

The Treasures of Egypt

“With many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” (1 Cor. 10:5).

They never reached the promised rest, and never will. The Revised Version says, *“With **MOST** of them God was not pleased.”* They were a nation under divine sentence of death. For forty years they wandered with the sentence hanging over them, each waiting his turn to die. On the average, one hundred bodies were left behind every day for forty years. *“With most of them God was not well pleased,”* though they had done just what was natural and human in the circumstances. “Natural” and “human” are not qualities that please God. In the next verse the Spirit through Paul gives the reason for dwelling on these matters—

*“Now these things were **OUR EXAMPLES.**”*

And, like as he had mentioned five ways in which they had been divinely blessed, he now lists five ways in which they betrayed the blessing and brought destruction upon themselves. The five were: lust, idolatry, fornication, tempting and murmuring.

LUST

The *lust* was for the good things of Egypt. It was quite natural for them to desire the pleasing things of the world they had come out from. Truly there were many pleasant and desirable things about Egypt, which at that time led the world in all the arts and sciences and flesh-pleasing contrivances of man. Forty years is a long time to wander in a hot, dry, barren wilderness, partaking of the same monotonous, unchanging food day after day.

But if they had been able to rise to the broader, *spiritual* view of the matter, they would have seen things differently. Egypt, with all its pleasures, was a land of futureless death. *They* were on the Divine road of life and promise. If they only had had eyes to see the manna, the smitten rock, the tabernacle, the pillar of fire, the plagues of Egypt, the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea, the miracles of Moses— all these things were concrete evidences that they were part of a marvelous, history-making divine operation that linked them to eternity.

Viewed in the proper perspective, what were the poor, passing pleasures of benighted Egypt? But they forgot the glory of God that had lifted them up, and could think only of the garlic and onions of Egypt. It is very easy to let food and animal pleasures monopolize much of our thoughts and conversation—to forsake spiritual food in the interest of natural food. Of such Paul sadly says, *“Whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things”* (Phil. 3:19). Moses had the proper outlook. The apostle records of him (Heb. 11:26) that he—

“Esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”

He weighed up all that Egypt had to offer and he could see through its empty deceptiveness and its inevitable end. Doubtless, he too, naturally speaking, would have enjoyed some of the pleasures and comforts of Egypt, but HE realized that there were more important things in life than babyishly catering to the flesh. *He* had a work to do and a goal to reach.

IDOLATRY

And what of idolatry and fornication and tempting and murmuring—the other examples of failure that Paul calls to our attention? As to the first, it is hard to draw a clear dividing line between lust and idolatry. All lust is a form of idol worship and voluntary slavery, but the Apostle's distinction seems to be that by idolatry he refers to the placing of *faith, trust or dependence* upon something, as upon money or insurance. The commonest form of this idolatry is *self-confidence* or *self-reliance*—depending upon the arm of the flesh. Perhaps, too, he has in mind the angle of *service, devotion or worship*, as when he says—as previously quoted—

"Whose god (or idol) is their belly."

FORNICATION

Fornication is a general term for a wide range of activities of which divorce is at present the most pressing and dangerous problem in the ecclesial world. Only a high, scriptural standard, firmly and faithfully applied, will save the brotherhood from the undermining infection of the modern Midianites and Balaamites. The slightest relaxing of scriptural restraint is fatal when such forces are involved. This plague is raging with unrestrained and mounting fury in the godless world of today. Uncompromising vigilance is essential to keep it from invading and destroying the Temple of God. "Marriage" into the world is another very serious aspect of this general evil of which Paul speaks. In fact, *the specific instance he gives is of this particular sin.*

TEMPTING

And the sin of "tempting"—what is that? The example Paul gives is when it is recorded (Num. 21:5)—

"The people spoke against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?"

They "*spoke against God!*" What unutterable folly! But is it not an easy thing to fall into, when the presentation to us of God's commandments is irksome and restrictive? Of course we would not admit we were speaking against *God*. It is safer to appear to be directing our annoyance against man, as they did against Moses. But when the people in the days of Samuel clamored for a king, God put His finger on the heart of the matter. "*They have not rejected YOU,*" He told Samuel, "*they have rejected ME*" (1 Sam. 8:7). God told Samuel they were running true to the rebellious pattern they had always followed from the time He brought them out of Egypt. They had said then, "*Let us make a captain, and let us return unto Egypt*" (Num. 14:4).

They pretended it was on account of Samuel's sons. This gave them a handle. But really they lusted after a worldly setup of splendor and magnificence. They wanted to be like the world –to have all its flashy tinsel, in all the latest models. God warned them, but still they blindly persisted in their headlong way.

We tempt God when we set our judgment and opinion against His. When, instead of casting aside the deceptive reasoning of the flesh and seeking to learn from Him, we rather attempt to find something in His Word that we can interpret to justify our own views and desires. If our scriptural judgment in any matter corresponds with our *natural* feelings, then we should examine both very carefully, for they are probably wrong. The commands of God are usually plain if we are anxiously seeking to understand and to always be on the safe side in any matter of doubt. Jesus said –

“The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you in the last day” (Jn. 12:48).

He will have a Bible there, and it will only be necessary for him to open it and point silently to some passage to put many to confusion and shame. Let us try to take every precaution not to be among them.

MURMURING

And finally, says Paul, *“Let us not MURMUR, as some of them murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer”* (v. 10). The basic frame of mind of the godly man should be *calm, contented gratitude and praise*. Anything else is a reproach against God. Restlessness and dissatisfaction are basic evils of the flesh. *“Keep your life free from covetousness, and be CONTENT with such things as ye have”* (Heb. 13:5) is a *command* of God for the free development of the spiritual mind –a clear, plain *command* – that will loom to far greater importance at the judgment-seat than it does today. And the Apostle concludes this portion of his exhortation –

“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

As he says in the next chapter in relation to the partaking of the memorial supper – *“Let a man examine himself.”* Let him take the searching spotlight of the Spirit-Word and turn its full glare upon the inner workings of his fleshly mind. What he sees if he looks carefully will move him to exclaim with Paul, *“Who shall deliver me from this body of death?”* But if the whole counsel of Scripture is eagerly and unreservedly accepted and applied, he will be able to also say with the apostle –

“I strain forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus . . . I can do all things THROUGH CHRIST WHICH STRENGTHENETH ME” (Phil. 3:14; 4:13).

(Taken from “Be Ye Transformed” Volume 2 Pages 276-279 by Bro. G. Growcott)