

1st Corinthians Chapter 10

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Introduction:

In chapter eight, Paul had answered the question of the Corinthian believers eating meat sacrifice to idols. In chapter nine, he answered inquiries concerning his apostleship and closed with a description of the self-denial which he exercised in order to secure his prize. He included a statement that despite his efforts, there was a possibility of his coming disqualified from winning his race.

So now two prominent ideas are explored:

- 1) the necessity of self-control and
- 2) the danger of falling away himself.

He next draws analogies from Israel's past:

ALL ISRAEL HAD SPECIAL HELP BUT MOST OF ISRAEL DISPLEASED GOD

(1) I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground.

- While many of Paul's readers were Gentiles, they were still expected to be familiar with the sacred history of Israel.
- There are great lessons in Israel's past -- particularly the time **in the wilderness**. The text lists five ways they were blessed by God:

#1 ALL of them **were guided by** the **cloud** that moved ahead of them.

The LORD went ahead of them. He guided them during the day with a pillar of cloud, and He

provided light at night with a pillar of fire. This allowed them to travel by day or by night. (Exodus 13:21 NLT)

God provided relief from the burning sun, guidance about when to travel and when to remain located. At night the cloud turned to a pillar of fire, providing lighting.

Other summaries are Exodus 14:19; Numbers 9:15-22, 14:14; Nehemiah 9:19.

#2 ALL of them walked through the sea on dry ground.

Then Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the LORD opened up a path through the water with a strong east wind. The wind blew all that night, turning the seabed into dry land. So the people of Israel walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on each side! (Exodus 14:21-22 NLT)

The crossing was mud-free for God's people and their animals. There were no hours of mud cleanup after the crossing.

(2) In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses.

- **#3. ALL of them were baptized as followers of Moses.**
- Paul's readers understood what it meant to be **baptized** into Christ. For Israel it was at the beginning of a long spiritual trip. As Israel began their journey, they experienced a wall of water on each side and a **cloud** above. So Paul describes Israel as **baptized as followers of Moses.**

When the people of Israel saw the mighty power that the LORD had unleashed against the Egyptians, they were filled with awe before Him.

They put their faith in the LORD and in His servant Moses. (Exodus 14:31 NLT)

Baptism in the Red Sea was to Israel a *death* to Egypt and the *birth* of a new covenant.

This **baptism** into Moses compares with our **baptism** into Christ.

1. It stands at the beginning of long journey to a land of liberty.
2. It is a burial in water like Israel experienced.
3. It is turning our backs on sin, just as Israel turned their backs on Egypt.
4. It is a birth into a new covenant.

(3) All of them ate the same spiritual food, (4) 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.

- Israel ate **food** that was supernaturally provided each morning by the Lord, so Paul calls it **spiritual food**. It was supernaturally provided, but many in Israel complained about it. Numbers 21:5. It certainly didn't make them **spiritual**.

#4. ALL of them ate the same food. They couldn't grow crops while moving regularly, so God provided food for His people.

- **Water** is always a need where there are people. There was no opportunity to dig wells, so the Lord provided **water** for His people as well as **food**.

#5. ALL of them drank water from sources provided by **Christ the Rock**. They needed water every day, and so wherever they went, **Christ** provided **water** for them. If the daily provision of **water** was recorded each time it

happened, the record would be larger than the Bible, but several events are recorded. Here is one:

At the LORD's command, the whole community of Israel left the wilderness of Sin and moved from place to place. Eventually they camped at Rephidim, but there was no water there for the people to drink. (2) So once more the people complained against Moses. "Give us water to drink!" they demanded. "Quiet!" Moses replied. "Why are you complaining against me? And why are you testing the LORD?" (3) But tormented by thirst, they continued to argue with Moses. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Are you trying to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?"

(4) Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What should I do with these people? They are ready to stone me!" (5) The LORD said to Moses, "Walk out in front of the people. Take your staff, the one you used when you struck the water of the Nile, and call some of the elders of Israel to join you. (6) I will stand before you on the rock at Mount Sinai. Strike the rock, and water will come gushing out. Then the people will be able to drink." So Moses struck the rock as he was told, and water gushed out as the elders looked on. Exodus 17:1-6 NLT

(5) Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

- Receiving God's five blessings did not save the average Israelite. They died without reaching the Promised Land.

"When the LORD heard your complaining, He became very angry. So He solemnly swore, 'Not one of you from this wicked generation will live to see the good land I swore to give your ancestors, except

Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see this land because he has followed the LORD completely. I will give to him and his descendants some of the very land he explored during his scouting mission.' "

And the LORD was also angry with me because of you. He said to me, 'Moses, not even you will enter the Promised Land! Instead, your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will lead the people into the land. Encourage him, for he will lead Israel as they take possession of it. (Deuteronomy 1:34-38 NLT)

DON'T CRAVE EVIL

(6) These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, (7) 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."

- The average member of the nation had a **craving** to do **evil** instead of heart-driven desire to be righteous. Their hearts were not in tune with the melody from heaven. They **craved** the food of the Egypt they had left behind:

He rained down meat as thick as dust -- birds as plentiful as the sand on the seashore! He caused the birds to fall within their camp and all around their tents. The people ate their fill. He gave them what they craved. But before they satisfied their craving, while the meat was yet in their mouths, the anger of God rose against them, and He killed their strongest men. He struck down the finest of Israel's young men. (Psalms 78:27-31 NLT)

- Some of them **worshipped** idols.

The people got up early the next morning to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. After this, they celebrated with feasting and drinking,

and they indulged in pagan revelry. The LORD told Moses, "Quick! Go down the mountain! Your people whom you brought from the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. How quickly they have turned away from the way I commanded them to live! They have melted down gold and made a calf, and they have bowed down and sacrificed to it. They are saying, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.'"

(Exodus 32:6-8 NLT)

Paul was writing to believers who were being attracted to dinners where idols were worshiped.

(8) And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day.

- This says **23,000 in one day**. Numbers 25: 9 says 24,000 *total*. Here is the core of one offence:

While the Israelites were camped at Acacia Grove, some of the men defiled themselves by having sexual relations with local Moabite women. These women invited them to attend sacrifices to their gods, so the Israelites feasted with them and worshiped the gods of Moab. In this way, Israel joined in the worship of Baal of Peor, causing the LORD's anger to blaze against His people. The LORD issued the following command to Moses: "Seize all the ringleaders and execute them before the LORD in broad daylight, so His fierce anger will turn away from the people of Israel." (Numbers 25:1-4 NLT)

In this Numbers quotation, we can see that **sexual immorality** is an outgrowth of idolatry.

DON'T TEST CHRIST OR GRUMBLE

(9) Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites.

- The member of the Godhead that dealt with Israel directly was **Christ**, so they were putting **Christ** to the **test**:

... and they began to speak against God and Moses. "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?" they complained. "There is nothing to eat here and nothing to drink. And we hate this horrible manna!" So the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people, and many were bitten and died. (Numbers 21:5-6 NLT)

(10) And don't grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death.

- **Grumbling** followed by **death** may have happened more than once, but here is a sample from Numbers 16:

But the very next morning the whole community of Israel began muttering again against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the LORD's people!" (42) As the community gathered to protest against Moses and Aaron, they turned toward the Tabernacle and saw that the cloud had covered it, and the glorious presence of the LORD appeared.

(43) Moses and Aaron came and stood in front of the Tabernacle, (44) and the LORD said to Moses, (45) "Get away from all these people so that I can instantly destroy them!" But Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground.

(46) And Moses said to Aaron, "Quick, take an incense burner and place burning coals on it from the altar. Lay incense on it, and carry it out among the people to purify them and make them right with the LORD. The LORD's anger is blazing against them

-- the plague has already begun." (47) Aaron did as Moses told him and ran out among the people.

The plague had already begun to strike down the people, but Aaron burned the incense and purified the people. (48) He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague stopped. (49) But 14,700 people died in that plague, in addition to those who had died in the affair involving Korah.

Numbers 16:41-49 NLT

(11) These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age.

- There may have been many other stories that were not **written**. Some facts don't appear in print until David's time when he wrote the Psalms. But the stories that are **written** are for our benefit. They are a warning to **us**.
- We live at the **end of the age**. Hebrews says it this way:

If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But now, once for all time, He has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by His own death as a sacrifice. (Hebrews 9:26 NLT)

(12) If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall.

- The citizens of Israel **fell** to just a few sins and missed entering the promised land. We must pay attention to their examples and not be tripped up.

(13) The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you can endure.

- **God** limits our testing to the extent that we can handle because trials are for our strengthening, not our destruction. He shows us a **way out** of our **temptation** so we are not overwhelmed.

(14) So, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols.

(15) You are reasonable people. Decide for yourselves if what I am saying is true.

- The self-styled **strong** Christians at Corinth mingled freely among **idol** worshippers. This is dangerous conduct.

OUR IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

(16) When we bless the cup at the Lord's Table, aren't we sharing in the blood of Christ? And when we break the bread, aren't we sharing in the body of Christ?

- **Blessing the cup** is **sharing in the blood of Christ**.
Breaking the bread is **sharing in His body**. This **sharing** identifies us with **the body of Christ**.

(17) And though we are many, we all eat from one loaf of bread, showing that we are one body.

- The **one loaf** is a demonstration that the partakers are a united **body**. Though there may be more than one loaf present at communion time, it is still one emblem.

(18) Think about the people of Israel. Weren't they united by eating the sacrifices at the altar?

- In speaking of the sacrifices, Moses wrote:

You must eat these in the presence of the LORD your God at the place He will choose. Eat them there with your children, your servants, and the Levites who live in your towns, celebrating in the presence of the LORD your God in all you do. (Deuteronomy 12:18 NLT)

(19) What am I trying to say? Am I saying that food offered to idols has some significance, or that idols are real gods?

- Paul draws yet another illustration from **Israel** of old. Unity is seen as they **ate** from the **sacrifices at the altar**. Just as partaking of the Lord's Supper speaks of fellowship with the Lord and just as the Israelites had fellowship with the Lord in their sacrifices, so eating at an idol's feast in the temple speaks of fellowship with **idols**.

(20) No, not at all. I am saying that these sacrifices are offered to demons, not to God. And I don't want you to participate with demons.

- Idols are not just inanimate being like toys. **Demons** are behind them, giving the power.

(21) You cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and from the cup of demons, too. You cannot eat at the Lord's Table and at the table of demons, too.

- Outward, some believers were participating in both **tables**, but one cannot do that in reality. The reason comes next:

DON'T AROUSE THE LORD TO JEALOUSY

(22) What? Do we dare to rouse the Lord's jealousy? Do you think we are stronger than He is?

- To worship a demon and then worship the **Lord** creates in Him a rightful **jealousy**.

(23) You say, "I am allowed to do anything"

-- but not everything is good for you.

You say, "I am allowed to do anything"

-- but not everything is beneficial.

- Some believers may counter that they are **allowed to do anything** they want to but Paul points out that their choice may not be **good** for them -- or **beneficial** for them.
- In his next sentence, Paul wants them to broaden their criteria for making decisions to include other people:

BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE RESPONSE OF OTHERS

(24) Don't be concerned for your own good but for the good of others. (25) So you may eat any meat that is sold

in the marketplace without raising questions of conscience. (26) For "the earth is the LORD's, and everything in it." (27) If someone who isn't a believer asks you home for dinner, accept the invitation if you want to. Eat whatever is offered to you without raising questions of conscience.

- Eating meat sacrificed to idols and then sold in the **marketplace** is different than dinner at the temple.
- Broaden your interests and consider what impact your conduct may have on others. Believers know the **earth** and **everything** in it belongs to the **Lord**. If someone invites you to dinner, don't ask about where the **meat** came from.

(28) (But suppose someone tells you, "This meat was offered to an idol." Don't eat it, out of consideration for the conscience of the one who told you. (29) It might not be a matter of conscience for you, but it is for the other person.) For why should my freedom be limited by what someone else thinks?

- If someone is testing you, then **don't eat** the **meat** because of *their* **conscience**.

(30) If I can thank God for the food and enjoy it, why should I be condemned for eating it?

- J. W. McGarvey writes:

In theory, Paul sided with the strong, but in sympathy, he was one with the weak; yet he did not permit them to exercise a vexatious tyranny over him because of their scruples.

(31) So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (32) Don't give offense to Jews or Gentiles or the church of God.

- The real goal of the believer is to bring **glory to God**.
- The believer exercising his or her freedom must consider the effects of their decisions on three groups:

1. The **Jewish** community. Members of the nation of Israel.
2. The **Gentile** community. The unconverted locals.
3. The **church** community. This would be Jews who accepted Jesus as their Messiah and Gentiles who may have been worshipers of **God** before accepting Jesus as their Lord.

(33) I, too, try to please everyone in everything I do. I don't just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved.

- Paul has set the pace for self-sacrifice. His goal is the **salvation** of as **many** as possible.

Because of an improper chapter beginning,
1st Corinthians 11:1 actually belongs here
and we show it.

(11:1) And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.

- The rules that please God are a little complex when it comes to freedom and eating meat, and Paul urges ~~is his~~ readers to **imitate** him as he **imitates Christ**.