

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 2ND - 3RD, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

EXAMPLES FOR US (1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-10)

Chapter 10 is a continuation on the subject addressed in chapters 8 & 9: what should these believers think and do regarding meat sacrificed to idols? Two principles in chapter 8:

1. An idol is really nothing, and any Christian who had this knowledge should act accordingly.
 2. Love is more important than knowledge! Even if I "know" eating meat is ok for me, if it causes my brother to stumble, I won't do it.
- Chapter 9 speaks of sacrificing our rights.

At the end of chapter 9, Paul used analogies from racing and boxing to demonstrate that we must be disciplined in the Christian life.

- We must continue to run our race to obtain the prize (Corinthians 9:24) - it's so dangerous to experience God's grace, and then get comfortable and take that grace for granted.
- To illustrate this idea, Paul speaks of the Exodus that Israel experienced from Egypt (vs.1-5).

Think of all the blessings Israel experienced as God liberated them out of their slavery in Egypt.

- The "cloud" that sheltered them from the desert sun and reminded them of God's presence (vs.1).
- The "baptism" of passing through the Red Sea onto dry ground (vs. 2).
- The provision of food and drink that God provided through supernatural, spiritual means (vs. 3-4).

Despite the experience of grace enjoyed by most of Israel, God was not pleased with most of them - so as a result, most of them died in the desert without seeing the promised land (vs. 5).

- Everyone in the Corinthian church had begun a spiritual journey with Christ and had participated in baptism and eating the "spiritual food" (the Lord's supper) - but some of them were not pleasing God.
- Some of them would not complete their journey because they didn't truly have saving faith.

WARNING 1: DO NOT DESIRE EVIL (VS.6)

Many Israelites failed in that they were unable to say "no" to their fleshly desires, and therefore they began to crave that which was evil (Exodus 16).

- The Corinthian Christians who insisted on eating meat sacrificed to idols even when it led other Christians into sin were guilty of being unable to say "no" to the desires of their flesh.
- If we feed our flesh by **always** saying "yes" to it, it will grow stronger!

WARNING 2: DO NOT BE IDOLATERS (VS.7)

Even after God had shown His power in miraculous ways to Israel, they still failed to focus on Him and started giving themselves to idolatry (Exodus 32:1-6).

- In the same way, many of these Corinthians were making idols out of their "rights" and their freedom to eat meat (even when it hurt others).
- If you can't give something up and you must consult it before following God, that thing is an idol.

WARNING 3: DO NOT INDULGE IN SEXUAL IMMORALITY (VS.8)

The root cause behind sexual immorality is an inability to say "no" to the desires of the flesh and an idolatrous heart that places far more emphasis on sex than what is appropriate.

- Israel surrendered to the temptation of sexual immorality by engaging in very salacious, perverse practices ("...rose up to play," Canaanite fertility rituals, Numbers 25).

WARNING 4: DO NOT TEST THE LORD (VS.9)

Because Israel's heart was self-focused and more concerned with their own desires than God's glory, they complained and took for granted God's salvation and provision, to which God responded with judgment (Number 21:4-9).

WARNING 5: DO NOT GRUMBLE (VS.10)

Israel complained against God and His leaders many times (Exodes 15:24) - we're not to complain against God's Word and what we might have to sacrifice.

THE WAY OF ESCAPE (1 CORINTHIANS 10:11-13)

We can learn from bad examples - we're given the history of Israel so that we might learn from their mistakes and be instructed (vs. 11).

- Because of all of this ("therefore," vs. 12), even if we think we're not capable of such wickedness, we should watch out.
- If we're selfish, self-focused, and driven by our flesh, we are in great danger of falling into the exact same sins of Israel.

But any temptation that we might face in the Christian life is "common to man" (vs. 13) - we're not victims to unique struggles that no one else has ever faced.

- Many men and women of God have faced either the same or very similar temptations, and they've found strength in the Lord to overcome them because, "God is faithful."
- Through God's strength, you can have victory.

Any temptation that comes your way- through the world, the flesh, or the devil—is allowed by the sovereignty of God (Job 1:6-12, Luke 22:31).

- He will not allow any temptation to be more than the capability He's promised to give you through the Holy Spirit to endure.
- Any time you and I have fallen to temptation, it's not because we didn't have the ability to say no to it - we simply chose not to endure and to give in.

God will not allow any temptation in your life to be so great that it overcomes you, and He will always provide you with "a way of escape."

- God will never force us to take that way of escape; He'll simply make it available - we must choose the "way of escape" willingly!
- The only place where temptation is completely gone is Heaven - but God does provide places for us where we're able to endure our temptations and not give into them.

Stop saying "yes" to your flesh when it demands your obedience over submission to God - that's dangerous!

- Know that God is faithful, and through Him, you have the ability to endure your temptations.
- Practice the discipline of recognizing the "ways of escape" that God provides and willingly choose to take them. You can live in victory!

FLEE FROM IDOLATRY (1 CORINTHIANS 10:14-22)

Because of these things ("therefore," vs. 14), we're to "flee from idolatry." Because of what things again?

- Israel had experienced grace (vs. 1-5), yet they fell into idolatry and perversity because of their selfish hearts, which invited God's judgment (vs. 6-11).
- God is faithful and will give us strength to endure the temptation to make idols out of our own selfish desires (vs. 12-13). Because of all this, "flee from idolatry"!

The issue of eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols was a bit complex.

- Some meat to eat at home was sold at markets set up outside pagan temples, and therefore some didn't feel right about eating that meat (while others felt just fine about it).
- But sometimes, the best meat was served actually inside a pagan temple restaurant or at a banquet given in honor of a pagan god.

It seems that some of the Christians in Corinth were worshipping Christ on the Lord's Day by coming to church and taking communion, and then on other days going to pagan temples or banquet halls and eating in environments specifically designed to worship idols.

- Because of their "knowledge" that there was only one God and none of these idols meant anything, these Christians were associating with pagan worship.

Just as eating bread and drinking wine in Christ's honor at the Lord's table is participation in the spiritual reality of the body of Christ, so too eating sacrifices on the altar of a pagan god is participation in a different kind of spiritual reality (vs. 16-20).

- It's not the food itself that is corrupt or that the idols themselves are anything; it's that there is a real phenomena of demonic deception.

Demonic spirits take advantage of worship of false gods and idols to deceive and enslave people.

- Praying to a false god or eating meat at a banquet in honor of a false god is participating with the demonic world (vs. 20-21).
- God doesn't want to share our allegiance—by participating in these dinners unknowingly given in honor of demons, these Christians could provoke to the Lord to jealousy (vs. 22).

Even if certain activities (dancing, sports or sporting events, concerts, festivals) aren't inherently wrong - there are certain environments that Christians just don't need to be in.

- Even if we have freedom to enjoy certain activities, participating in a kind of atmosphere that is full of spiritual darkness is selling out our allegiance to Jesus.
- We're called to practice discernment, wisdom, and choose sometimes to sacrifice by opting out.

WHATEVER YOU DO (1 CORINTHIANS 10:23-11:1)

The blessed Christian life is not found in learning all the rules of what's permitted and forbidden and simply looking to see how much we can get away with.

- Not everything that's "lawful" for me to do is helpful or serves to build up and encourage me and others in our walk with the Lord (vs. 23-24).
- When all we ask is, "what's wrong with ___?" we're not considering, "what's right with ___?"

Now Paul will give some practical guidelines about this issue of eating meat in Corinth (vs. 25-30).

- "Eat whatever is sold in the meat market..." - the origin of the meat was irrelevant because everything belongs to God (even that cow).
- The purpose of the meat market wasn't to honor a pagan god it was to sell meat and make money - so they were free to take meat home and eat it without asking questions.

If an unbeliever invites you to dinner, eat whatever you're served without making it an issue (vs. 27).

- However, if that unbeliever goes out of their way to tell you that what you're eating was sacrificed to a pagan idol, don't eat the meat (vs. 28).
- At that point, eating the meat might compromise your Christian witness, so refrain for the sake of the other person's conscience (vs. 29-30).

The big idea is this - "do everything for the glory of God" (vs. 31).

- The purpose of the Christian life isn't to see how much we can get away with and still be considered a Christian.
- It's to give glory to God in all that we do and seek to serve and love the people around us by not engaging in any behavior that would encourage others to sin (vs. 32-33).

When all we're thinking about is "seeking our own advantage," we rarely consider how our actions, words, and attitudes might prohibit people from seeing Christ in us and being saved.

- On our minds always should be the glory of God and the needs of others that may not know Jesus - and that's almost impossible when we're thinking primarily of ourselves, our comfort, and our preferences.

"WHAT DOES ANY OF THIS HAVE TO DO WITH ME?"

- We all can learn from the examples given to us in Scripture and not repeat the same sins we see there (vs. 11). We're all tempted every day and need reminding of God's faithfulness in that temptation (vs. 13). We're all called to seek the good of those around us above our own good (vs. 33). We're all called to imitate Christ! (11:1) **Philippians 2:5-9**

THE MIND OF CHRIST.

- Jesus did not consider His own interests to allow them to dominate His actions - He came to do the will of the Father (John 4:34) and submit to the Father's will. Jesus set the perfect example of humility, love, sacrifice, and selflessness. Because submitting to and pleasing the Father was Jesus' top priority, He endured temptation and embraced the path of sacrifice.
- If Christ is in us and we're applying His mindset, we have the ability to endure temptation through His strength. We must learn to stop saying "yes" to our flesh when it demands our obedience over submission to God and recognizes the "ways of escape" God provides out of temptation.
- What are some "ways of escape" God has given you that you've just not taken?
- The purpose of the Christian life isn't to see how much we can get away with and still be considered a Christian.
- It's to give glory to God in all that we do and seek to serve and love the people around us.
- If you were the only Christian the unbelieving world ever saw, what would your lifestyle say about the person of Jesus?