

All passed through the sea

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[0 : 0 0] Corinthians 10 verse 1. Moreover brethren I would not that you should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud and all passed through the sea. Now Paul has been writing this letter to the church in Corinth an exciting church and a difficult church and Paul was having to defend his own apostleship and the one thing that Paul loved to do above all else he couldn't but was preach. He loved to preach. In fact he says further back there he says what was unto me if I preach not the gospel. But even although Paul was such a great man of God and I'm sure you would have to say you'd be hard pushed to think of any greater man of God that we know of than the apostle Paul. He was an extraordinary Christian. The more that you read of his submission and of his humility and of his tremendous zeal for the cause of Christ the more you just you realize that this man was a man amongst men. And yet despite that Paul is somebody who doesn't take even although he's somebody obviously as great as you he doesn't take his salvation for granted. And at the end of the previous chapter chapter 9 that chapter that we we read there he's showing the importance of running this race. And he's saying that the importance even of him for himself. And he's sounding that note of warning that he could preach to others and yet that I myself should be a castaway. You know that's a very very solemn piece of scripture. And we believe that it is possible for people like Judas. Judas was a preacher. Probably Judas was a great preacher.

Judas was one that was sent out by the Lord. And he went out preaching. Remember all the apostles and Jesus sent them out two by two. All the disciples I should say sent them out by two and two. And yet Judas was a castaway. He was somebody that went to a lost eternity. And so Paul is here and he's as it were he's kind of shaking people up. And he's saying look yes salvation is a great thing.

But we've got to take this salvation seriously. And Paul I often wonder if Paul had been an athlete in his day because so often he goes back to the image of the athlete. And he's showing how the athlete that he'll forgo many things in order to gain this crown. That he put aside many things. Some of the few years back ago, Daley Thompson, the decathlon Olympic and world champion, was reckoned by many to be the greatest athlete alive, greatest athlete on the planet. He trained six or seven hours every day of the year.

365 days a year he trained six or seven hours. Christmas day, New Year's day, he was out training. He wanted to be the best. He became the best. But in order to do that he had to sacrifice I'm sure virtually everything else in life.

[3 : 1 0] And that's really what Paul is saying. That people for, and it was only for a corruptible crown, it was for a gold, for gold medals. Which will go, which will pass away. And he's saying if athletes will do it for a corruptible crown, how much more should we strive? How much more should we seek in order for this crown that will never perish?

And so Paul says we've got to keep going. We've got to keep fighting. We've got to keep persevering. And tonight you are able to say one of the great things. If you tonight are still following the Lord Jesus Christ, you're following him.

Why? You're not first and foremost you're following him because his grace is within you. But there's that wonderful verse. Those that persevere to the end, the same shall be saved. In other words, will be taken onwards and upwards into glory.

And that's one of the great evidences that the work of grace is in your heart, is the fact that you're still going. Isn't it a marvel that you're still following the Lord? Isn't that an evidence of his grace? When you think of all the powers that have tried to suck you, have you ever stood by a whirlpool? A powerful one. I've seen that, as it were, almost a suction of pool in it. And it's like it's sucking everything that's there down. And you know the Christian is being sucked all the time.

[4 : 30] There are satanic forces. There are worldly forces. There are forces of nature within our own being that are trying to destroy the light of faith that's within us.

And yet despite all the powers of darkness being unleashed against us. And there are times that Satan will pull out all the stops and he'll try to take you down and break you and mar your, and spoil your confession and the profession that you made.

He'll try and ruin everything. And yet you're still here. Maybe you've had slips and maybe you've had falls, but you're still here. Why? Because his grace won't let you go.

And that's the fulfillment of this verse. Those that persevere to the end, the same shall be saved. Now, the church in Corinth was some church. It really was an unusual church.

Because, as you know, and historians will tell us, Corinth was an incredible city. Corinth was a city that was really just, it was almost heaving.

[5 : 38] Every immorality, every perversion, every form of idolatry was practiced in Corinth.

Anybody who wanted to go and to live life to the edge, anybody who wanted to indulge themselves in all the things that were going in the day, they went to Corinth.

It was a city where you could do anything. Any perversion was catered for in Corinth. And really, when you look at it, you would expect that Corinth would be the last city in the whole world that a church would be planted and a church that Christians would be growing up in.

Suppose if you were to look almost like a parallel today, it would be like going to, say, the red light district in Amsterdam, that infamous place of prostitution and drug addiction and immorality.

And you'd say, boy, you'd never get a church growing up in there. Well, that's what it was like. The very same, that's the kind of place Corinth was. And yet, here's this church. And it's growing up.

And there were great Christians in it. But, unfortunately, in Corinth, and I suppose that's part of the difficulty. They had just come out of all this immorality and idolatry and paganism.

[6 : 52] And when you read through these epistles, the letters to the church in Corinth, you see that there were all kinds of problems with it. And in a sense, it's not surprising when we think of their background.

As we heard on the Thursday night of the communion, one of the problems was that people were drunk going to the Lord's table. There were a lot of divisions within the church. Some were going after this person and that person.

There were the problems that one Christian was taking another Christian to court. And there were all kinds of problems. And Paul is trying to address all these different things.

And he's showing how it is wrong. And in a sense, at this particular part, he's trying, as it were, to shake the church in Corinth and say, look, you've got to get a grip. Even although you've got this, the wonder of Jesus Christ.

And even although it's all so new and so thrilling, just don't take it all for granted. This is serious business. And he says, I'm going to remind you or I'm going to tell you something about Israel's history.

[7 : 57] And that's what Paul does. That he says, the Israelites in the wilderness, I want to remind you, he's saying to the church in Corinth about them. Because at the end of the day, he's saying to the church in Corinth, and he's saying to you and to me, we can't live any old way that we choose.

You know, there's a, I suppose, there's always a tendency within every person to go down one road or another. It's very, very hard to walk that straight line. To swing on the one hand to legalism.

To go into the form of extremes of trying to live the letter of the law. That's one danger. It's a danger facing all Christians. And the other extreme is what we call un-to-know-me-ness.

Where we look at ourselves above the law. And in other words, anything goes. That we are, now we're in grace. And it doesn't matter what we do. It's all right because we're forgiven and pardoned in Jesus Christ.

And that is a problem. That it can go into extremes or it can go into lesser forms. And that's why it is so important that we take our Christianity from the Bible and seek by grace to walk in a Christ-like way every day.

[9 : 10] It's not an easy thing, but we need to go back every day and try to walk following the Lord Jesus. And so Paul is saying to the church in Corinth. The Israelites, they were taken out of Egypt.

And my word, he was saying, they had tremendous privileges. They had tremendous blessings. And yet, many of them took these privileges and blessings for granted.

And many of them perished in the wilderness. Now tonight, I want to look at not all the privileges, but just one of the great privileges that the Israelites had when they came out of Egypt.

But before we come just to look at that, may I remind ourselves that privilege always carries responsibility. Privilege is a great thing. It doesn't matter in what level it is.

It doesn't matter where privilege stands. Privilege always has responsibility with it. And most certainly, privilege carries responsibility with regard to the gospel.

[10:11] And Jesus makes that very point. It's a wonderful privilege to sit under the gospel. It's a wonderful privilege to be brought up in a Christian home. A wonderful privilege to have been instructed in the faith since you were knee-high.

But you know, there's a great responsibility in it as well. Because the more that we have, the more light that we're given, the more knowledge that we receive, the more that God is going to require of us.

And that privilege, if we do not use the privilege, and if we do not accept the blessings that are offered within the privileges, then these privileges, at the end of the day, will turn round to be a curse and a condemnation to us, where we will go into lostness.

The Bible makes that clear. And that's why Jesus said that on the day of judgment, he said, it will be far better for Sodom and Gomorrah than it will be for Capernaum. Sodom and Gomorrah didn't have the light.

They didn't have the warnings to the same extent. They didn't know in the same way that Capernaum, Jesus was there ministering, fulfilling the word before their very eyes, and yet they were rejecting him.

[11:28] And he was saying, oh Capernaum, oh Capernaum, he was saying, you don't realize what you're reaping, what you're sowing just now, and the awful harvest you will reap by rejecting him.

So Paul is warning the church in Corinth, and he's warning us as well. So I want us to look at this first great privilege that is here before us, with regard to the Israelites, because this is what Paul is doing.

He's highlighting some of the privileges that they had in the wilderness. And he says, all our fathers were under the cloud. Now if you know, and we've often said that the Old Testament was, well, that's been said before, was God's picture book.

It was full of illustrations, of symbols, of types. And really everything that was happening in the Old Testament, the whole structure of the worship of the tabernacle, even all the little things that were there involved, everything comes together to point to Christ.

All the things that were happening to Israel in their journey out of Egypt all the way to the Promised Land, is pointing to Christ and the journey of the Christian onwards. And so everything there, we can see something of it with regard to ourselves.

[12:46] Now one of the amazing phenomena that followed Israel throughout their journey in the wilderness, was the presence of the cloud. It was an amazing thing, this great pillar of cloud.

Now that cloud spoke, above all it spoke, of a covenant keeping God. You see, God has made a covenant. And that covenant, in that covenant, he has promised to be with his people.

Let us remember that tonight, that God has promised to be with his people. Not in an imaginary way. Not in some theoretical way. Not in an airy, fairy, if he will be kind of way.

In a real way. God is really present with every single one of his people. And in the wilderness, that presence was evident in the cloud.

The cloud, once Israel entered, came to the borders of the Promised Land and entered in, the cloud went. Then there was a new form of God's presence in the ark.

[13:50] Remember how the ark was taken out. And the ark had to go in front of Israel. And Israel were to view the ark and to follow the ark. And again the ark was symbolizing the presence of the living God.

And today we have God's word, which is assuring us that the spirit of God is present within us. And remember what Jesus said.

Jesus, before he left this world, he said to his disciples, he said, I have to go and die. And he said, it's important for you that I die. Because I'm going to die and I'm going to rise again. And when I go to heaven, I'm going to send the Holy Spirit down among you.

In great power. And the Holy Spirit will presence himself with each one of you. Of course the Holy Spirit was present with the believers in the Old Testament as well. But the Holy Spirit hadn't come with the same power as he came after Jesus ascended.

And so we have the assurance of his presence with us when we look at Calvary and when we look at the empty grave and when we look at his word. Calvary and when we look at the Holy Spirit because he has assured us that he is going to be present with us.

[15:01] Now, throughout scripture, the cloud, the forming of clouds is symbolic of the presence of God. It has always been so. We have it here in the wilderness.

When Solomon, remember when the temple was built and Solomon dedicated the temple, that this thick cloud entered into the temple and filled the temple. And there was this great weight of clouds symbolizing the presence of God.

On the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus shone through with the glory that he was to receive as mediator, this mediatorial glory, the glory that you and I will share in as well, that glory, there was also the presence of the clouds.

When Jesus ascended, he ascended up into the clouds. And we're told again that when he returns, he will return in the clouds and with the clouds. Here it is always symbolizing the presence of the Lord.

Now, the cloud of the wilderness, as we have read there, was, I've always thought of it, and rightly so, like a thick, I suppose, kind of tunnel.

[16:11] It's termed a pillar of cloud. By day it was a pillar of cloud, and by night it turned into a pillar of fire. And I've always thought of it just as this, this sort of, just like a, like a, like a funnel.

Or I suppose like we've seen pictures, maybe on the television, of a, of a tornado, of that circle, whirling, circle moving. And I would imagine there was just this thick funnel, thick, thick funnel of cloud.

Now, while I believe that that is, that is, that is true, I do not know, we do not know the circumference of that. It obviously didn't always remain simply as that pillar going up from, from the earth up to heaven, or from heaven down to the earth.

Because it would also appear that the cloud at times was over, and that's what it says here. Our fathers were under the cloud, not beside the cloud, but they were under the cloud.

When we read in Numbers as well, on another occasion, it talks about the cloud being over them. And in this way, as we will look through, we see that the cloud, as it's before them, and as it's over them, is speaking of the different things about the Lord Jesus Christ.

[17:26] So I want us just to look at three or four things that the cloud symbolises. And the first we've already really touched at is that the cloud is a clear representation of Jesus Christ.

What is one of the names of Jesus? Emmanuel, God with us. That is one of his covenant names. Emmanuel, God with us. And right from the beginning, Jesus Christ has been present with his people.

And that's what he was doing there in the wilderness. Here he was with them throughout this journey. Now some people have spiritualised here. A lot of people are very keen on spiritualising things.

And they have said that this pillar of cloud was representative of Jesus in his two natures. That the pillar of cloud, the one pillar, by day it was cloud, by night it was fire.

And Jesus was one passion and yet he had the two natures. He was God and he was man. Divine nature and human nature. And maybe that is stretching things a wee bit too far.

[18:34] But it's certainly something that people, it's the sort of thing that people can maybe discuss and talk about. But it is. I mean, we could even go along that road. So here is this pillar.

But the second thing that we see about the pillar is that the pillar was our guide. The pillar of cloud was the guide to the Israelites. Now, the wilderness was a very, very dangerous place.

A very dangerous place to be. There are probably few more threatening places to be than to be out in the wilderness in the middle of a vast desert. And that's how it was for Israel.

And they didn't really know the way to go. Now let us remember that the children of Israel weren't a group of trained, armed, fighting men. There were old ladies and old men probably too weak to walk.

There were little babies that had to be carried. There were all their cattle. And in so many ways they were a prey to enemies. Enemies could strike from any direction as enemies often try to do.

[19 : 35] Wild beasts, there were lots of things threatening them there in the wilderness. And when you think of being out in a great wilderness in a great desert, it would be very hard to know which way to go.

Well here was the pillar of cloud. And it tells us that when the pillar of cloud moved, Israel moved, gathered up everything and followed it. When the pillar of cloud stopped, they stopped and they set up camp.

Now, when we go through the Old Testament we will find that there were times that Israel wanted to get going. And they couldn't get going because the cloud wasn't moving.

And I'm sure that there were someone in the camp who were saying, oh, I can't wait anymore. I'm going on anyway. But they couldn't go on because the moment that they would try and go ahead of the cloud or move away from the cloud, they were separating themselves from the will of God.

They were going out from the way of God. And you know, there's a danger for us as well because, you know, God often stops with us too, doesn't he? It's one of the things I think maybe I'm learning more and more as I go along as a Christian is that God very often works slowly in so many different ways.

[20 : 48] Works slowly in us individually. You know, sometimes we think when we're converted that it's going to be so altogether different and in a sense it is different.

But we think we're going to become such incredibly holy men and women and we're just going to live on this totally different plane and we're going to be ready for glory in a little while.

But oh no, there is so much that God has to work away within us and he's chipping away at this and chipping away at that and we're slow learners. But God, even although he works slowly, he works surely.

Again, we often see it with prayer. We're praying and we're praying and we're praying and we're saying, Lord, it's time to work. Oh Lord, won't you work now? Why are you not working? Maybe God has every intention of working but his time is not.

It's not his time yet. Even although it's our time, Jesus was always having to say that to the disciples. He said, your time is ready but my time has not yet come.

[21 : 54] So, we often find that we're having to wait. And so, it's so important that every day that we, again, with childlike trust and simplicity put our hand in the hand of the Savior and say, well Lord, I don't know where I'm to go or what I'm to do.

Lord, teach me in the way that I am to go. And there are great promises in the word of God where he's saying, I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou will go. I will guide thee with mine eye.

And our friends, how we need that guidance. Well, in the Old Testament, in the wilderness, God guided them with a pillar of cloud. But the pillar was also to them a light.

Every night, there they were out in that great howling wilderness. But as the darkness came, that cloud began to glow and glow and at night, it was a great shining light that shone right throughout the camp so that everybody had light sufficient to see.

And again, that's symbolic of Jesus because Jesus came into this world and one of his great declarations was, I am the light of the world. Into this darkness, into the spiritual darkness and the moral darkness of this world, Jesus shines like a light.

[23 : 10] But you know, men and women cannot see that they're in darkness and they cannot see the light of Jesus until he shines into them.

And you know, this is very clearly illustrated in the wilderness because when Israel moved out of Egypt, the cloud went before them. But you know, you remember that particular time when the Egyptians were following after the Israelites and the cloud came round and came between the Israelites and the Egyptians and there they were at night and the amazing thing was that the very same cloud which was a light to the Israelites, it had turned a pillar of fire and was shining down upon the Israelites, that same cloud was darkness on the other side to the Egyptians.

And it's still like that. And that's why there are so many people around and about and they see Jesus Christ simply as a pillar of cloud. They see him as a pillar of history.

They see him as a historical character. But there's nothing glorious or wonderful or spectacular about him. They don't see him as a saviour. They just see him as a great character of history to be alongside the likes of Julius Caesar or Alexander the Great or some other characters from history.

But those upon whom Jesus has shone the light, they're able to see the light. And sometimes when we forget that as Christians we wonder and we say how is it that they can't see?

[24 : 47] How is it that these people cannot see? Well they cannot see because they are still in the darkness like the Egyptians. Even although the light was shining in Israel and they could see the Egyptians on the other side couldn't see.

The cloud was a thick cloud left like I suppose like a really thick dense fog and they couldn't see anything. And that's how it is spiritually. That's how it is and that is the reason why so many people remain without Jesus Christ.

But the thing about this light the light that shines in Jesus is that the more that the light of Jesus shines into us the more that we're able to see the light that is in him.

That's a wonderful thing. But then there's another thing about the cloud and maybe we've touched on this already. The cloud was there for their protection. As we said the cloud came between them and the Egyptians.

And it was such a thick cloud that the Egyptians couldn't find their way through. Just like remember in the time of the Covenanters. The time great preacher the godly Alexander Peden was preaching. [26 : 01] And they were there in their little conventicle in these little almost natural churches where they would be in the hillside. And then one of the guards announced that there were dragoons coming.

The soldiers on horseback. And these Covenanters men and women and boys and girls gathered there. There was nothing. They had nothing. And Peden knew that they were done for.

Remember how he prayed to the Lord and he said Lord there's nothing that we can do but he said spread your covering over us. Spread your covering over us.

And as he prayed a thick mist began to descend. And it was so thick that the Covenanters couldn't move themselves but the dragoons became hopelessly lost.

And you and I know there's nothing like becoming nothing for disorienting you for making you lose your bearings like being out in a thick mist. If you're out in the moon in a mist it is incredibly easy to lose your bearings to lose your direction.

[27 : 07] And that's what happened to these Covenanters and the dragoons. And here we see that the Lord he spread a covering over the Israelites.

He was there to protect them. And we have that beautiful picture again in the Bible of the Lord spreading his wings around them. It's a beautiful picture. The everlasting wings.

Now we know that God doesn't have wings. But he uses images so that we can understand the way that he deals with us. And there's Jesus himself he was weeping over Jerusalem.

Oh he said Oh Jerusalem Jerusalem he said how often I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks. Have you seen the hen gathering the little chicks to herself?

And she takes them in and you know when they're right in there under the mother and under her wings and there's not even a little foot sticking out not even a little beak you wouldn't know they were there at all. And it's such a secure place.

[28 : 10] Isn't it? A place of protection. A place of warmth. A place of security. A place of love. And that's what the Lord is doing for us and offering to us.

And that's the same Lord tonight. Just as he covered and spread the mantle over them in the wilderness and spread his mantle over Alexander Peden and the Covenanters he is spreading his wings over you and over me tonight in Jesus Christ.

That's why the word of God says no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper. That is why the Lord says who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect.

That's why the apostle under inspiration of God says that he says I am persuaded he said that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come. Nothing he said. In other words nothing in heaven earth or under the earth is able to separate you or sever you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Isn't that wonderful?

[29 : 13] What security. And finally the last thing again this cloud. It sheltered them from the intense heat in the wilderness.

Remember they were in a burning hot desert. They had come up from the Red Sea. The temperatures there in the height of the summer would be I'm sure up 130. That is hot.

120, 130. Boiling hot. In the intensity of that heat. That's why it's saying here that they were under the cloud. And I'm sure there that this cloud was there to shelter them from the heat.

And the Lord does that for you and for me. He shelters us from the heat and from the storm. Well isn't shelter is a wonderful thing. Both in the heat and in the storm.

Remember how it's in the Song of Solomon there how it says I sat down under a shadow. There's something wonderful about being there in the shadow. And as we go through the different trials and the difficulties and sometimes we say Lord this is too much for me to bear.

[30 : 19] The Lord will come over and he will cover us. And he will lessen the heat. And he will lessen the pain. And he'll give us a strength. And he'll give us a grace to bear it.

But there's one last thing before we conclude I want to say our verse also says to us and all that passed through the sea. And of course that was a great moment at the Red Sea.

And of course the cloud was there first of all and then they came to the Red Sea. You know that was a wonderful moment. It was a wonderful moment of faith and it was a wonderful moment where God was displaying his glory.

Because you remember at that particular juncture that Israel were hemmed in on all sides. The Egyptians were behind them. There was no way either to the left or to the right.

And in front of them there was this great sea. And if any person or any people felt trapped it was surely the Israelites. And yet God is saying to them and he said to Moses he said stand still he said and see the salvation of the Lord.

[31 : 25] Here we are God's in activity again. Now I'm sure that Moses himself must have been frantic with worry. If I was in that position and I was leading people man I'm telling you you'd be saying what what's going to happen?

How do we can't go back? We can't go this we can't go that? What are we going to do? God says stand still. You know so often that's what we've got to do. So often we're in a frenzy. We're running this you know sometimes we get exhausted running around in circles going nowhere and God is saying.

Be still and know that I am God. I'm going to teach you something and you can only learn it in the stillness and the quietness. In the stillness and the quietness. And then as Israel stood still and as Moses stood still God obviously spoke to Moses and he said stretch out your rod.

Do you know if Moses hadn't stretched out his rod Israel wouldn't have crossed the Red Sea. that was faith. Now natural reason would say now if you were there and naturally you'd say what good is stretching out a rod going to do?

But God said you stretch out the rod Moses. Moses stretched out his rod and in response to that simple act of faith God divided the waters and Israel crossed over.

[32 : 45] And you know the amazing thing is that after Israel had crossed over the Egyptians who were hounding Israel they tried to cross over as well. And you know they came to the very edge and then the water the great walls of water broke in on top of them and they were all devoured.

You know you will be chased and hounded by the enemy right to the very end. Right down into death's dark field. don't you think that you're going to have it easy even when you're coming to death.

Oh the Lord will give you great experiences. I'm sure of that. But the devil will hound you to the very end. But you will see the destruction of your enemies.

Israel on the banks there they looked down and they saw these people who had been their persecutors and their enemies for years and they saw them being destroyed. And you friends when you are being transported to glory into the spiritual realms you will see as you leave this world your eyes will be open to see things that you couldn't see here.

And these enemies that bade for your blood you will see them but you will also see their destruction. What a wonderful thing. A simple act of faith.

[34 : 07] And God is looking to you and to me tonight to trust him implicitly. Are you daring to trust the Lord? Let us pray. O Lord our God we pray that thou will give us this faith to trust thee implicitly.

That we may maybe tonight there's somebody here and they're facing their own particular Red Sea. Well here's the word that God spoke to Moses. He said go forward. Go forward.

After he had first said stand still he then said go forward. O well Lord we pray that if there's anybody here tonight who has never taken that step that they may go to the Lord as we were talking about this morning like the little baby with the outstretched arms who cannot lift herself but yet lifts the hands to thee to be lifted.

We pray Lord that they will do that tonight. Lift their hands to thee that thou will lift them up and take them to thyself. Bless each one of us we pray. Guide us with thy wisdom and with God we pray of thee Lord pardon our sin for Jesus sake Amen.