.

Friends, as we turn now to us and what we can takeaway from this passage, what is the main thing to remember?

And I believe that it is this: **We are to remember that Israel’s history is part of our history and we are to actively learn from our history and heritage.**

There are many Christians today that view the Old Testament as unimportant or even opposed to the New Testament. There are Christian leaders that are teaching these things.

As God’s Church today, we must oppose this. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching and rebuking and correcting and training. All Scripture is there to help us live righteous and godly lives to the glory of God.

God is consistent in His character throughout the Bible. And we can get to know God in both the Old and New Testaments.

And likewise, we would be doing ourselves a great disservice if we neglect to learn from the Old Testament. God has always been a God of mercy and grace, but our Lord desires to spare people from so much pain. And so, He warns us to learn from the past.

One of the ways that we are seeking to learn from our history is through the Bible books of the month here at Chestnut Grove. We are in the Old Testament about the same amount of time that we are in the New Testament. We typically go back and forth. We do this because all of the Bible is important and we can learn from ever page of Scripture.

Friends, we must also remember that we are part of the Israel of God. Israel’s history is part of our history and heritage. We must learn from it.

In the passage from 1 Corinthians, idolatry is the main thing that Paul is warning the Corinthian Christians about. But just because we do not have as many pagan temples around this area as they did in the city of Corinth, this doesn’t mean that we are not to address this issue. There is much idolatry in America today. Money, fame, success, and even one’s family can become an idol. Truly, anything that someone puts before God becomes an idol.

And one big thing that can help us to avoid the lore of idols of any kind is by tending to our walk with God. Our walk with God must be the most important thing in our lives.

And one big way that we tend to our walk with the Lord is by treasuring His Book – the Bible. And not just part of it, but all of it. As we read and hear and reflect on the good, the bad, and the ugly in Israel’s story, we can learn more clearly how God wants us to live. We can discern what blesses God and honors God and what does not.

Friends, God wants us to finish well. And one way that Christians finish well is by loving and valuing and seeking to learn from Israel’s history – our history. By learning from our history, we will be better able to resist and temptations that will come our way.

Temptation is something everyone deals with. Israel dealt with temptation and the Christians in Corinth were certainly susceptible to it. And certainly, we all deal with temptations of various kinds in our lives today. But God promises to provide a way out of temptation, by His grace. And I believe that as we learn the lessons from our history, these lessons learned may often be the way of escape that God provides for us.

The Old Testament is rather big, isn’t it? One of my professors jokingly referred to the New Testament as an appendix to the Bible. But there is a measure of truth in that statement.

When one neglects to learn from our history, they would effectively be choosing to not open up one of God’s greatest presents to Christians. I firmly believe that we will burn brighter as the light on a hill that Christ has called us to be, as we are intentional in learning from our history and our heritage. By the grace of God, may we do this well. Amen.

Resources:

[www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com)