

1 Corinthians 10

10:1” For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. ² They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³ They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴ and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.”

Paul starts this chapter by giving the Corinthians the history of the Hebrew nation coming out of Egypt. When I say that history is boring, Mike quotes a former historian, George Santayana “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Can you guess where this history lesson is going to lead us? Paul is going to take them and us back to the question “Is it ok to eat meat which has been sacrificed to idols.” Remember Paul didn’t write the letter as chapters and verses.

Remember in Chapter 8, Paul said that “Idols are nothing.” It should be okay to eat food sacrificed to idols but not if it causes a weaker believer to stumble. In Chapter 9, Paul said that we all have rights but if my rights get in the way of leading someone to Christ or cause another believer to stumble then you should give up what is your right in favor of loving the other person.

What did Jesus’ say was the most important commandment and the one that was slightly lower than the first? Love God with all your heart, soul and mind. Love others as you love yourself. (Matthew 22:37-39)

Back to the history lesson, Paul says that everyone in the Hebrew nation was under the cloud and passed through the sea. What/who was the cloud? (Exodus 13:21-22) God or God’s Shekinah glory. We also know that Moses parted the Red Sea with God’s help. Paul connects this amazing event to baptism. Dining in an idol’s temple is an act of demon worship that Christians should shun. Christians should learn from Israel’s bad example that they must avoid idolatry.

Holman New Testament Commentary - 1 & 2 Corinthians:

Crossing of the Red Sea

Baptism

The Jews were slaves to the Egyptians

We were slaves to sin.

They passed through the waters of the Red Sea.

We pass through the waters of baptism.

A new life was waiting for them on the other side.

A new life is waiting for us on the other side of baptism.

God saved them because He loved them.

God saves us because He loves us.

God had a special land promised for them.

God has a special land promised for us.

In verses 3 and 4, Paul says, “*They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink*”. What was the spiritual food? (Exodus 16:4-5) Manna. What was the spiritual drink? (Exodus 17:6) The water that flowed from a rock.

What spiritual food and drink do we and the Corinthians take part in Christ’s name? communion

Paul ties Jesus to the Exodus of the Hebrew nation from Egypt. He says that Jesus was that water. Where have we heard that Jesus is the water? John 7:37-39 “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.” or John 4 - The Samaritan woman at the well.

Paul points out that even God’s chosen people failed Him and were scattered in the wilderness. How many of the adults from the Exodus made it into the Promised Land? 2 (Joshua and Caleb)

6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.” 8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9 We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. 10 And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.

Paul gives them 5 examples and an praise.

In verse 6 and 7, Paul is warning the Corinthians not to fall into the same trap that the Hebrews did when they left Egypt. In Chapter 32:6, Moses stayed on the mountain with God and the Jews partied in his absence and worshiped a Golden Calf.

In verse 8, Paul continues with what happened during the Golden Calf incident. Paul says that 23,000 died. The number that died in the Golden Calf incident was 3000 so Paul may be referring to another day during the exodus. Numbers 25 tells about a day when the Israelites were indulged in sexual immorality with Moabite women and 24,000 died during a plague.

In verse 9, Paul warns them not to test the Lord or Christ. He is again using an example from the exodus recorded in Number 21:4-9. This reference describes the Israelites complaining against God and Moses. It says that *“the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died.”*

This should also be a warning to those that believe in the prosperity gospel. If bad things happened to God’s chosen people then bad things can happen to anyone.

“11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. 12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! 13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

In verse 11, Paul says that the bad things recorded in the Bible are put there as a warning. Fortunately for us, the good examples also help keep us on the right path because we know what amazing things God has in store for us.

In verse 12, Paul reminds them to stand firm. In our study of Satan, we studied about the Full Armor of God. In Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul tells us to put on the Full Armor of God so that we can stand or stand firm against the temptations of Satan.

We used verse 13 in our study of how to defend ourselves from Satan. We need to remember that God is in control of everything, even Satan. Verse 13 tells us that there have been no new temptations *“except what is common to mankind”*. Sexual immorality existed when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden. They didn’t have the internet but it was still there.

The remainder of the verse says how faithful God is. *“He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”* Remember it says tempted beyond what you can bear and not give you trials beyond what you can bear. During our temptations, we should always look for and take advantage of the way out that God provides.

“Barclay says the word for a way of escape is really a mountain pass, with the idea of an army being surrounded by the enemy, and then suddenly seeing an escape route to safety. It isn't necessarily an easy way!”

“14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.”

In verse 14, Paul sums up what he has been saying for 3 chapters. “*Flee from idolatry.*” What Paul is saying is go to the butcher and get your meat. Don’t go to the pagan temples to get it.

In verse 15, Paul says what Pastor Brian says most weeks during his sermon. “You are intelligent people, make sure what I am preaching makes sense and when in doubt check the Word of God.”

In verses 16 and 17, Paul draws communion into his argument regarding food sacrificed to idols. For our communion, the bread represents the body of Christ and the cup represents the blood of Christ. We hold these sacraments to be holy and meaningful. Isn’t it possible that those that participate in the idol worship hold their rituals to have similar meaning?

He points out that in both kinds of worship there is a form of fellowship.

“In the thinking of that part of the ancient world, to eat at the same table with someone indicated friendship and fellowship with that person. Since you ate of one bread, that made you one body, because you both shared of the same food at the same table. So to eat at the table of a pagan temple restaurant was not as innocent as it seemed.” (Guzik)

“18 Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? 19 Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons. 22 Are we trying to arouse the Lord’s jealousy? Are we stronger than he?”

In these verses, Paul goes back to Jewish history. The food was sacrificed on the altar by the priests and then it was eaten by the priests. Chapters 6 and 7 of the book of Leviticus go into great detail on how the food is to be sacrificed.

In verse 19, Paul wants to reiterate that idols are still nothing. Just as the act of baptism does not save you. It is an outward expression of what is in your heart and mind. This same thing applies to idol worship. The idol is nothing but if you are participating in the idol worship then you are showing others that it is important to you.

In our study of Satan, we learned that Satan is doing his best to draw our focus and worship away from God. Paul says that if you are participating in idol worship then you are worshipping with demons and Satan is winning.

In verses 21 and 22, Paul reiterates two facts that we should know:

Matthew 6:24 says, *“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”* Paul is saying the same thing in these verses except he is substituting idols for money. Read Exodus 20:5 says, *“You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.”* Paul goes back to the 10 Commandments and points out that our God is a jealous God. No idols allowed! Paul gives them a Joshua moment. Joshua 24:15 says, *“But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”* Make your decision, it is God or idols, you can't have both.

In verse 22, Paul asks, “Are we stronger than God?” “The Corinthian Christians claimed the right to eat at pagan temples because they were such strong Christians; but are they stronger than God?” (Guzik)

23 “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. 24 No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.

Paul reiterates what he has already said in this letter to the Corinthian church. Just because they have the right to do something, that doesn't make it beneficial or constructive. It all comes down to what Jesus said was the second most important commandment, Love others as you love yourself. (Matthew 22:37-39) The 10 Commandments comes down to giving up of yourself and giving of yourself to God and others.

Paul states that in verse 24, it doesn't say it is ok for some to think about themselves first. No one is to be self absorbed or self focused. Back in 1 Corinthians 2, Paul said we are to have the mind of Christ (verse 16).

25 Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, 26 for, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it."

In verse 14, Paul said "Flee from idolatry" but he was really saying even though you have the right to eat meat sacrificed to idols, go to the butcher to get your meat. Here in verse 25, he says it plainly "*Eat anything sold in the meat market without*" feeling any guilt.

Guzik says, "At the butcher shop, some of the meat was sacrificed to idols, and some of it was not. Paul says, "if you aren't going to partake of the atmosphere of the pagan temple, the meat itself doesn't matter. Don't even ask, and it won't even bother you." What if one of the brothers with a weak conscience objects, saying "Wait a minute! That meat was sacrificed to an idol!" Paul responds by quoting, The earth is LORD'S, and all its fullness (Psalm 24:1). The cow belonged to the Lord when it was on the hoof, and it belongs to the Lord now that it is on the barbecue! The food wasn't the issue, the idol worshipping atmosphere was."

27 If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. 28 But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. 29 I am referring to the other person's conscience, not yours. For why is my freedom being judged by another's conscience? 30 If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for?

In verse 27, Paul covers eating at a nonbeliever's house. If you go to a nonbeliever's house then eat what is placed before you. Use the "don't ask / don't tell" policy. In verses 28 to 30, Paul adds a hypothetical situation. The "don't ask / don't tell" policy works fine until someone tells. Once you know for a fact that the meat has been sacrificed to an idol and someone has a problem with it, then you can't eat it.

It sounds confusing but the problem is not the meat. God made the cow and God made nothing that is unclean. (See Acts 10:13-15) The problem is the person that has an issue with the meat. For their benefit, you should not eat it. Your love for others should outweigh your right to do something. Paul doesn't say it but maybe at another time, you should consider educating the person so that you are both working from the same knowledge base.

In verse 30, Paul says that if we eat a meal with thanks then we should be able to eat with a clear conscience, and not have to worry about offending someone else's conscience. In turn, they should not judge us or speak ill of you. His justification for eating with a clear conscience is that the food itself is not the problem. No one should judge another Christian who can eat meat sacrificed to idols, as long as they don't violate their own conscience or someone else's.

31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— 33 even as I try to please

everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

Paul finishes his discussion of the last 3 chapters with one final principle. “*do it all for the glory of God.*” As we have said numerous times, “It is all about Him and not about me.” I believe that we are to educate others about what the Word of God says. We are to help each other to grow. While at OC, I learned that a good supervisor removes barriers so that their employees can grow and accomplish the company’s objectives. If we “*do not cause anyone to stumble*” as Christians then we are doing the same thing. We are to build others up and help them to grow in Christ.

Paul’s goal is to lead others to Christ. He reiterates what he said in 1 Corinthians 9:22, “*To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.*”