

After urging the Corinthians to live disciplined lives (1 Cor. 9:24-27), Paul now uses OT examples to warn them that God still punishes sin. We cannot use temptations as an excuse for our sinful behavior since God promises to give us a way to escape them and we are to live in a manner that will glorify Him. Paul then returns to the subject of meat offered to idols, reminding us of the context of chapters 9 and 10.

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant” – The OT is full of examples of God’s dealings with mankind, including incidents when God blessed His people for their obedience and incidents when God punished His people when they disobeyed. Paul wants the Corinthians to be learn from these incidents so he points out examples of disobedience in Israel’s history.

“how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea” – Even though the Israelites were not ancestors of the Corinthians in the biological sense, they were “our fathers” in the sense of being associated with God. However, the repetition of the word “all” through these verses indicates that Paul’s emphasis seems to be on the fact that even though “all” were associated with God, not all were pleasing to God. Paul is speaking of the Hebrews that left Egypt “under the cloud” by day and a pillar of fire by night, and passed through the Red Sea on dry ground. Both the cloud and the passage through the sea indicate the LORD’s watchful care over the children of Israel.

“And were all baptized [to be immersed] unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” – Obviously Moses did not conduct a baptismal service on the banks of the Red Sea. Paul uses the word “baptized” here in a figurative sense, indicating the people’s association with Moses as he led them through the sea under the cloud of God’s Shekinah glory.

“And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink” – This refers to the manna, water and other food that God provided through His spiritual (supernatural) power. The entire congregation benefited from God’s provision.

“for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” – The Jews had a legend that the rock that Moses struck to provide water for the people followed them throughout their wanderings in the wilderness to provide a source of water. Paul’s point here is that Christ provided equally for all of the people.

5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

The Greek word translated “overthrown” means “to strew about; to lay prostrate.” The Greek word is *katastronnumi* and is related to the English word “catastrophe.” Even though God provided for all of the people, many of them displeased God by their disobedience. We know this because the bodies of these disobedient people were left strewn about in the wilderness.

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

“Now these things were our examples” – God placed these OT accounts in the Bible for us to learn from.

“to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted” – The lesson we are to learn is that God does not tolerate sin and that He will punish us if we follow sinful desires.

“Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play” – Paul quotes from Ex. 32:6. The incident recorded in Exodus 32 concerns the time that Israel began worshiping the golden calf while Moses was on Mt. Sinai with the LORD. The description of sitting down to eat and rising up to play implies that they were engaging in the drunken and immoral activities associated with idolatrous worship.

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

“Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand” – Ex. 32:28 records that the Levites responded to Moses’ command and killed 3,000 men who had engaged in the immoral acts. Ex. 32:35 records that the LORD also plagued the people because of the calf, but it does not give the number that died. Paul apparently had a source of information that we don’t have that set the number of those that died in the plague at 20,000.

“Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents” – Paul is referring to the incident in Numbers 21 when the LORD sent venomous snakes among Israel because they were not grateful for His provision and were questioning His motives (**Num. 21:5** “*And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread*”).

“Neither murmur [to mutter; to grumble] ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer” – Paul is apparently not referring to a specific incident since there were multiple instances of certain people dying as a result of their grumbling and complaining in various ways.

11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition [to help one’s understanding]” – Paul’s point is that even though Israel is God’s chosen people, their history demonstrates that the LORD will not tolerate sin among His people, whether they be descendants of Abraham or the members of His church.

“upon whom the ends of the world [aion: an age or period of time] are come” – The “ends of the world” and similar phrases in the NT refer to the time period that began when Christ entered the world as Savior but more specifically to the period just prior to His return and the establishment of His millennial kingdom. Paul is saying that we should learn from the examples of the past so that we will be prepared for Christ’s return.

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

We should not be over-confident in where we stand with God. We ought to humbly ask God to show us if there is any sin that we need to repent of and seek His help in purging it out of our lives (2 Cor. 13:5 “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*”).

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

This verse is often quoted out of context. While it is true that God promises to help us in times of temptation so that we can avoid sin, the context seems to be that we are not to use temptation as an excuse for sin because God has made a provision so that we will not be overwhelmed by temptation to the point that we have no choice but to sin.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man” – We cannot claim that a temptation that we faced was so unique and overpowering that we had no choice but to sin. Other people have faced similar temptations without sinning. All human beings share the same sin nature and we are all tempted by the same types of sins, so we cannot use temptation as an excuse for sin.

“but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able” – God will not allow the temptation to overwhelm our ability to resist it. We cannot blame our sin on the temptation because God always limits the power of the temptation.

“but will with the temptation also make a way to escape” – God will also provide a way to escape the temptation so that we can choose to not sin. Hence, the next verse says “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry” (v. 14).

Verses 14-22: Paul returns to the subject of food (1 Cor. 8:1-13), indicating that the intervening verses (1 Cor. 9:1 to 10:13) should be taken in that context. He instructs the Corinthians to “flee from idolatry” and then makes the point that the food we consume in connection with religious worship does have spiritual implications. When they celebrated the Lord’s Supper, they did so as an act of worshiping Jesus Christ. Eating meat offered to idols was connected to the worship of these idols and Paul did not want them to be involved in such things. Doing so would provoke the jealousy of the Lord.

23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. 24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s *wealth*.

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient [profitable; beneficial]” – One commentator suggests that the expression “all things are lawful for me” may have been a slogan used by the Corinthians to justify whatever they chose to do, which would constitute an abuse of God’s grace. Paul admits that food offered to idols has not been tainted, but doing so is not worthwhile if it harms other Christians (1 Cor. 8:10-13).

“all things are lawful for me, but all things edify [to build up] not” – While Christians are free to eat whatever foods they want, there are occasions when doing so does not build up other Christians, as in the weak brother whose conscience has been harmed.

“Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s *wealth*” – The word “wealth” is in italics (meaning it’s not in the original text) and is supplied by the translators to show Paul’s intent. The idea is that we should express the love of Christ by prioritizing the well being of others above our own.

25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, *that* eat, asking no question for conscience sake: 26 For the earth *is* the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof.

“Whatsoever is sold in the shambles [meat market], *that* eat, asking no question for conscience sake” – The meat sold at the meat market included both that which was offered to idols and meat that wasn’t. The Christian was to buy the meat without asking where the meat came from so that he could eat with a clean conscience. This was permissible since at that stage the buyer wasn’t taking part in the worship of idols (v. 20) and that the meat had not been tainted by the idol (1 Cor. 8:4, 8).

“For the earth *is* the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” – The justification for eating this meat with an unknown origin is that the earth belongs to the Lord and everything it produces also belongs to Him. Both were created by God to be used for man’s benefit.

27 If any of them that believe not bid you *to a feast*, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

The same principle applies to being invited by an unbeliever to a feast. The Christian should eat without asking where the meat came from in order to have a clean conscience.

28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth *is* the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof: 29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another *man’s* conscience?

The scenario seems to be that a weaker brother has warned you that the meat had been offered to idols, and Paul says that we should not eat for the sake of the conscience of this weaker brother (1 Cor. 8:12-13). Why should we place our weaker brother in a position where he would be compelled to judge the liberty of ours that he doesn’t understand?

30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? 31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

“For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?” – Why create a situation where someone else might condemn me for eating something that grace allows me to eat and for which I’ve thanked God?

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” – God’s glory should be the priority and our spiritual liberties. We are to avoid offending others in these matters so that there will be no unnecessary hindrances to the gospel.