

Paul hasn't changed his thought direction since chapter 8. Remember that he was writing to address an issue about whether it was right to eat meat that had been sacrificed to an idol. Some people ate meat that had been sacrificed to idols, and they felt free in doing so. Others felt like it was wrong and that it somehow compromised their newfound faith. We learned that we as Christians have the freedom to partake in many things, but sometimes in doing so, we might cause our brothers or sisters in Christ to stumble. We might have strong convictions that we are free to do certain things, but other Christians think that those things are fundamentally wrong, so we must pray through these areas of disagreement.

These are what we call "grey areas." You might feel free in doing certain things, but others will say, "I disagree and don't think it's right to participate in that." Paul went on to tell them in chapter 9 that biblical knowledge about matters can easily become a point of conceit and cause a person to become puffed up. For this reason, love needs to take a higher priority in our lives than doing things that we have a right to enjoy. This means you might have a biblical understanding of certain liberties you have in Christ, but you must be sensitive and not pull others into a lifestyle that might be injurious to their spiritual lives.

Paul then gave quite a few examples of how our rights are laid down in chapter 9. Last week, you might have learned that even athletes have a right to do things, but they restrict themselves from doing them so they can win a crown of leaves. They do this to stay in shape. We should be able to lay certain rights down as well. In this chapter, Paul will use an example of the Nation of Israel to show further what he means. In summary, he's saying that even though all of Israel enjoyed certain spiritual freedoms and privileges, they were not careful and they fell into sin and were destroyed. They should have made it to the Promised Land, but they did not due to sin and disobedience.

Note: All translations are NKJV unless specified otherwise.

10 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ²all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. (1 Corinthians 10:1-5).

In speaking to the Gentiles there in Corinth, Paul gives the example of Israel, and how, despite many miraculous events and spiritual inheritances, Israel chose a path of sin and disobedience. This means that they had received an abundance of the goodness of God, yet they chose to rebel and fall into sin. Paul gives the example of being guided by a pillar of cloud by day.

Remember that Israel was privileged to be led by the Holy Spirit in the form of a cloud during the day as they crossed the desert. And, they all experienced a sort of baptism as they passed through the dry land through the middle of the Red Sea. Likewise, they enjoyed the benefits of God's provision of manna in the wilderness. And when they were thirsty, three or four times in the desert God miraculously provided water to them. As a matter of interest we find that provision of waters in: (1) Marah, where God turned the bitter water into sweet water (Exodus 15:22-25), (2) Elim, where there were abundant fresh springs (Exodus 15:27), (3) Rephidim (Massah 'tested' and Miribah 'quarreling'), there at the base of Sinai, and (4) Kadesh, where God told Moses to speak to the rock, and instead he struck it. All four of these instances demonstrate Israel's fear, defiance, and anger in the face of God's provision. Paul is warning the Corinthians of the danger of disregarding the blessings and provisions of God.

⁶ Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷ And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." ⁸ Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹ nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰ nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Corinthians 10:6-11).

Paul explains that the sin of the Israelites was born in their "lusting after evil things." I have heard Christians so many times asking such things as, "How in the world could the Jews have fallen so quickly from God after experiencing the marvelous blessings and liberation that they experienced in Egypt?" Well, we do exactly the same thing. God proves His faithfulness again and again into our lives, and we are quick to turn our heads and think that we got where we are on our own. In the space of just fifty days after leaving Egypt, they arrived at Sinai. Moses went up on the mountain, and the people became bored and impatient with doing things God's way. They took the treasures that He had given them, and they threw them in a fire and fashioned a golden calf. They took their bodies that now didn't belong to slave masters, but instead belonged to themselves, and they had an orgy at the base of Mount Sinai. Within a few short days they went from being the trusting people of God to being debased animals doing whatever their flesh desired.

Paul is analogizing this to the conduct of the Corinthians (and we might as well include ourselves in this) who had found freedom in Christ. They had enjoyed the joys of their new-found salvation and baptism, and they had partaken in God's provision of the living water of Jesus who now was present in their lives. And no sooner had they entered into the family of God than they were back sacrificing to idols and engaging in temple prostitution and illicit sex with one another. In short, they were a spiritual mess. Paul points out that on account of their wickedness, God struck down 23,000 of those in the desert, and others with illness, snake bites, and other judgments. These things were done to sternly warn believers to be careful stewards of the blessings of God.

SO HOW DO WE STAY OUT OF THE SIN TRAP?

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).

These verses are some of the most comforting verses in the Bible. Paul is telling them to be careful, and stay vigilant! There are temptations that are all around us. We are constantly besieged by the world, the flesh, and the devil. BUT God is faithful! As a young camper at Camp Peniel, I learned 1 Corinthians 10:13 which has been a great source of deliverance in my life. This verse should be committed to memory by every believer hearing this message. Let's look at this verse in detail.

13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. 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. (1 Corinthians 10:13, ESV).



Paul is clear that whatever temptation comes our way, it has come to other people. It's not that unusual. We are not unique. We are not experiencing something that has never been experienced by others. When we are tempted to engage in thoughts, words, or deeds that are sinful and not pleasing to God, He absolutely WILL NOT LET YOU BE TEMPTED BEYOND YOUR ABILITY TO HAVE VICTORY. He will

always provide you with a way to escape. You will note that in the photo above, the door is locked, but the window is open, providing a way to escape from what is going on in the room. The key Greek word here for a "way of escape" is *εκβασιν* "ekbasin." This means an exit door, a way out, or some means of escape. This can be like an emergency exit or a path to get out of a tight spot. GOD WILL MAKE A WAY OUT. You won't be strong enough to do this on your own, BUT HE IS ABLE. William Barclay, a Scottish theologian explained it in military terms. He gives the example of an army totally surrounded by enemy forces, and then out of nowhere, a way to escape destruction is unexpectedly found. Barclay says that it might be an unknown mountain pass or some other way.¹

So how exactly does this whole temptation thing really work in the life of a believer? First a thought comes into your mind to do something that you know is not honoring to God. It is a

¹ <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/dsb/1-corinthians-10.html>

persistent thought that over time you can talk yourself into. Most temptations begin in the mind. Here's what we need to do in those cases:

- 1 First, admit to yourself that you're entering a place of thinking that is not right. In fact, it is contrary to what God's word commands of you. Realize that it is common and not specific to you. It's been encountered and dealt with by other people a million times over. Realize that you will not be able to overcome this by your own strength, but God promises to give you His strength to handle it.
- 2 God absolutely promises you an escape hatch or an emergency exit. This can look many ways. You will have to look for it. It might include:
 - a. The supernatural strength to say "no" and to stand firm.
 - b. An actual opportunity to flee from the temptation. When Potiphar's wife begged (or maybe even commanded) Joseph to come lie with her, the Bible tells us he fled! You must make a decision to turn and flee.
 - c. In wisdom, remove yourself from the temptation. The problem is that often you'll want to stay near the temptation because it's gotten a hold of your mind. It's pleasing to you. It's exciting to you.
 - d. Turn to prayer, scripture, and confess the temptation to another trusted accountability partner who will not condemn you or criticize you. Often when we confess a sin, it loses its power over us.
 - e. Contemplate the consequences of giving in to your temptation. Think through how it will destroy you, your reputation, and your relationship with others.
 - f. Confess to the Lord that you're in a bind, and you need Him to deliver you.

The goal is to persevere through the temptation and to remain faithful. You probably won't have immediate relief nor will you have the pressure of the temptation being immediately removed. Give it to God and He will deliver you from it moment by moment until it abates. Paul is telling the Corinthians that they too can be delivered from anything and everything that will come their way.

Flee from Idolatry [KEY WORD IS PARTICIPATION – DON'T PARTICIPATE]

¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵ I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [Greek: participation] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [Greek: participation] of the body of Christ? ¹⁷ For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. (1 Corinthians 10:14-17).

Paul says that the Corinthians have also participated in the blessings of God. They are one in the Spirit and need to hold fast and hold together. In order to get away from these various temptations that come our way, we must learn to FLEE. But it seems that some of the believers

felt like their freedom extended to attending feasts, etc where the pagan gods were being worshipped. Paul is drawing a line and he gives a warning for being careful NOT TO PARTICIPATE. Participation means to “take part in,” “to play a role in,” to “have a hand in,” and to “be associated with.” When a believer attends a pagan feast a believer is participating. That is over the line. When he took the sacrificed meat home and ate it there was no participation in the evil associated with it.

18 Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? 19 What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? 20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He? (1 Corinthians 10:18-22).

Paul then moves on to instructing believers to not partake of the ways of the world. Here, he is telling them to be careful to not get too close to sinful ways. Don't flirt with your freedoms. You might end up partaking in them. Don't see how close you can get to the edge without falling off.

All to the Glory of God

23 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. 24 Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being. 25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; 26 for "the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness."

27 If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake. 28 But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness." 29 "Conscience," I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? 30 But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks?

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, 33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. (1 Corinthians 10:23-33).

It's hard to think of how this last part of this chapter might apply to our lives. We aren't Christians in India facing a decision of whether or not to eat food sacrificed to idols, or even with the possibility of eating halal meat that was supposedly slain in a manner to please Allah. I hesitate to even mention how it might be applied to each of our lives because our individual temptations can be so different. Each of us is living through different things that seek to pull us

from a path of holiness in our living. One of our congregants was discussing this with me this week and I think he came very near to giving a good explanation of what Paul is talking about here. As believers, we are in the world but not of the world. In his own case, he said at a young age he was immediately attracted to the night club scene the first time he saw it. He was staying in a hotel and passed by the lounge. He decided to go in and see what it was all about. For him the attraction was the loud music that he loved, the girls all over the place, and the up-close dancing. As he involved himself in all of this scene, it led to compromising himself as a single man.

He explained, "I know that in Christ I'm free to go there and have a drink, but I cannot and should not participate in the whole bar scene." He has fled that as it led to compromise in his life. Another example might be hearing needed news at the water fountain at work, but without precautions a person who is weak could get caught up in the gossip mill. It might be riding animals in a rodeo away from home, but it doesn't involve what might go on in the camp sites and the trailers after the lights have gone out. We're free to go shopping, but if you have a buying addiction, it's probably better for you to exercise restraint and not just "going shopping." It could lead to your excess. Learn to identify your temptation triggers and avoid them. Anything and everything that we do must be done to the glory of God. It's fine to spend a few minutes on Facebook, but if we spend an entire evening scrolling through videos we've accomplished nothing. I think the key for the believer is **always resisting the pull** that the world, the flesh, and the devil have on our soul to take us to places where we will not prosper in the Lord. Avoid those places. Flee from those places. I'm not just talking about physical places, but anything and everything that is a threat to your Christlikeness. It might be a place of fantasy and unfaithfulness in your own mind.

The Corinthians weren't exempt from falling into sin and neither are we. Whatever we engage in, we should ask ourselves, "Does this bring glory to God and does it increase my passion for Christ and a life of holiness, or is it a dead end street bringing Him no glory and taking me away from Him? It is easy to lie to ourselves just about anything and everything. Ask the Holy Spirit to see you as you truly are and to reveal to you how you really are. It's okay to come near to the world at many points in our lives, but we must not drift over to being of the world. When we are "of the world" and no longer just "in the world," we are not abiding in Christ nor allowing Him to abide in us. We are wasting the precious gift of life and not being all that our Lord intends for us to be.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.