

Beware of Falling! (1 Corinthians 10:12)

A Hard Lesson in the Bathroom

My wife and I were staying at a nice hotel for her 50th birthday. Lori warned me repeatedly about how slick the tub floor was. There was no mat, so Lori offered to put a towel down for my safety. (She even dared to suggest that I was accident-prone.)

I responded, “It doesn’t seem slick to me. I haven’t had any problems. Trust me, I’m not going to fall.”

I took multiple showers over three days without any problem. Still, Lori kept warning me, but I insisted there was nothing to worry about.

On the last night of our stay, I stepped into the tub and instantly went into “Slip ‘N Slide mode.” That floor suddenly felt like it had been coated with grease. As my legs did the splits, I banged my left shin on the tub ledge. My shin immediately swelled into a goose egg. I was in immense pain!

All I could do was blame myself. I was overly confident in my ability to stand. I underestimated the danger—and I ruined a romantic evening.

The Danger of Overconfidence

It’s easy to be overconfident in our ability to fight temptation. We give ourselves far too much credit. The apostle Paul understood this tendency, so he shared a memorable proverb:

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall” (1 Cor 10:12).

Paul concludes his discussion in 1 Corinthians 10:1–11 with the word “*therefore*.”

- The Warning: “Let him who thinks he stands” addresses the overconfident. Such believers have become “puffed up” (8:1) and assume to “have knowledge” (8:2, 10).
- The Command: Paul warns that those who think they “stand” are in danger of a “fall.” He commands them to “take heed”—to beware and watch out (cf. 3:10; 8:9).
- The Vulnerability: The sins facing the Corinthians included idolatry, immorality, ingratitude, and testing God (10:6–10). No believer is above such sins. Like Israel in the wilderness, we’re prone to “crave evil things” (10:6).

To “fall” is to come under God’s discipline and judgment. In Israel’s case, that often meant physical death (10:8–10). Likewise, some Corinthians who abused the Lord’s Supper experienced severe discipline—even death (11:27–30). Ultimately, persistent failure can leave a believer “disqualified” or “unapproved” at the judgment seat of Christ (9:27).

From the Mountain Top to the Broom Tree

If we think we’re standing tall, we’re being set up by the devil to be knocked down. Those on the mountain top are often the most vulnerable to attack.

Consider Elijah. One day he stood on the mountain, daring to defy the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18). The next day, he ran for his life across Israel, fleeing the threats of wicked Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 19). One magnificent, climactic victory—then dismal defeat. Before long, he was sitting beneath a broom tree, disillusioned, discouraged, and undone. Staggering courage had shrunk into cowardice overnight.

God found him there and asked, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1 Kgs 19:9). God expected His prophet to be standing.

Are you standing on top of the world spiritually right now? Do you feel a quiet confidence in your past success, your present ability? If so, take this to heart: a fall could happen to you. You’re not beyond failure.

Great beginnings don’t guarantee good endings. Most biblical leaders who fell—Moses, Samson, Solomon—faltered in the second half of their lives, not the first. If you’re midlife or in your twilight years, don’t assume you’re immune. Satan loves to pick off believers in their home stretch.

That’s why Paul’s warning matters: “Let the one who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12). Ignoring it will cost you more than a bruised shin or a damaged ego.

Ask God to keep you humble. Acknowledge your continual need for His sustaining grace. Tell Him today how desperately you need Him. Don’t be more confident in your footing than you are in His grace.

Timeless Truth: Our greatest danger is often the confidence that we could never fall.

