

# CCLEB SERMON NOTES



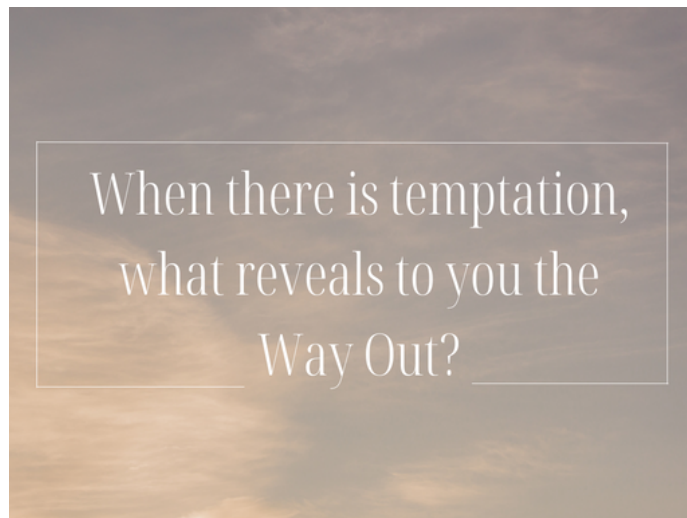
SUNDAY AUGUST 18, 2024  
1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13

PASTOR DUANE MILLER

## TEMPTATION: WHERE IS THE WAY OUT?



We are going to read **verses 1-14**. Two comments before we read. This passage takes some sudden twists and turns, and we will purpose to explain some of that. As we read this ask yourself the question, “When there is temptation, what reveals to you the Way Out?”.

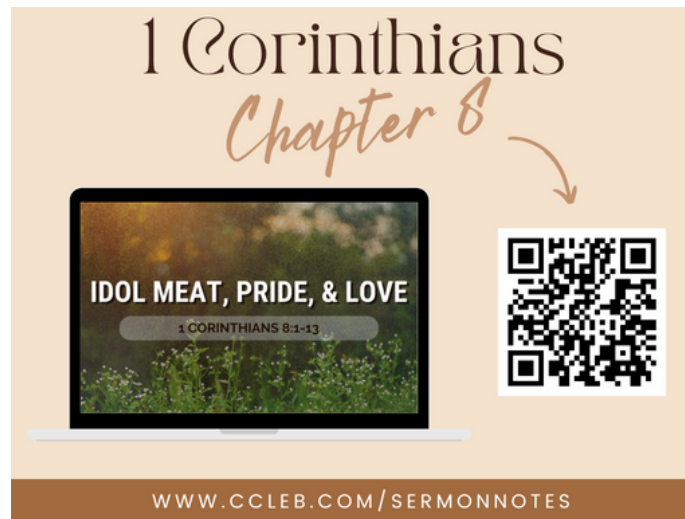


I remember as an 8 year old child being in Meramec Caverns in Missouri. It was a hot summer day, and we were camping, my dad had left for the day to attend a missions conference in Saint Louis, and my mom and my older siblings and I went on a guided tour of Meramec Caverns. As we stepped into the caverns, I remember the sudden change in temperature from the hot Missouri July sun to the 55 degree damp coldness of the cave. I carried an orange flashlight with size D batteries in it, and we followed our guide deep into the cave, passing stalagmites and other wet creepy things. And at some point in the tour, in one of the large cavern rooms, the guide instructed us to turn all of our lights off. We did. He told us to wave our hands in front of our face and see if we could see them, I couldn't see my hand. I couldn't see anything.

I could hear my brothers and mom talking, but I couldn't see anyone. Worse than the absolute darkness was that I could not see the way out, which is what really mattered to this young scared 8 year old. And I could not see the way out until the light of our flashlights came back on and revealed the path.

When you, me, us, are in the darkness of temptation, what reveals the way out?

We are in a three chapter section of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, Chapters 8-10, where Paul is addressing a question from the Corinthian believers in Corinth related to whether they can eat meat offered to idols or not? And this issue had divided the Corinthians. If you have not listened to the previous teaching in this section, I would encourage you to do so.



In 1st Century Corinth, the central market where the meat market was located, was surrounded by temples and alters to their many gods. Multiple times per month there were festivals to worship the many gods. And as animals were offered to these gods on alters, what meat was left was then sold in the meat market. This was the main source of meat in Corinth, meat offered to idols.



Some of the believers in Corinth felt free to eat meat offered to idols. Others, with a more sensitive consciences did not. In the end of chapter 8 Paul encourages the believers in Corinth to decide about eating this meat, not based on what is best for themselves, but what is best for others. This is the principal that Paul teaches in **Chapter 8, verse 9**.

So in essence Paul is instructing the believers to give up their freedoms, or for the Corinthians, their right to eat meat offered to idols, if it is going to cause another brother or sister in Christ to stumble. Now this is dangerous territory here for Paul.

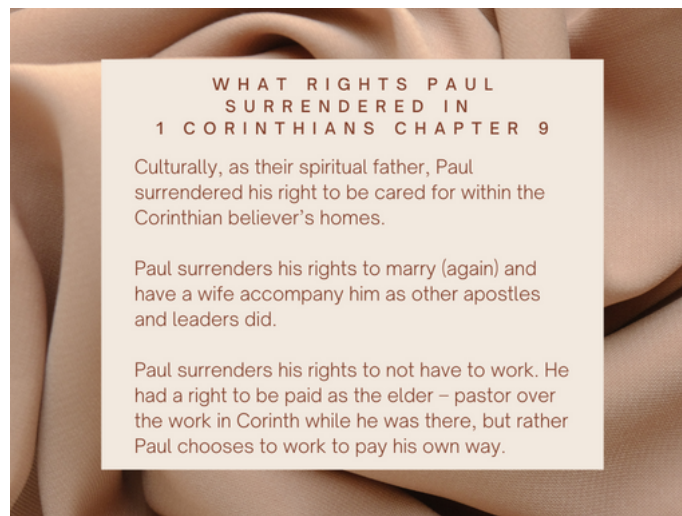
We are talking about food after all, and it is hard to separate people from food they like. Paul just asked the Corinthian meat lovers to give up their meat.

Paul knew that giving things up that you like is really hard. Hard for the Corinthians, hard for me, hard for you. Thus to encourage surrendering things Paul in **8:13** verbally commits himself to this principle and leads us in the process. This is Paul not just teaching the principle but demonstrating the principle by doing the very thing he instructed himself. Thus his words were reinforced by his actions.

Now for those of us who don't live in a culture or time where meat is offered to idols, the broader principle at play here is to surrender your rights - surrender your freedoms that could cause a fellow believer to stumble, and to do so out of love for others for the sake of the gospel.

And to further reinforce this principle of surrendering ones rights, Paul then gives the Corinthians more examples in chapter 9 of how he, Paul himself, limits or surrenders his freedoms - out of love for others- for the sake of the gospel.

In chapter 9 we see Paul surrenders his rights:



These are the things that Paul used as examples from his own life to show the Corinthian believers what a life of surrendering your rights looks like when it is best for others and the gospel.

Even if we don't understand all the cultural meanings of the things that Paul surrendered for the sake of others, it is clear from his writings, that for Paul it was all about the gospel - the gospel is the motivator and the gospel is love. These verses in Chapter 9 support this: **1 Corinthians 9:19-23**

And this theme continues on in **1 Corinthians 10:33**. Read that last line out loud, "I do what is best...". The phrase, "that many may be saved" i.e. "the gospel" is the motivator for Paul's loving actions".

Paul then adds another motivator for the Corinthians to resist the temptation of anything coming from selfish or evil desires. Paul uses lessons from Israel's history as a warning to the Corinthians to not give in to temptation.

In **verse 1a** Paul says "I don't want you to forget". This is Paul deliberately challenging their thinking. Again, as you have heard me say, "your thinking directs your actions". Change your thinking, and it changes your actions. Paul wants to challenge the thinking of the Corinthians by reminding them about real historical events that they can learn from.

Paul is referencing here several different events surrounding the Hebrew exodus from slavery in Egypt and their early life in the wilderness. The Old Testament references for these passage are listed in the sermon notes.

Now before we look at the biblical historical events Paul is referencing please note that in **verse 1** Paul uses the phrase “our ancestors”. Paul is writing here to primarily non Jewish readers in Corinth who are not of Jewish descent, so why does he say “our ancestors”? Paul’s use of this phrase tells us that these words are to inform the reader that Paul is not talking about “physical ancestry” but rather “spiritual ancestry.” For example, all believers in Christ have a “spiritual” ancestry that includes Father Abraham..

The rest of **verses 1-4** include the biblical historical events of our spiritual ancestors that serve as a warning to the Corinthians and us to not give into temptation.

**Verse 1b** (the cloud that moved ahead of them and guided them was LORD - this was the Cloud of Shekinah Glory), and the sea they walked through on dry ground was the “Reed Sea” - Moses parting the Reed Sea - some of you know that story.

In **verse 2** Paul uses the word “baptized”. Most of us connect this word “baptism” to spiritual water baptism. In contemporary Greek literature one of the ways this word was used was to describe a new boat leaving dry dock, sliding into and dipping under the water and then floating.

“Spiritual” water baptism that we connect with, is where one who has made a decision to put their faith and trust in Christ, who then is a new creature, they publicly announces to the world that they are a now a follower of Jesus Christ by being baptized in water, their life and identity is now in Christ. In God’s timing, baptism like we are talking about here is happening later this afternoon at 2pm.



**Verses 3-4** Note here, consistent with “spiritual ancestry”, and spiritual water baptism”, Paul now mentions “spiritual food” and “spiritual drinking water” and “spiritual rock”.

And what it is that connects the “spiritual ancestry, spiritual water baptism, spiritual food, spiritual drinking water and spiritual rock” - is Christ.

This imagery in **verse 4** of Christ being the “spiritual rock” that followed behind them is interesting.

The rabbinical tradition is that the “rock” that provided water literally “followed” the Israelites the rest of their journey as a constant source of water. There is no evidence of the rock physically following the Israelites in scripture, however it is clear that Jesus Christ who is YHWH - LORD (all caps), Jehovah, is the one who provided the Israelites life sustaining water

- thus in essence “following” them. Western readers get thrown off by the idea of Christ “following” them as expressed in this passage. This may be unrelated however, it was common in ancient middle eastern shepherding, that shepherds directed the sheep as much from the rear of the flock as from the front of the flock. From the rear of the flock the shepherd could see the whole flock. From the rear shepherds used simple directional voice commands that the sheep obeyed. And the Shepherds also used well place rocks from slings to redirect errant sheep by slinging a rock past the sheep which redirected them the direction the shepherd wanted them to go.

One verse that perhaps supports this notion of Christ being behind the sheep, following them, is **Isaiah 52:12**. Many consider this verse as a reference to the Exodus Pillar of Cloud that stood behind the Israelites and between them and the advancing Egyptian army in **Exodus 14** - part of the narrative that Paul is referencing here in **1 Corinthians 10**.

Paul ends the analogy of the Exodus narrative with the chilling words in **verse 5**. Sobering right?

So what is Paul’s intended message from these first five verses to the Corinthians who simply asked if they can eat meat offered to idols?

Parallels between the Corinthian believers and the Israelites I Corinthians 10:1-5	
ISRAELITES	CORINTHIANS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Captivity in Egypt</li> <li>• Delivered from captivity by the blood of the Passover lamb</li> <li>• Passed through the waters of the Reed Sea</li> <li>• The cloud of God’s Glory led in front and protected from behind</li> <li>• God fed them food and water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Captivity in sin</li> <li>• Delivered from captivity by the blood of Jesus</li> <li>• Passed through the waters of Spiritual baptism</li> <li>• The Holy Spirit leads and protects</li> <li>• God fed them spiritual food and spiritual water</li> </ul>

Follow these parallels between the Corinthian believers and Israelites. The Corinthians, like their spiritual ancestors the Israelites, were delivered from captivity under the blood of the Passover Lamb. Captivity being sin, the blood of the Passover lamb being Jesus. The Corinthians, like the Israelites then passed through the waters of baptism, for the Israelites it was the Reed Sea, for the Corinthians it was the spiritual waters of baptism after their conversion. The Israelites experienced the cloud of God’s Glory leading them in front, and protected them from behind. The Corinthian believers also experienced God leading and protecting, not through a cloud, but through God’s Spirit. The Israelites were given food and water by God, Corinthians were fed spiritual food and spiritual water by Paul and others. In essence all the Israelites had to do was follow and obey, everything else was taken care of by God. The Corinthians too, only had to follow and obey, God takes care of everything else.

Paul’s warning to the Corinthians citing these stories is that salvation and baptism and God’s presence in front and behind, and God’s provision of spiritual food and water, “does not”, as commentator Keener writes, “render one invulnerable to falling into temptation”. Think bodies scattered in the wilderness. In Old Testament culture and geography the “wilderness” is where one ends up dead because they left the “right path.”

In **verse 6** Paul reinforces the warning. To have an idea of what “crave evil things” means - the NIV says “set your heart on” or NKJV say “lust after” evil things.

So these stories Paul is referencing from Israel's history are warnings. But note here now Paul characterizes the actions of the Corinthians who want to eat meat offered to idols as "lusting after evil, craving evil". So why would Paul be so against the Corinthian believers lusting after evil or craving evil? Well first it is because Paul loves the Corinthians - in **verse 1** he calls them "dear brothers and sisters" and Paul wants what is best for them. "Lusting after", or "craving evil" results in bad things, trouble, injury, destruction, sometimes death.

So perhaps Paul is saying to the Corinthians that their lust or craving of idol meat, that Paul has characterized as "evil" is going to result in trouble injury and destruction, and perhaps even death. This is not just a warning for themselves but in but in context, for others. Or more broadly applied, how believers crave or lust after evil, related to not surrendering their rights out of love for others, can result in "trouble, injury and destruction, even death for themselves and others.

Paul reinforces what "trouble, injury and destruction" from selfish desires looked like in **verses 7-10**, let's read **verses 7-8**.

**Verse 7** is a "loose" quote of **Exodus 32:6**. 3,000 died at the end of that story. In **Verse 8** Paul references another Israelites wilderness story where 23,000 died because of sexual immorality. This reference by Paul is more difficult to source in the Old Testament as it could be a reference to multiple stories, given that the 23,000 who died doesn't exactly match any one story - I've included the potential Old Testament passages in the sermon notes.

In **verses 9 -10** Paul references the story in **Numbers 21:4-9** whereas a result of the Israelites complaining the Lord sent a plague of snakes. Guzik says of this, "their complaining hearts show them to be self-focused and more concerned with their own desires than God's glory - the same issues causing trouble with the Corinthian Christians, who will not yield their right to eat meat sacrificed to idols for the sake of another brother. The idea of "putting Christ to the test" is that our complaining hearts reveal our desires. "Testing Christ" by not surrendering our evil desires is that eventually Christ will release us to our unchecked desires and the "trouble, injury and destruction" they bring. If we don't surrender evil desires, Christ will in love and wisdom allow us to experience the destruction they bring, in hopes then at rock bottom we will repent and surrender. "Repentance and surrender" of evil desires that harm us, others and the gospel is Christ's goal.

Paul summarizes this in **verse 11**.

And then in **verse 12** Paul gives us warning about how "pride" can make this all worse. This is Paul echoing the well known proverb, **Proverbs 16:18**.

So let's apply this. So you're Corinthian believer, it's the day after a pagan festival, and after a hard day of work you walk home with another Christian coworker on your normal route through the central market, and there hanging in front of you is a beautiful, lovely piece of meat. Meat that you know was probably offered to idols. And instantly you find yourself in the darkness of temptation of selfish desires, desires that when acted upon you know could bring "trouble, injury and destruction" to you and maybe your Christian coworker. What do you do? When there is temptation, what reveals to you the way out?

God and Paul both knew this scenario, and many many others similar scenarios of selfish temptation, were very likely in the life of believers then and now. Believers who God called into Christian community, to be a church, to bless and edify others, not to cause them to stumble or destroy them. And since God knew this would happen, would God abandon them in the darkness of their temptation, like me in the cave with the light off unable to see my way out, or would God show them the way out? He shows them a way out. **Verse 13**

Here's the key. God's word is true. In His faithfulness and love He will always show you a way out, he said it, its based on his character. The first step in seeing the way out from temptation is not in the scenario where the temptation rears its ugly head.

Rather the first step is in surrendering your temptations before, here and now. You know what your desires and temptations are, if you want to see the way out that God promises, it starts with surrendering your desires before the temptation happens.

Before the close of this essay of **chapters 8-10** on eating meat offered to idols, there is one more very real warning in **verses 14-33** Paul gives, and its regarding idols and demons.. and you'll just have to come back next week to hear that taught by Pastor Miles.

Temptation to hold onto your rights and desires is every believer's battle. You are not alone. We all need each other's prayers and encouragement in this. The battle and the surrender is now. What is your motivation to do this? Your motivation is love for others, for the gospel, and Paul's warning about "trouble, injury and destruction". Read **chapter 10 verse 33** again, out loud. I encourage you to pause in silence for you to individually surrender your rights and desires to God.

# SUPPLEMENTAL

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## NOTES:

**Regarding Corinth being divided over meat:** Harmful divisions is a theme in most of what Paul addresses in his letter.

**10:1 Reed Sea:** The KJV errantly translated it as “red” Sea and then it became tradition. That was an error. It translates at “Reed” Sea.

**10: 1-4 These verses refers Old Testament accounts:**

Exodus 12 - the Israelites leaving Egypt and walking under the blood of the Passover lamb that applied on the door frames as they left their slavery homes for the last time;

Exodus 13:21 (the cloud that God inhabited that led them and protected them);

Exodus 14:21-31 the crossing of the Reed Sea on dry land;

Exodus 16:35 God providing Manna - food;

Exodus 17:6 God providing water.

**10:4 “follow”.** Another passage that references “follow” is Psalm 23:6 “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me...”

**10:8** Potential Old Testament passages that Paul is referencing 23,000 deaths caused by sexual immorality are: Exodus 32:6, Numbers 25:9

See David Guzik’s comments: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-corinthians-10/>