

November 2, 2014
Guidelines for Christian Living
1 Corinthians 10

There is a cartoon that shows a mother and son walking home from church, and the mom says, "The next time Pastor Bob ask you what the sermon was about, don't say, 'About three hours!'"

In chapter 10 of 1 Corinthians Paul continues to express his concern about the lifestyle of the believers in Corinth and the need for self-discipline and self-control. He talked about this in chapters 8 and 9 and Paul closes chapter 9 described his own self-discipline, warning about the danger of being "disqualified."

1 Corinthians 9:27

I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

The Christian life takes discipline. It is a struggle to obey God, face persecution, exercise self-control and self-discipline, and deal with sin in one's life. We are saved – sins forgiven, know God personally, and have Eternal Life – not by what we do, but by accepting through faith what Jesus has done for us. Then we grow in that relationship with Christ and want to become more like Him. Not that we will ever become perfect in this life, but the desire to work toward holiness is evidence of our salvation. God in His love and as we are ready makes us aware of deeper levels in us that need to be cleansed, but it takes a life-long work of discipline to change these areas in our lives. In this chapter Paul gives guidelines for Christian Living.

1. Recognize the destructive power of sin

Some of the Corinthian believers thought that because they had professed faith in Christ, went to church, and joined in the Lord's Supper, they could then live as they pleased. But this was a false belief, as Paul would show through the example he used from Israel's history.

1 Cor 10:1-12

I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses. All of them ate the same spiritual food, and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ. Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, or worship idols as some of them did. As the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry." And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day.

Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites. And don't grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death. These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age. If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall.

Paul reminds us how the Jews were under the shelter of the Divine Presence of God manifested by the Cloud and were taken miraculously through the Sea. It was like our baptism – from enslavement to salvation. The Jews were saved from slavery in Egypt, we from enslavement to sin and death to salvation life. The Jews were sustained in a supernatural way with meals provided daily by God, this refers to manna; and water from a rock and, he tells us that Rock was Christ. Paul clearly suggests the preexistence of Christ. Jesus was the Divine Being who accompanied the people of God on their journey in the wilderness; and it is Christ who accompanies us in our journey and provides the means for our deliverance.

Yet, though Christ dwelt with Israel and did wondrous things among them, their experience of God's wonder and grace didn't seem to mean much – most of them were defeated by temptation, unbelief and sin and God was not pleased with them, most perished without ever seeing the Promised Land.

These things happened as a warning to us, we must learn from this example, for the same thing can happen to us. Then, to make himself crystal-clear, Paul listed five sins of Israel, which apparently were threatening the church in Corinth, and could also threaten us today.

A. Craving evil things (v6)

What were the Israelites craving?

Numbers 11:4

Then the foreign rabble who were traveling with the Israelites began to crave *the good things of Egypt*. And the people of Israel also began to complain.

The people had a strong desire for the things left behind in Egypt. The complaining began by people who were not fully committed to the way of life directed by Moses. When we don't completely separate ourselves from the world and commit fully to God we will crave evil things of the world. We will want our own way as the Israelites did. The history of the Jewish nation is a mirror for all people. Don't crave evil things as they did.

B. Idolatry (v7)

In Exodus 32 the Israelites made a golden calf and worshiped it in the wilderness. The people became *idolaters*, worshiping an image rather than God, who had brought them out of Egypt. Yet, they claimed to be worshiping the Lord God.

Exodus 32:5

Aaron saw how excited the people were, so he built an altar in front of the calf. Then he announced, "Tomorrow will be a festival to the LORD!"

They claimed to worship God, however, God was dishonored by what they were doing — both by their idol (a golden calf) and then by their "pagan revelry." Paul quotes from Exodus 32:6 when he says, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry." "Revelry" refers to singing, shouting, and dancing that promote sexual immorality. (TM says it this way), "...we must not turn our religion into a circus as they did." Don't put anything before God and be sure you are truly worshipping the Lord.

C. Sexual Immorality (v8)

We are reminded again of what a constant treat this was in Corinth, much like it is today. We see in the Old Testament that it was also a continual danger in Israel. Many sinned without regard for the God they claimed to belong and this brought harsh punishment upon them. The lesson Paul presents to us here is that sexual immorality among people who are spiritually enlightened is worse than among those who are not. God will not go lightly on those who claim to be His but engage in idolatry or sexual immorality.

D. Testing Christ (v9)

Numbers 14:22b

They have all seen my glorious presence and the miraculous signs I performed both in Egypt and in the wilderness, but again and again they have tested me by refusing to listen to my voice.

The Israelites were trying God's patience by rebellious conduct, refusing to listen to His voice that was telling them to obey Him. There were some in the church at Corinth who were testing Christ by pushing their behavior to the limits. Don't challenge God. Don't test God's patience. Listen to His voice, the voice of His Spirit. Those who belong to God will not test the Lord to see how much they can get away with.

E. Grumbling (or stirring up discontent) (v10)

We grumble when we shift our attention from what we have to what we don't have. The Israelites were not noticing what God was doing for them; saving them from slavery, providing for their needs, giving them a new land. Instead they were so wrapped up in what God wasn't doing for them.

What occupies your attention most of the time? Are you grateful for what God has given or complaining about what you would like to have and don't? Don't allow unfulfilled desires to cause you to forget God's blessings to you. Grumbling is a denial

of the goodness and mercy of God. Grumbling, discontent, is distrust of God's love, wisdom and goodness.

(v11-12) These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age. If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall.

Which brings us to the second guideline for Christian living

2. Accept the victorious possibilities of grace

After Paul warns them of these 5 sins he then softens the severity of his words by assuring the Corinthians that ...

1 Corinthians 10:13

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

Everyone faces temptations and trials, no one is exempt. Don't you wish you had a choice? Don't you wish you could say, "I think I will skip this trial/temptation." But it doesn't work that way. No one is exempt.

Temptation is not sin, giving in to temptation is sin. When you face temptation and trials nothing unusual is happening to you. The Israelites faced the same temptations and trials, the Corinthians faced the same temptations and trials, other Christians experience the same. Your trials and temptations are not anything new. You can never say, "No one has ever gone through what I'm going through." Therefore, if you fail you are without excuse. For, no temptation or trial is beyond human resistance.

God is faithful, now there is something you can bank on. God is always faithful, He cannot - not be faithful. God does not leave you alone when trials and temptations come, He is faithful.

He always provides strength for those who trust and follow Him. He promises that He will not allow you to be tempted more than you can stand. That's a promise; He makes that covenant with you. He is always faithful to His Word and to His compassionate Nature. If He was to allow temptation beyond your power to overcome He would be violating His covenant, His Word, and His nature.

Furthermore, God is fully aware of the circumstances surrounding your every trial and temptation and "When you are tempted, he will (always) show you a way out so that you can endure." Literally, He will provide "a way to escape." The Greek word is *ek-bas-is*. He will provide *ekbasis*. A term used for a mountain pass. The picture is of travelers trapped in the mountains when a pass is discovered so they can escape to safety. Of course you have to look for the pass – the way out, and you have to take it, but you can

be assured of the faithful and sustaining power of the Holy Spirit. Victory over temptation is possible through humble trust.

You may wonder why God allows temptation – He does not tempt you, but He does allow temptation and trials - because they will make you stronger.

James 1:3b NIV

The testing of your faith develops perseverance.

James 1:12 NLT

God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

- Wrong desires and temptations happen to everyone. You're not the only one who has that particular desire or thought you struggle with. You're not being singled out, you're not worse than other Christians.
- Others have resisted temptation and so can you.
- Any temptation can be resisted because God will help you resist it.
- God gives you a way to resist temptation by helping you recognize people and situations that give you trouble.
- Run from anything you know is wrong; Stay away from anything or anyone that can cause you to fall.
- choose to do only what is right;
- pray for God's help
- You have a split second between the temptation and sin to take God's path of escape. Become aware of that split second of time and "Accept the victorious possibilities of grace."

3. (Guideline for Christian Living) Live in the Consistent Strength of Fellowship

1 Corinthians 10:15-17

You are reasonable people. Decide for yourselves if what I am saying is true. When we bless the cup at the Lord's Table, aren't we sharing in the blood of Christ? And when we break the bread, aren't we sharing in the body of Christ? And though we are many, we all eat from one loaf of bread, showing that we are one body.

The word, "sharing" means "having in common" "fellowship" "partnership." What we share in common is pictured so well in Holy Communion that we took today at the Lord's Table; it is a sharing in the redemptive work of Christ. And this communion with the Lord brings fellowship with each other. We all shared in the cup representing the Blood of Christ; and we all ate from one loaf of bread showing that we are one body. We are part of one body. Christ is the head and we are all part of His Body. We not only need each other we are one with each other. There is strength in this fellowship that we share.

A minister visited a man who had not been to church in a while. During the visit the man told the pastor, "I can worship God just as easily in my house as I can in a church pew." They were having this conversation while sitting before a fireplace in which the embers glowed. Silently the minister went to the fireplace, took the tongs, and lifted a single glowing coal from the fire and placed it alone on the hearth. Soon it cooled down and became black ash. The fellowship -neglecting Christian said, "Ah, you need not say a word. I understand what you mean. I cannot worship alone any more than I can live alone. I'll be in my place at the church next Sunday." The environment of the church is basic to Christian growth.

4. Choose the inspiring freedom of love

1 Corinthians 10:23-24, 31-33; 11:1 NIV

"Everything is permissible"-but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"-but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others... So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

The highest principle of conduct is not self-expression but consideration of the good of others. Seek to do all for the glory of God, seek not your own good but the good of others, seek to live that others may be saved. Let our freedom in Christ be this, the freedom of love.

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2. Accept the victorious possibilities of grace
3. Live in the Consistent Strength of Fellowship
4. Choose the inspiring freedom of love