

1 CORINTHIANS 10

Flee From Idolatry

Intro: chapter 10 concludes Paul's answer to their inquiry regarding meat sacrificed to idols. Paul first dealt with their attitude, their arrogance based on "knowledge" of an idol being nothing, their attitude that had little regard for the sensitive conscience of their brethren. At the conclusion of chapter 8, Paul offered himself as an example of one who would give up meat for the sake of his brother (8.13) and then detailed in chapter 9 how he had given up many rights, all for the sake of the gospel (9.12). Now, Paul will address the issues directly, warning against eating in an idols temple and giving counsel for eating meat sold in the market place.

Chapter 10 begins with the word "For," indicating that Paul is continuing a line of reasoning. Recall that Paul's final point in chapter 9 was that he forsook many rights so the he would "not be disqualified." Paul's point in chapter 10 is that he doesn't want them to be disqualified, a very real possibility given their "knowledge" and unloving behavior.

VSS. 1-13, AN APPEAL TO HISTORY

1. Israel (vss. 1-5)

- » Some of the Corinthians had become arrogant, puffed up, because of their knowledge. In their minds they were established as God's people and thus free to act as they chose. But Paul reminds them of God's first people, in particular the generation of Israelites that God had delivered from Egyptian bondage.
- » You will note the repeated use of the term "all" in vss. 1-4. It occurs 5 times, every time referencing a blessing that all of Israel had received from God. They had been guided by God, delivered from their oppressors through the Red Sea, fed with manna from heaven and water from the rock. However,

with most of them, God was not pleased and they perished in the wilderness! Should the Corinthians assume that God would treat them differently?

- » What does Paul mean in vs. 4 by saying, "and the rock was Christ"? I believe the term "spiritual" in this verse provides the key. While Israel received physical food and water from God during their travels, more importantly they received the Word of God (note Deuteronomy 8.3). Their spiritual life was a product of Christ, the true Word of God.
- 2. A call to learn from their example (vss. 6-11).
 - » Twice in this passage Paul states that Israel serves as an example to Christians (vss. 6, 11). Paul mentioned four sins Israel was guilty of that the Corinthians should heed their example:
 - Idolatry (vs. 7; Exodus 32.6). As we will see, eating in an idols temple would be idolatry.
 - Immorality (vs. 8; Numbers 25) Sexual immorality was often associated with idolatrous practices.
 - Testing God (vs. 9; Numbers 21.5-6). Israel had tested God by failing to appreciate all He had done for them. The Corinthians were doing the same by not being content with what Christ had done for them.
 - Grumbling (vs. 10; Numbers 16). Israel had grumbled against God and His chosen leader, Moses. The Corinthians were doing the same!
 - » Note: many boast about the freedom we now have in Christ, freedom from the Law of Moses. The freedom provided by God's grace. However, do not forget that even though we are no longer under The Law, we are still under God's law (9.21). Paul's point

in this passage is significant. Israel serves as an example of what happens to God's people when they turn aside from following the Lord. They are an EXAMPLE to us, because if we are not careful the same could be true of us!

3. Exhortation (vss. 12-13). The exhortation is straightforward. Have some humility (vs. 12). We have been saved by God's grace, we have every possible advantage in Christ, but we must not become arrogant or we may stumble and fall! Yet, there is the reminder that God is still on our side, He can / will provide the way of escape. But would the Corinthians look for and take the escape route? Paul proceeds to show them how they can escape this temptation.

VSS. 14-22, REGARDING EATING IN AN IDOL'S TEMPLE

1. Note: that Paul is referencing the practice of actually eating in an idol's temple is likely based on Paul's mentioning it in 8.10 and referring to their partaking of the table of demons in 10.21.
2. Flee! (vs. 14) Sometimes the only manner of resistance is to flee! The Corinthians may have reasoned that with their "knowledge" they could safely eat in an idol's temple, but Paul says to get away! "They must not try how near they can go, but how far they can fly." (Leon Morris)
3. The matter of communion (vss. 15-20). Throughout this passage Paul uses the term *koinōnia*, often translated as "sharing," "communion," or "fellowship".
 - » The Lord's Supper (bread and cup) is a matter of our "sharing" or being in fellowship with the Lord (vss. 16-17)
 - » Most sacrifices under the Mosaic Law involved the worshipper eating a portion of the sacrifice (see Leviticus 7.6, 14f). Thus, Israel shared in the altar (vs. 18).
 - » An idol might be nothing. The Christian might have this knowledge, but the pagan did not. They were "sharers" with their de-

mons (i.e. Pagan gods). Should a Christian be seen as sharers with these demons? (vss. 19-20)

4. NO! You cannot share with the Lord & with demons! (vss. 21-22)
5. Note: much ink has been spilled over what kind of meal the early Christians partook of during worship. Many talk about "love feasts" and say that the Lord's Supper was a common meal involving all kinds of food. While I have no doubt that Christians often ate together, it is significant that in a passage dealing with meat sacrificed to idols, Paul only mentions the bread and cup when referring to our fellowship meal. We would do well to follow suite.

VSS. 23-30, REGARDING MEAT SOLD IN THE MARKET PLACE

1. Restatement of principle (vss. 23-24). Recall from 6.12 that the phrase "all things are lawful" was probably a Corinthian catchphrase. They probably used the phrase in reference to eating in the temple of idols and of their right to eat anything, regardless of their brother's conscience. Paul reminds them that what is important is their brother. They should edify their brother rather than destroy him (see 8.10-12).
2. Eat without asking in good conscience (vss. 25-27). They were free to eat meat, because meat came from God. Being sacrificed to an idol did not change that fundamental fact. Remember: much of the meat sold in the market place had been killed in a god's name. They could buy and eat in good conscience, and a practical piece of advice was to just not ask!
3. When you should not eat (vss. 28-30). However, the situation was different when they knew the meat had been sacrificed to an idol. In that case, they should not eat. You don't want an unbeliever thinking you are "sharing" with an idol, you don't want to violate the conscience of others!
 - » Paul's words about himself in vss. 29-30 are difficult. He has just said we must not violate the conscience of another, but then defends his own freedom?

- » The best solution is that Paul is anticipating their arguments. Yes, they have freedom, yes they might give thanks, but they must not eat if it would give offense!

VSS. 31-33, ALL FOR GOD'S GLORY

1. Again, we come back to attitude. Their “knowledge” had made them arrogant (8.1). Now was the time live for God’s glory, not self!
2. The way to glorify God? By avoiding offending others (vs. 32), by doing all things for the salvation of others (vs. 33).