

Fleeing Idolatry

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Sorry, somebody was playing with this mic, so you guys do what you need to do to hear me less or more sound, guys. I'm not sure who sent out the message yesterday for Daylight Savings Time. Thanks a lot.

I got it last night, like 7, 8 o'clock, and that's the first time in a long time I remember being caught off guard by Daylight Savings Time. So, thank you, but thanks a lot.

This morning, we're going to be hitting 1 Corinthians 10. What I'd like to do is just go back and do a quick summary just to bring us up to this point. Chapter 8, if you remember, Paul was exhorting the Corinthian believers.

Am I fading in and out? Is that okay? Okay. If I am, somebody just throw your hand off and I'll just grab the other mic because I don't want to be a distraction. We have Paul exhorting the Corinthian believers not to eat meat sacrificed to idols, and the big reason being that they won't cause newer Christians, new believers, to stumble and cause them to fall back to some of their old practices, possibly pulling them back into sin and out of the salvation that they may not have been part of yet because of that.

So, he says the main point being Christian love requires that we forego or give up our rights and not to insist on our rights at the expense of others.

[1 : 3 6] Last week, Sean brought to us chapter 9, a difficult passage for a pastor, and that was Paul telling us about how he had a right to get paid from the church, or in his preaching of the gospel, he had that right, and yet he intentionally gave that up for the sake of the gospel.

And then at the end of the chapter, if you remember, he's talking of self-control, practicing self-control. So, like an athlete, like someone who is going to the Olympics, there's a focus on the goal.

There's a specific goal that a runner is to be aiming for. So, Paul calls us to run as if we're going for that prize and doing with purpose and not to settle or just to coast through life.

So, now that brings us to chapter 10 this morning, and it starts out with the word for. However, Paul is connecting this passage back to these last two chapters because he's going to be building on the idea of idolatry and not falling back into former sins.

And in thinking of that, there's three points that we're going to be looking at this morning, and we'll go through those. But the main idea is that there's blessing and there's strength that we get from following the Lord.

[2 : 5 4] There's also defeat and death that comes from following idolatry or following after the world. So, our first point this morning is past warnings.

These are some warnings that Paul starts out talking to the church of Corinth about. So, if you take a look at verse 1, he says, For, because of what I've been talking about, I don't want you to be unaware brothers, translated brethren or brothers and sisters.

For our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink.

For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. In these first couple verses, we see Paul laying out this interesting package for us, if you will, where he's making a connection back to the Old Testament.

He's making a connection for the church in Corinth back to the Old Testament, and he does that to encourage them and also to show them that they are part of the family of God.

[4 : 0 6] He's also making that connection for us. As we're reading this, we're not just spectators, but we're part of the congregation as well that he's speaking to.

First, he says in verse 1, Notice Paul doesn't say, It's not his Jewish lineage, but it's our Jewish lineage that he's connecting to, referring to the Israelites that followed Moses out of Egypt. Those were God's chosen people. Paul is calling them our fathers, highlighting the fact that salvation has come to all who believe in Christ. It's not just the special Jewish select group, but it's now open to Jews and Gentiles.

So let's listen to what Paul else, what else Paul unpacks for us here. He says, Our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

A reference to God protecting the Israelites, leading them through the cloud. If you remember, the cloud stood in their way when the Egyptian army was coming.

[5 : 12] The cloud also provided a way for them to follow where they should go in the wilderness. And it was also used when they were miraculously brought through the Red Sea. And check out the next part in verse 3.

And all ate the same spiritual fruit, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the same spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Now that sounds a lot like the Lord's Supper, a communion that we take part of now.

So Paul is making a connection for us. Back to the Old Testament, to a type of Lord's Supper, to a communion that the Israelites were part of. If you remember, manna was the physical food that fed them.

But we know it didn't come from Whole Foods or Stop and Shop. It was given to them supernaturally by God. The same with the water. The water didn't come to them in bottles that they brought from Egypt, but it came from a rock.

I don't know how many other people have seen water come from a rock, but that's a pretty supernatural thing. So we're reminded here that that rock that was with them was Christ.

[6 : 25] So we have the Israelites. They believed Moses. They followed him. They're baptized into Moses as he takes them through the cloud and through the Red Sea, and they're delivered from the Egyptians.

Christ was that rock that sustained them. And now we as believers of Christ, we get baptized into him, similar to how they were baptized in Moses as he led them through the wilderness.

So what's the point? What's Paul trying to say? The Israelites were rescued from Pharaoh in slavery, and they were brought across the Red Sea. They were delivered from the Egyptian army. They were provided for in the wilderness. However, what's verse 5 say? Nevertheless, with most of them, God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

That brings us to our first point, which is past warnings. It's what Paul is giving us here, is warnings for things that have taken place.

[7 : 28] Now these things took place, verse 6, as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. The NIV translates that to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things.

You know, as a parent, you do these things. That is, you warn them of things that can cause danger to them.

Don't do that. You might fall. Don't touch that. It's hot. Right? Hopefully they don't touch it. A lot of times they touch it. That's how they learn. They got burned. You're starting off college.

You're starting a job. People warn you of things. But what tends to happen, we think that we're a little smarter. Maybe we're a little quicker.

I won't fall into that like you fell into because I'm special or whatever the reason is. I remember doing that in college. I needed to make up some courses and I took three courses over the summer.

[8 : 30] And everybody told me, don't take that many. Summer is short. Everything is packed. You know, most of the time you only want to do one, two at the most. It's fine. I got plenty of time. Most of the courses are easy.

One of them was a religion class. That should be cake. So what ended up happening is I took all three and I ended up dropping one or two of them or I at least dropped one. I don't remember if the second one I just did really poorly at or if I finally gave up and dropped it.

But I thought I was different. I thought I could do it and I couldn't and I didn't heed the warning and I failed at it. And that's what Paul is doing for us here.

He's giving us warnings based on failures that the Israelites went through in the Old Testament. Verse 7. Do not be idolaters as some of them were.

As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. That doesn't sound so bad just looking at that quotation. But it's a reference back to the time when Moses went up on the mountain to get the Ten Commandments to meet with the Lord and what happens?

[9 : 34] The Israelites get impatient and they decide to make for themselves a golden calf. Their God, their new God, little g, they even said that this new God delivered them out of Egypt and they worshipped it.

They gave, they offered burnt offerings to it just like the burnt offerings they offered to God. They stopped believing that fast.

They stopped believing in God, the one who had rescued them out of Egypt and they started following after something that they made with their hands. Paul says, watch out, don't be an idolater.

Verse 8. We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did and 23,000 fell in a single day. This is a reference to Numbers 25.

When the people of Israel began to mix with the people of Moab, the Bible actually says that they began to whore with the daughters of Moab. That sounds pretty rough.

[10 : 47] Why would God use that terminology? Because the people worshipped Baal and Israelites were called to worship God. What happens when they start to intermingle and their families start to begin and grow?

You worship God and somebody else worships an idol and you have more people that are following after an idol than they are following after God. So their focus was quickly changed from being the people of God to a people that just worships another idol in this world.

This sexual immorality is, I don't have to tell you that that's a big area, a big pitfall that we can fall into.

If you're not married this morning, be careful. You want to make sure that the person that you look for or the person that you're with now their heart belongs to Christ.

Because if not, if their heart belongs to the world and your heart starts to become connected to them, guess where your heart is going? It's generally not to God and bringing them with you.

[12 : 05] It usually will pull you both towards the world. God warns about that. Moses warns about that. Here Paul is warning about that. So I'm telling you, don't go there.

Verse 9, another warning. We must not put Christ to the test as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents. If you remember the story of the serpent, this is referring to that in Numbers 21.

It says this in verses 4 to 6, and the people became impatient on the way another time where they just couldn't wait on the Lord. And the people spoke against God and against Moses.

Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? But there's no food and no water and we loathe this worthless food. So the Lord sent fiery serpents among his people and they bit them so that many people of Israel died.

They tested God because they became impatient and as a result many of them died. Verse 10, another warning. Nor grumble as some of them did and were destroyed by the destroyer.

[13 : 14] There were several occasions that we can go back to in the wilderness where the people of Israel grumbled against God. They grumbled against Moses which ultimately is against God and they also grumbled directly against God and what his plan for them was.

And this was met with serious consequences. In verse 11, Now these things happened to them as an example but they were written down for our instruction on whom the end of the ages has come. Sounds a little weird but it's really pretty simple. Who is that? The end of the ages has come to all those that are right now. Anything on, anybody on this side of the cross and until eternity until the Lord comes back is the end of the ages.

So that's us. These are examples written down for our instruction. And why is Paul writing down these things for our instruction? That brings us to our second point.

These were warnings that took place many years ago but the dangers are still here for us now. Our second point is present dangers.

[14 : 22] These are dangers that the Corinthian believers had. They were also dangers that we currently have. They may look a little different. Our lives may look a little different.

Things around us may look a little different but the dangers are still there nonetheless. Verse 12 says this, Therefore let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Don't be overconfident. This is what we see taking place in the previous chapter with people thinking that they can, they're strong enough to go back to the pagan temple and worship the same way they used to worship before they knew God.

Don't think that you can stand strong and face sin and it not affect you. It's going to affect you. The idea, the point isn't to see how close to sin you can play with.

The point is just flee sin. It's like with a fire. Don't see how close you can get. At some point you're going to get burned and realize you got too close. Verse 13, No temptation has ever taken you that is not common to man.

[15 : 44] When you're tempted, what you're tempted with is not anything new. Basically, it was what Paul is saying. There isn't a new big temptation that you're going to meet tomorrow that isn't something new that thousands of other people haven't struggled with.

It isn't anything new. It wasn't anything new for the Israelites, the people in Corinth, and it's not for us as well. But, and we got verse 13, God is faithful.

Amen to that. God is faithful. And he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. But with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

God is faithful. Start with that. Before you deal with the temptation and how you're going to get out of it, remember that God is faithful. God is faithful.

He was faithful to the Israelites. He was faithful to the people in Corinth and he's faithful to his people here in 2018. Now, if we focus in on the last part of that verse, but with the temptation he will also provide a way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

[16 : 59] Notice Paul doesn't say that you may be able to skip over it. as you walk through your temptation or as you walk through your day, whatever that looks like, and temptations slowly approach you as some do, there may be also those temptations that just stand right in your way.

And God's not saying I'm going to pick you up and I'm going to lift you over top of your temptation so you don't have to deal with it. There's not a secret secret tunnel that might be opened up for us where we slide underneath and we can pop out the other side and, whoo, I didn't even have to worry about that.

That was pretty cool. No. He says he will provide a way of escape that you can endure it. When we face temptation, he does provide that way of escape, but it requires something of us as Christians to endure that.

And then we fall back on the beginning part of that that we're reminded of where God is faithful. verse 14, therefore, my beloved, therefore, we get kind of a connecting back to what he was talking about.

Therefore, because our fathers who desired evil were idolaters, who indulged in sexual immorality, who put Christ to the test, who grumbled, don't be overconfident.

[18 : 23] These are all the things he's been saying so that you aren't overtaken. he says, flee from idolatry. Flee from the desires of the flesh and run to God's desires for you.

We're going to get back to that. That's a big one. We're going to come back to that in just a minute, but we're going to go on with these verses just to break them up a little bit. Let's look at verse 16.

The cup of blessing that we bless, referring to communion, referring to the Lord's Supper here when the Lord's Supper started, if you remember, Jesus broke the bread and he blessed it.

When we have communion, we also give thanks and bless it as well, just like Jesus did as he started the Lord's Supper back before his crucifixion. But Paul says, is it not a participation, this is verse 16, is it not a participation that is a fellowship or a sharing in the blood of Christ?

The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? So here we pick up that Paul uses this word participation twice here, and that's the sharing of one another as we participate in communion.

[19 : 39] We are sharing that with one another. It's founded in Christ. It's founded on his death and resurrection. And we as believers get to share that with one another and we get to be a part of that.

Verse 17, because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. The one bread that he's talking about here is the body of Christ that was broken for us.

The many that he is talking about is us as believers. We are the church, but we're one body in Christ. There are many believers in Christ, but there's just one body. One body in Christ is what he's talking about.

And we partake of the one bread, the one bread being Christ. Let's look at another couple verses that might be helpful for this if it's not quite clear.

If you flip over to 1 Corinthians 12, just ahead two chapters, I know somebody else is going to preach this. I'm just going to, I won't stay long, take what you're going to be speaking on, but I find it's really helpful for this as well.

[20 : 43] Chapter 12, verse 12, For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, they're one body.

So it is with Christ. Christ is one body of which we, who are many, are part of. You are part of the body of Christ. This is very important, so I just want to hang out here for a minute.

If you're standing this morning, you're sitting, I know I'm not talking about that, I'm talking about where you are, where you find yourself, this morning.

If you believe in Jesus Christ, they died on the cross for sins that you couldn't pay, and you've asked him to forgive your sins and to be your savior, you're part of that body of Christ.

That's something to rejoice in this morning. because you have a life in Christ, you have a future in Christ, you have a hope in Christ, you have a strength in Christ, you have a savior in Christ, you have freedom from sin in Christ, you have a relationship with God in Christ, you have an eternity in Christ.

[22 : 00] Praise God if you are in Christ this morning. now if that's not where you stand this morning and you don't believe in Jesus Christ, maybe he's just a good person to you, then those statements that I just make become questions for you.

Where's your life? Where's your future? Where's your hope? Where's your strength? What is your savior? What is your relationship with God?

And what is your eternity? You can answer those with a lot of things, but if it isn't Christ, they're going to end. They're not going to, they're not going to keep you through to eternity.

They're going to leave you at death. We're still in the same passage.

Chapter 12, look at verse 13 with me. For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews and Greeks, slaves, free, covering everybody here, and all were made to drink of one spirit.

[23 : 11] That's why we have believers baptism. We believe in Christ and we're baptized into one body. One body believers, one body in Christ. Christ. That last part of that verse says, and all were made to drink of one spirit.

All right, now let's jump back to chapter 10 where we were and take a look at verse 4. We're going to see some connections here that I think are helpful for us. And all drank of the same spiritual drink.

For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them. The rock was Christ. Christ was the spiritual drink. Christ was the rock that followed them and sustained the Israelites through the wilderness.

He's also the spiritual drink and the spiritual rock that sustains us as believers. So Paul's reaching back to a time way back.

This is like 2,400 years before Christ. He's reaching back to the Israelites and he's letting us know that Christ was there and Christ was their rock. Now Paul is speaking and he's a little bit past the crucifixion so we'll roughly say about 2018 years ago.

[24 : 25] He's talking to the church and he's reminding them of that and Christ is still their rock. And we find ourselves here over 2,000 years later and Christ is still our rock.

That will continue on until the end of time when we get to go to heaven and be with Christ our rock. because Christ is faithful.

Alright, so we're done with that passage. Let's jump back. We are back to chapter 10. Let's move down to verse 18 where we left off. Consider the people of Israel are not those who ate the sacrifices participants in the altar.

See, the altar in the Old Testament if you remember was where the priest would make sacrifices. Different sacrifices. A lot of times they involved animals but the priests were able to take part in the sacrifices.

They were able to eat of the food that was offered. That was part of their benefits of the job I guess you could say.

[25 : 34] That was part of their livelihood that they could do that but all of it was a worship to God. The sacrifice, the altar, the altar, what they had to do to clean everything and get it ready.

Making that blood sacrifice to cover the sins of the people and then them being able to eat that meat later as part of their livelihood. All that was done in worship to God.

So Paul here is building up his previous arguments about attending events in pagan temples, worshipping idols, thinking that you can eat food offered to sacrifice to idols and that be okay.

Verse 19, Paul says, what do I imply? That food offered to idols is anything or that an idol is anything? If you remember, Paul earlier said idols aren't real, they aren't anything.

Food is food, enjoy it. That's how he started out but as he progresses, he wants us to know the warnings, the dangers of thinking this way. verse 20, he says, no, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they offered to demons and not to God and I do not want you to be participants with demons.

[26 : 50] The priest in the Old Testament participated in the sacrifice. They ate the food and that was done as worship, like I said. The same applies to those who go to the temple where idols were worshipped and participate in those meals.

All that was done is worship to an idol, to a god, little g. And Paul points out not only are they idols but there's demons. There's demons that you're worshipping because if you're not worshipping God, you're worshipping Satan and whoever is on Satan's side, there isn't more than two sides.

It's God or everything else. Verse 21, you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and then turn around and take the table of demons.

Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? That reminds me of, I don't know, I don't know if you guys did that, this when you were a kid but, did you ever have a large dog chained up behind a fence and you kind of had that temptation that you wanted to kind of taunt him a little bit?

Maybe see, just get him angry a little bit, kind of growl at him? I didn't do that. My brother did. But, also, thinking of if you ever went to a zoo and you saw a strong, kind of ferocious animal and you knew he was behind a fence, behind a glass wall and he couldn't get you, you might toy with him, make faces at it.

[28 : 27] God's not like that. This is something that God takes seriously.

Let me just read a couple verses from Exodus 20 as he's given the Ten Commandments and God spoke all these words saying, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me. Deuteronomy 5, 9, speaking of idols. You should not bow down to them or serve them for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.

This is not jealousy like our sinful human jealousy. This is, this is a holy, righteous jealousy based on God protecting his name and his image of being the only true God, the creator of heaven and earth and there are no other gods, little g, that are worthy of his worship.

So, Paul says, don't provoke the Lord to jealousy. are we stronger than he? The question, the answer to that question being you're not stronger than God.

[29 : 32] Don't go there. Some of the Israelites did it and it ended in death. Now, by now, some of you might be thinking, okay, all this stuff makes sense, this sounds really good, but I don't worship idols.

On top of that, I don't remember the last time I ate any food that was offered to idols. idols. It's a good point, but we need to be serious here because we're not talking about just idols.

Idolatry is anything that we worship that's not God. So, while Paul is talking here to the Corinthians about idols and pagan temples, the same applies to us, it just looks a little different.

Back in verse 6, Paul says, now these things took place as examples for us that we might not desire evil. And again, the NIV translates that, which I think is a little better helpful translation.

Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things. As they did. What things were they?

[30 : 49] They followed after other gods. What else? Sexual immorality, testing God, grumbling, complaining. They stopped believing in God. Even though God was in their midst, they saw God work.

They saw God perform miracles that they were a part of, and yet they set their hearts on evil things. So the question this morning is not whether or not you worship idols.

The question about is where your heart is. Because that's where our worship comes from, right? It comes from what's inside our heart. It's not just the activity of bowing to something.

It's just, it's not the actual physical idol. It's not the actual TV that you spend time in front of. It's not the actual magazine that you might look at or the conversations you have that are not Christ glorifying.

Those physical things aren't it. It comes from a heart that's not focused on God. So what do you desire? What do you worship?

[32 : 03] Some people say, well, it's where you spend all your time that's what you worship. Maybe. Well, maybe not. If you have a job outside the house and you spend on an average of 45 to 55 hours a week commuting and working at a job, that's a large chunk of your time.

It's not an idol, but it could be. Your job, your status, your money, that could be an idol.

if God's here and your job is up here. Staying home with kids, that's a full-time job. Right?

That's not an idol. Could be. I've seen it happen. You can make your kids an idol. You can put God down here and make your kids the most important thing in your life. The problem is is when we get them flipped, everything else is going to let us down.

The God who is faithful, who is always there, will not let us down and he calls us to be on him and not on other things. So how about other things? We have sleeping, video games, food, TV, hobbies, shopping, sports, drugs, alcohol, pornography, gambling?

[33 : 29] Now obviously some of those are pretty obvious. That's a pretty bad idol. But it's possible for us to set our hearts on the idol of things that are not God.

It can be good things that we've made God things. So we want to make sure from what Paul is telling us here, from the warnings that he's given to us, that our hearts should be placed on the altar of Jesus Christ, our Savior and King.

That's where we put our hearts. And that brings us to our third point. You're probably thinking third.

It's okay, this one's short. It's also the most important one.

The last point is our future success. And by now you should be able to guess that our future success is Christ. Christ, the same Christ that loved his people enough to save them from slavery and bring them through the wilderness, the same Christ who loved us enough to die in order to save us from death.

Paul is telling us that our success is Christ, it's not idols. But you still got to watch out for them.

Christ was available to the Israelites, Christ was their rock and yet they turned to the world instead.

[34 : 54] And God left them, God cursed most of them, the older ones, 20 and older, to remain in the desert until they died off and their kids got to go to the promised land. So we're warned not to follow after anything besides God.

We're told to flee idolatry. It's helpful, it's a very helpful tool. It's short, it's easy to remember, you don't need a five-step program when you run into a problem if you don't know what to do, if you're stuck in sin and you're being tempted, flee from idolatry.

Flee from fill in the blank. Here it says idolatry, you can put any sin you're struggling with in that spot. The problem is when we're struggling with a sin, we say we can't overcome of it a lot of times, we kind of want to bask in that sin a little bit because we don't want to give it up.

We struggle with sin because we like the sin. Paul says watch out because it's going to overtake you. So let's keep our hearts focused on Christ because Christ is faithful, because Christ is our rock, because Christ is our savior.

Christ is the one we follow, Christ is the one we serve. and he's faithful to protect and to keep us.

[36 : 19] Lord, we ask your help with life because life is rough. There's temptations, there's sin that's all around us and we're in a world that looks so good from so many different angles.

There are idols all around us to pull us in. Lord, help us to keep our mind, our hearts focused on you. Lord, protect us from falling into temptation for your glory.

What I'm going to do is just take a minute just to think about the passage. There's an area that the Lord has laid on your heart. Don't cover it up.

Don't let the next part of the service just push it around. Just let that work in your mind. Think about how you can lean on Christ, your rock to get you through that temptation.