CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

1 Corinthians Chapter 10 — Examples, Warnings, and the Glory of God

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 10 continues Paul's answer about food offered to idols.

In Chapter 8, Paul taught that knowledge must be guided by love.

In Chapter 9, he showed how he gave up his own rights for the gospel.

He ended Chapter 9 with a warning about himself.

Even an apostle must discipline himself so that he is not disqualified.

Now, in Chapter 10, Paul applies that warning to the whole church.

The strong believers in Corinth felt very secure.

They had been baptized.

They shared in the Lord's Supper.

They knew idols were nothing.

So they thought they could go to idol feasts without any danger.

Paul answers with a history lesson.

Israel also had great spiritual privileges.

They were all under the cloud.

They all passed through the sea.

They all ate the manna and drank from the rock.

And that Rock was Christ.

Yet most of them died in the wilderness.

They craved evil things.

They worshiped idols.

They committed sexual immorality.

They tested the Lord.

They grumbled.

Their story was written as a warning for us.

“Let the one who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.”

But Paul also gives one of the greatest promises in the Bible.

God is faithful.

He will never allow His people to be tempted beyond what they can bear.

He always provides a way of escape.

Then Paul gives a clear command.

“Flee from idolatry.”

Idols themselves are nothing.

But demons stand behind idol worship.

A believer cannot share in the Lord's table and the table of demons.

Finally, Paul gives practical guidance.

Meat sold in the market may be eaten freely.

A meal in an unbeliever's home may be enjoyed freely.

But if someone points out that the food was offered to idols, love may call us to set it aside.

And Paul sums up everything with one great principle:

“Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

The chapter moves through six movements:

- Israel as an Example (verses 1–5).
- Lessons from Israel's Failures (verses 6–12).
- God's Faithfulness in Temptation (verse 13).
- Flee from Idolatry (verses 14–22).
- Seeking the Good of Others (verses 23–30).
- Do All Things for God's Glory (verses 31–33).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 10 is:

Spiritual privileges do not protect those who play with sin, but God is faithful to help His people escape temptation, so believers must flee idolatry, seek the good of others, and do everything to the glory of God.

I. UNDER THE CLOUD, THROUGH THE SEA

1 Corinthians 10:1 — Our Fathers

“Moreover, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud and all passed through the sea.”

Paul begins with Israel's history.

“I do not want you to be unaware.”

The Corinthians were proud of their knowledge.

But they had forgotten important lessons.

Paul calls the Israelites **“our fathers.”**

Most of the Corinthians were Gentiles.

But in Christ, they had become part of God's family.

Israel's story was now their story.

Then Paul reminds them of two great blessings.

They were under the cloud.

God led them by a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night.

His presence was with them.

They passed through the sea.

God opened the Red Sea and brought them out of Egypt.

Notice the word **“all.”**

Every Israelite shared in these blessings.

Cross References

Exodus 13:21

> By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to lead them on their way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so they could travel by day or night.

Exodus 14:22

> and the Israelites went through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on their right and on their left.

Psalm 78:13

> He split the sea and led them through it. He made the water stand up like a wall.

Spiritual Principle

The history of God's people is written for all who belong to Him.

Key Truth

Every believer has a family history that goes back to Abraham and the Exodus.

II. BAPTIZED INTO MOSES

1 Corinthians 10:2 — In the Cloud and in the Sea

“They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,”

Paul uses a surprising word.

“Baptized.”

Israel was **“baptized into Moses.”**

Passing through the sea and walking under the cloud joined them to Moses as their leader.

It was like a baptism.

It marked them as God's people under the leadership of Moses.

Paul is drawing a picture for the Corinthians.

They had been baptized into Christ.

They thought baptism made them safe, no matter how they lived.

But Israel had been **“baptized”** too.

And as Paul will show, that did not protect them when they turned away from God.

Cross References

Exodus 14:22

> and the Israelites went through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on their right and on their left.

Exodus 14:29

> But the Israelites had walked through the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on their right and on their left.

Romans 6:3

> Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Spiritual Principle

Outward religious signs are good, but they cannot replace a faithful heart.

Spiritual Warning

Do not trust in a ceremony while ignoring the Lord.

III. SPIRITUAL FOOD

1 Corinthians 10:3 — They All Ate

“and all ate the same spiritual food,”

Israel also received **spiritual food.**

This was the manna.

Every morning for forty years, God sent bread from heaven.

Paul calls it **spiritual** because it came directly from God.

It was a miracle of His provision.

Once again, the word is **“all.”**

Every Israelite ate it.

Paul is pointing to the Lord's Supper.

The Corinthians ate the bread of the Lord's Supper.

Israel ate bread from heaven too.

Cross References

Exodus 16:15

> When the Israelites saw it, they asked one another, “What is it?” because they did not know what it was. Moses told them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.”

Exodus 16:35

> The Israelites ate manna for forty years, until they came to a land where people lived. They ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.

Psalm 78:24

> He rained down manna for them to eat. He gave them grain from heaven.

Spiritual Principle

God faithfully provides for His people every day.

Key Truth

Jesus is the true bread from heaven, far greater than the manna.

IV. THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST

1 Corinthians 10:4 — Spiritual Drink

“and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”

Israel also received **spiritual drink.**

In the desert, there was no water.

God told Moses to strike a rock, and water poured out.

This happened more than once.

Then Paul makes an astonishing statement.

“That Rock was Christ.”

Christ Himself was present with Israel in the wilderness.

He was the true source of their life and provision.

In the Old Testament, God is often called **“the Rock.”**

Paul identifies Christ with that Rock.

This is another clear testimony to the deity of Jesus.

He existed long before Bethlehem.

And He cared for His people in the wilderness.

Cross References

Exodus 17:6

> I will stand there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink. So Moses did this while the elders of Israel watched.

Numbers 20:11

> Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water poured out, and the people and their animals drank.

Deuteronomy 32:4

> He is the Rock. His work is perfect, and all His ways are just. He is a faithful God who does no wrong. He is upright and fair.

Spiritual Principle

Christ has always been the source of life for God's people.

Key Truth

The same Christ who gave water in the desert gives living water to all who come to Him today.

V. GOD WAS NOT PLEASED

1 Corinthians 10:5 — Scattered in the Wilderness

"But with many of them God was not pleased, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness."

Here is the shocking turn.

All received God's blessings.

But with many of them God was not pleased.

In fact, of the adults who left Egypt, only two—Joshua and Caleb—entered the Promised Land.

The rest died in the wilderness.

“Their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.”

They had been delivered from Egypt.

They had seen miracles.

They had eaten bread from heaven.

Yet they never reached the land God promised.

Privileges did not save them from the results of their sin and unbelief.

Cross References

Numbers 14:29

> Your bodies will fall in this wilderness—every one of you twenty years old or older who was counted and who complained against Me.

Numbers 14:32

> But as for you, your bodies will fall in this wilderness.

Hebrews 3:17

> And with whom was God angry for forty years? Wasn't it with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

Spiritual Principle

Great spiritual privileges bring great responsibility.

Spiritual Warning

Being near God's blessings is not the same as being faithful to God.

VI. EXAMPLES FOR US

1 Corinthians 10:6 — Do Not Crave Evil Things

“Now these things became examples for us, so that we should not crave evil things as they did.”

Paul explains why he is telling this story.

“These things became examples for us.”

The word Paul uses is the source of our word **type.**

It means a pattern or a warning sign.

Israel's story is a pattern for us to learn from.

The first warning is about **craving.**

“So that we should not crave evil things as they did.”

In the wilderness, the Israelites grew tired of manna.

They craved the meat they used to eat in Egypt.

God gave them meat, but a plague followed.

The place was named **“the graves of craving.”**

Craving is where every other sin begins.

Cross References

Numbers 11:4

> The mixed crowd of people among them began to crave other food, and the Israelites started crying again and said, “If only we had meat to eat!”

Numbers 11:34

> So that place was named Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had craved other food.

Psalm 106:14

> In the wilderness they gave in to their cravings. In the desert they put God to the test.

Spiritual Principle

Sinful desire is the root of sinful action.

Application

Watch your cravings.

What you long for will shape where you go.

VII. DO NOT BE IDOLATERS

1 Corinthians 10:7 — They Rose Up to Play

“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.””

The second warning is about **idolatry.**

Paul quotes from the story of the golden calf.

While Moses was on the mountain receiving God's law, the people made a calf of gold.

They called it their god.

Then they held a feast.

“The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”

Play here means wild partying that likely included immoral behavior.

This is exactly what was happening at idol feasts in Corinth.

Eating, drinking, and partying in honor of false gods.

Paul says, **“Do not be like them.”**

Cross References

Exodus 32:6

> So the next day they got up early and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the people sat down to eat and drink, and got up to party.

Exodus 32:4

> He took what they gave him, shaped it with a tool, and made it into a metal calf. Then they said, “Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up out of Egypt.”

Exodus 32:19

> When Moses came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, he burned with anger. He threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

Spiritual Principle

Idolatry often comes dressed as celebration.

Key Truth

The golden calf was made by people who had just seen God part the sea.

No one is too blessed to fall into idolatry.

VIII. NOR SEXUAL IMMORALITY

1 Corinthians 10:8 — Twenty-Three Thousand in One Day

“Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell.”

The third warning is about **sexual immorality.**

Paul points to the time when Israel was camped near Moab.

The Israelite men began sleeping with Moabite women.

And these women invited them to worship their gods.

Sexual sin and idolatry went together.

The same was true in Corinth.

God judged Israel with a plague.

“In one day twenty-three thousand fell.”

The book of Numbers gives the total as twenty-four thousand.

Many Bible students explain that Paul is speaking of those who died **“in one day,”** while Numbers gives the full number for the whole plague. Others note that both numbers are round figures.

Either way, the judgment was terrible.

Cross References

Numbers 25:1

> While Israel was staying at Shittim, the men began to commit sexual sin with Moabite women.

Numbers 25:9

> But 24,000 people died in the plague.

Psalm 106:29

> They made the LORD angry by what they did, and a plague broke out among them.

Spiritual Principle

Sexual sin and idolatry often travel together.

Spiritual Warning

God takes sexual sin seriously.

It cost Israel dearly, and it still brings great harm today.

IX. DO NOT TEST CHRIST

1 Corinthians 10:9 — Destroyed by Serpents

“Nor let us test Christ, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents.”

The fourth warning is about **testing the Lord.**

In the wilderness, the people complained against God and Moses.

They hated the manna.

They doubted God's goodness.

They pushed to see how far they could go.

God sent poisonous snakes, and many died.

Notice that Paul says they tested **Christ.**

Once again, Paul shows that Christ was present with Israel in the wilderness.

The Corinthians were testing Christ too.

They were going to idol feasts to see how much they could get away with.

Cross References

Numbers 21:5

> They spoke against God and against Moses: “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread and no water, and we hate this worthless food!”

Numbers 21:6

> Then the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people. They bit the people, and many Israelites died.

Psalm 78:18

> They tested God on purpose by demanding the food they craved.

Spiritual Principle

It is dangerous to see how close we can get to sin without being hurt.

Application

Do not test the Lord's patience.

Trust Him and obey Him.

X. NOR GRUMBLE

1 Corinthians 10:10 — Destroyed by the Destroyer

“Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.”

The fifth warning is about **grumbling.**

Grumbling might seem like a small sin.

But in the wilderness, Israel grumbled again and again.

They grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

And in doing so, they grumbled against God.

After Korah's rebellion, the people grumbled, and a plague killed thousands.

Paul says they were **“destroyed by the destroyer.”**

This may refer to the angel God used to bring judgment, as at the first Passover.

Grumbling is the opposite of trust.

It says, **“God is not good, and I deserve better.”**

Cross References

Numbers 16:41

> The next day the whole community of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. “You have killed the LORD's people,” they said.

Numbers 16:49

> But 14,700 people died from the plague, besides those who had died because of Korah.

Exodus 12:23

> When the LORD passes through to strike down the Egyptians, He will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway. He will not let the destroyer enter your houses to strike you down.

Spiritual Principle

Grumbling is a sign of a heart that does not trust God.

Application

Replace complaining with thanksgiving.

Thankfulness is the cure for grumbling.

XI. WRITTEN FOR OUR WARNING

1 Corinthians 10:11 — The Ends of the Ages

“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our warning, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”

Paul repeats his main point.

“These things happened to them as examples.”

These were real events in history.

“They were written for our warning.”

God had them recorded so that we would learn from them.

“Upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”

Believers live at the turning point of history.

In Christ, all the ages of God's plan have reached their goal.

We are living in the last days.

That makes the lessons of history even more urgent.

Cross References

Romans 15:4

> Everything written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

2 Timothy 3:16

> All Scripture is breathed out by God and is useful for teaching, for correcting, for setting things right, and for training in how to live rightly.

Hebrews 9:26

> Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the world was created. But now He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to take away sin by sacrificing Himself.

Spiritual Principle

The Old Testament is God's word for us today.

Key Truth

Those who do not learn from history are in danger of repeating it.

XII. TAKE HEED LEST YOU FALL

1 Corinthians 10:12 — The One Who Thinks He Stands

“Therefore let the one who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.”

Here is the warning in one sentence.

The strong believers in Corinth felt very secure.

“I know idols are nothing.”

“I have been baptized.”

“I share in the Lord's Supper.”

“Nothing can hurt me.”

Paul says that kind of confidence is dangerous.

“Let the one who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.”

The person most in danger is the one who thinks he cannot fall.

Pride lowers our guard.

Humility keeps us watchful.

Cross References

Proverbs 16:18

> Pride comes before destruction, and a proud spirit comes before a fall.

Galatians 6:1

> Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should gently help that person back on the right path. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

Romans 11:20

> That is true. They were broken off because they did not believe, and you stand only because you believe. So do not be proud, but be afraid.

Spiritual Principle

Overconfidence is one of the most dangerous places a believer can stand.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The moment you think you cannot fall is the moment you are most likely to.

XIII. GOD IS FAITHFUL

1 Corinthians 10:13 — A Way of Escape

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. 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, so that you may be able to bear it.”

After the warning comes a wonderful promise.

This is one of the most loved verses in the Bible.

Paul gives four great truths about temptation.

First, your temptation is not unique.

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity.”

Others have faced it.

Others have overcome it.

You are not alone.

Second, God is faithful.

“But God is faithful.”

This is the foundation of the promise.

Our hope is not in our strength, but in God's character.

Third, God sets limits.

“Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.”

God controls how far temptation can go.

Fourth, God provides a way out.

“But with the temptation will also make the way of escape.”

With every temptation comes a door.

Our job is to look for it and take it.

This means no believer can honestly say, **“I had no choice.”**

Cross References

James 1:13

> When someone is tempted, he should not say, “God is tempting me.” God cannot be tempted by evil, and He does not tempt anyone.

Hebrews 2:18

> Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.

2 Peter 2:9

> So the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials and to hold the wicked for punishment on the day of judgment.

Spiritual Principle

God's faithfulness is greater than any temptation we face.

Application

When temptation comes, do not ask, **"Can I resist?"**

Ask, **"Where is the way out God has given me?"**

Then take it.

XIV. FLEE FROM IDOLATRY

1 Corinthians 10:14 — "My Dearly Loved"

"Therefore, my dearly loved, flee from idolatry."

Paul now gives a clear command.

Notice how tenderly he begins:

"My dearly loved."

His warning comes from love.

Then the command:

"Flee from idolatry."

Paul does not say, **"Be careful around idolatry."**

He does not say, **"See how close you can get."**

He says, **"Run."**

In Chapter 6, Paul told them to flee sexual immorality.

Now he tells them to flee idolatry.

Some sins must not be managed.

They must be escaped.

And notice how this connects to verse 13.

Fleeing is often the way of escape God provides.

Cross References

1 John 5:21

> Dear children, keep yourselves away from idols.

Exodus 20:3

> You must not have any other gods besides Me.

1 Thessalonians 1:9

> For people everywhere are telling how you welcomed us, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

Spiritual Principle

Some temptations are not to be fought but fled.

Key Truth

Anything that takes God's place in our hearts is an idol.

XV. JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES

1 Corinthians 10:15 — I Speak to Wise People

“I speak to wise people; judge for yourselves what I say.”

Paul appeals to their understanding.

“I speak to wise people.”

The Corinthians prided themselves on their wisdom.

Paul invites them to use it.

“Judge for yourselves what I say.”

He is about to give them an argument.

He wants them to think it through and see that it is true.

Paul does not just give orders.

He reasons with them.

Cross References

Proverbs 1:5

> Let the wise listen and learn more, and let those who understand gain good guidance.

1 Kings 3:9

> So give Your servant an understanding heart to govern Your people and to know the difference between good and evil. For who is able to govern this great people of Yours?

Hebrews 5:14

> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant practice have trained themselves to tell the difference between good and evil.

Spiritual Principle

God wants His people to think carefully and understand His truth.

XVI. THE CUP AND THE BREAD

1 Corinthians 10:16 — Participation in Christ

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?”

Paul points to the Lord's Supper.

“The cup of blessing.”

This was the cup over which believers gave thanks to God.

“The bread that we break.”

This was the bread shared at the Lord's Table.

Paul says both are **“a participation”** in Christ.

The word means **sharing**, **fellowship**, or **communion.**

When believers share the Lord's Supper, they share in the benefits of Christ's death.

They express their fellowship with Him.

They declare that they belong to Him.

This is not just a meal.

It is a spiritual union.

Cross References

Matthew 26:27

> Then He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “All of you drink from it.

Matthew 26:28

> This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Luke 22:20

> In the same way, after supper He took the cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.”

Spiritual Principle

The Lord's Supper expresses our deep fellowship with Christ.

Key Truth

To share in the Lord's Supper is to say, **“I belong to Jesus.”**

XVII. ONE BREAD, ONE BODY

1 Corinthians 10:17 — We All Partake

“For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.”

The Lord's Supper also expresses unity among believers.

“We, being many, are one bread and one body.”

Many people.

One loaf.

One body.

When believers eat from the same bread, they show that they belong to one another.

The Lord's Supper is not only a vertical fellowship with Christ.

It is also a horizontal fellowship with His people.

This was an important lesson for a divided church.

Cross References

Romans 12:5

> In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and each of us belongs to all the others.

Ephesians 4:4

> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called.

John 17:21

> I pray that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us, so that the world will believe that You sent Me.

Spiritual Principle

Sharing in Christ means sharing life with His people.

Application

When you come to the Lord's Table, remember that you are coming with your brothers and sisters.

XVIII. PARTAKERS OF THE ALTAR

1 Corinthians 10:18 — The Example of Israel

“Look at Israel according to the flesh: are not those who eat the sacrifices partakers of the altar?”

Paul gives a second example.

In Israel, when people brought certain sacrifices, part of the animal was burned on the altar.

Part was eaten by the priests.

And part was eaten by the worshiper and his family.

By eating from the sacrifice, the worshiper shared in the worship at the altar.

He was joined to the God to whom the sacrifice was offered.

The point is clear.

Eating a sacrificial meal is not neutral.

It means taking part in worship.

Cross References

Leviticus 7:15

> The meat of the fellowship offering given to give thanks must be eaten on the day it is offered. None of it may be left until morning.

Leviticus 3:3

> From the fellowship offering, he must present to the LORD an offering made by fire: all the fat that covers the inner organs and all the fat attached to them,

Deuteronomy 12:27

> Present your burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD your God, both the meat and the blood. The blood of your other sacrifices must be poured beside the altar of the LORD your God, but you may eat the meat.

Spiritual Principle

Sharing in a sacrificial meal means sharing in worship.

XIX. IS AN IDOL ANYTHING?

1 Corinthians 10:19 — Paul Clarifies

“What do I mean then? That an idol is anything, or that what is offered to idols is anything?”

Paul anticipates a question.

If eating at the altar means sharing in worship, is Paul saying idols are real gods?

Is he saying that idol meat has some special power?

No.

In Chapter 8, Paul already agreed that **“an idol is nothing.”**

A statue cannot hear, see, or act.

The meat is just meat.

But as the next verse shows, there is something more going on.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 8:4

> So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: we know that an idol is nothing at all in the world, and there is no God but one.

Isaiah 44:9

> All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who speak up for idols are blind and foolish, and they will be put to shame.

Psalm 115:4

> Their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands.

Spiritual Principle

Idols themselves have no power.

XX. SACRIFICED TO DEMONS

1 Corinthians 10:20 — Fellowship with Demons

“No, but 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.”

Here is the hidden danger.

The idol is nothing.

But behind idol worship stand **demons.**

“The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God.”

Paul is echoing Moses, who said the same thing about Israel's idolatry.

People may think they are worshiping Apollo or Aphrodite.

But in reality, their worship is going to evil spiritual powers.

So Paul says:

“I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.”

The strong believers thought idol feasts were harmless.

Paul warns them that they were stepping into spiritual danger.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 32:17

> They sacrificed to demons, not to God—to gods they had never known, new gods that had only recently appeared, gods your ancestors never feared.

Leviticus 17:7

> They must no longer offer their sacrifices to goat-idols, which they have been chasing after like an unfaithful wife. This is a law for them that will last for all generations.

Psalm 106:37

> They even sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons.

Spiritual Principle

False worship is never spiritually neutral.

Key Truth

The idol is nothing.

The demon behind it is real.

XXI. THE LORD'S TABLE AND THE TABLE OF DEMONS

1 Corinthians 10:21 — You Cannot Have Both

“You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons.”

Paul draws the line.

“You cannot.”

Not, **“You should not.”**

You cannot.

It is impossible to be loyal to both.

The cup of the Lord and **the cup of demons.**

The Lord's table and **the table of demons.**

A believer cannot share in the Lord's Supper on Sunday and share in idol feasts during the week.

This is spiritual unfaithfulness.

It is like a husband who is loyal to his wife on some days and to another woman on other days.

Cross References

Malachi 1:12

> But you treat My name as unholy when you say, “The Lord's table is defiled, and its food is not worth respecting.”

Deuteronomy 32:38

> Where are the gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up and help you! Let them give you shelter!

2 Corinthians 6:16

> What agreement can God's temple have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: “I will live with them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be My people.”

Spiritual Principle

Loyalty to Christ cannot be shared with any rival.

Application

Is there anything in your life that competes for the loyalty that belongs to Christ?

XXII. PROVOKING THE LORD TO JEALOUSY

1 Corinthians 10:22 — Are We Stronger Than He?

“Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?”

Paul ends this section with two sharp questions.

“Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?”

God's jealousy is not like human jealousy.

It is His holy love for His people.

He will not share them with false gods.

Israel provoked God to jealousy with idols, and they suffered for it.

“Are we stronger than He?”

The strong believers called themselves **“strong.”**

Paul asks, **“Are you stronger than God?”**

Can you challenge Him and win?

Of course not.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 32:21

> They made Me jealous with what is not God and made Me angry with their worthless idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people. I will make them angry with a foolish nation.

Deuteronomy 32:16

> They made Him jealous with foreign gods. They made Him angry with their disgusting idols.

Exodus 20:5

> Do not bow down to them or worship them, because I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God. I punish children for the sin of their parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me.

Spiritual Principle

God's jealous love will not share His people with idols.

Spiritual Warning

No one is strong enough to play games with God.

XXIII. NOT ALL THINGS BUILD UP

1 Corinthians 10:23 — Beneficial and Upbuilding

“All things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful, but not all things build up.”

Paul now moves from temple feasts to everyday situations.

He repeats the Corinthian slogan from Chapter 6.

“All things are lawful.”

And he answers it again.

“But not all things are beneficial.”

Some things may be allowed, but they are not helpful.

“But not all things build up.”

Some things may be allowed, but they do not strengthen others.

The question is not only, **“Can I do this?”**

The question is also, **“Will this help me and others grow in Christ?”**

Cross References

Romans 14:19

> So let us work hard at doing what brings peace and what helps one another grow.

Galatians 5:13

> Brothers and sisters, you were called to be free. But do not use your freedom as an excuse to please your sinful nature. Instead, serve one another in love.

Romans 15:2

> Each of us should please our neighbor for his good, to help him grow strong in faith.

Spiritual Principle

Christian freedom asks not only what is allowed, but what is helpful and upbuilding.

XXIV. THE GOOD OF OTHERS

1 Corinthians 10:24 — Not One's Own Good

“Let no one seek his own good, but the good of others.”

This verse sums up the Christian way of life.

The world says, **“Look out for yourself.”**

Jesus says, **“Look out for others.”**

The Corinthians were seeking their own good.

Their own freedom.

Their own rights.

Their own comfort.

Paul calls them to seek **the good of others.**

This is exactly what Jesus did.

He did not seek His own good.

He gave Himself for us.

Cross References

Philippians 2:4

> Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Romans 15:2

> Each of us should please our neighbor for his good, to help him grow strong in faith.

Philippians 2:21

> For everyone else looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Love seeks the good of others before its own.

Application

In every decision this week, ask, **"How will this affect others?"**

XXV. EAT WHATEVER IS SOLD

1 Corinthians 10:25 — No Questions of Conscience

"Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience,"

Now Paul gives practical guidance.

Much of the meat sold in Corinth's market had come from temple sacrifices.

Should a believer ask where every piece of meat came from?

Paul says no.

“Eat whatever is sold in the meat market.”

Once the meat is sold in the market, it is just food.

Buying it is not worship.

“Without raising questions of conscience.”

There is no need to investigate.

Believers can eat with a clear conscience.

Paul is not being careless here.

He is drawing a clear line between taking part in idol worship and eating ordinary food.

Cross References

Romans 14:14

> I know and am fully convinced in the Lord Jesus that no food is unclean in itself. But if someone believes something is unclean, then for that person it is unclean.

1 Timothy 4:4

> For everything God created is good, and nothing should be rejected if it is received with thanks.

Romans 14:20

> Do not tear down God's work over food. All food is clean, but it is wrong to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.

Spiritual Principle

Believers are free to enjoy ordinary things without needless worry.

XXVI. THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S

1 Corinthians 10:26 — Everything in It

“for “the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.””

Paul gives the reason from Psalm 24.

“The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.”

Jewish families often said these words as a blessing before meals.

All food comes from God.

It belongs to Him, not to idols.

An idol cannot claim the meat.

God made it, and He gives it to His people to enjoy with thanksgiving.

Cross References

Psalm 24:1

> The earth belongs to the LORD, and everything in it—the world and all who live in it.

Psalm 50:12

> If I were hungry, I would not tell you, because the world and everything in it is Mine.

Deuteronomy 10:14

> The heavens, even the highest heavens, belong to the LORD your God, and so do the earth and everything in it.

Spiritual Principle

Everything good in creation belongs to God and can be received with thanks.

Key Truth

Every meal is a gift from the Lord who owns the whole earth.

XXVII. INVITED BY AN UNBELIEVER

1 Corinthians 10:27 — Eat What Is Set Before You

“If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you choose to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising questions of conscience.”

Paul now addresses meals in an unbeliever's home.

Notice that he does not forbid believers from going.

“If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you choose to go.”

Christians are free to share meals with unbelievers.

This is a great opportunity to build friendships and share Christ.

“Eat whatever is set before you.”

Do not insult your host by questioning every dish.

Enjoy the meal with thanks.

This is just what Jesus told His disciples when He sent them out.

Cross References

Luke 10:7

> Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, because the worker deserves his pay. Do not move from house to house.

Luke 10:8

> When you enter a town and they welcome you, eat whatever they serve you.

Romans 14:6

> Whoever sets apart a certain day does it for the Lord. Whoever eats meat does it for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God. And whoever does not eat meat does it for the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Spiritual Principle

Believers are free to build friendships with unbelievers and enjoy their hospitality.

Application

Accept invitations from unbelievers.

Your presence at their table can open doors for the gospel.

XXVIII. “THIS HAS BEEN OFFERED IN SACRIFICE”

1 Corinthians 10:28 — For Conscience' Sake

“But if anyone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice to idols,” do not eat it, for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience—”

Paul now gives an exception.

Suppose someone at the meal says, **“This was offered to idols.”**

Then the situation changes.

“Do not eat it.”

Why?

“For the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience.”

The person who spoke up may be a weaker believer who is troubled by it.

Or it may be an unbeliever who is testing whether you take your faith seriously.

Either way, eating now would send the wrong message.

It might wound a weak conscience.

Or it might make it look like you approve of idol worship.

Cross References

Romans 14:15

> If your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer living in love. Do not let what you eat destroy someone for whom Christ died.

Romans 14:21

> It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else that causes your brother or sister to stumble.

1 Corinthians 8:9

> Be careful, however, that the way you use your freedom does not make a weaker believer stumble.

Spiritual Principle

Love may call us to give up a freedom when someone else's conscience or witness is at stake.

XXIX. THE OTHER PERSON'S CONSCIENCE

1 Corinthians 10:29 — Why Should My Freedom Be Judged?

“I mean the other person's conscience, not your own. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience?”

Paul clarifies.

“I mean the other person's conscience, not your own.”

Your own conscience may be perfectly clear.

But you give up the meat for the sake of the other person.

Then Paul asks a question:

“Why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience?”

This question can be read in two ways.

Some see it as Paul explaining why he gives up his freedom: so that it will not be wrongly judged and spoken of as evil.

Others see it as Paul protecting the believer's freedom: another person's conscience does not get to control what you believe is right in general.

Either way, the believer's freedom remains real, but love decides how it is used in each situation.

Cross References

Romans 14:16

> So do not let what you think is good be spoken of as evil.

Romans 14:22

> Keep what you believe about these things between yourself and God. Blessed is the person who does not condemn himself by what he approves.

1 Corinthians 8:12

> When you sin against your brothers and sisters in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Our freedom is real, but love decides when to use it and when to lay it down.

XXX. WITH THANKFULNESS

1 Corinthians 10:30 — Why Am I Denounced?

“If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?”

Paul continues the thought.

“If I partake with thankfulness.”

A believer who eats with thanks to God is not sinning.

The food is God's gift.

“Why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?”

Paul does not want his good gift from God to be spoken of as evil.

So in some situations, he will choose not to eat, so that his thanksgiving is not turned into a cause for blame.

Cross References

1 Timothy 4:3

> They forbid people to marry and tell them not to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be received with thanks by those who believe and know the truth.

1 Timothy 4:4

> For everything God created is good, and nothing should be rejected if it is received with thanks.

Romans 14:6

> Whoever sets apart a certain day does it for the Lord. Whoever eats meat does it for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God. And whoever does not eat meat does it for the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Spiritual Principle

What we receive with thanks should never become a cause of harm to others.

Key Truth

Thankfulness turns ordinary meals into acts of worship.

XXXI. DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD

1 Corinthians 10:31 — Whatever You Do

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

Here is the great principle that ties everything together.

“Whether you eat or drink.”

Even the most ordinary things.

Breakfast.

Lunch.

A cup of water.

“Or whatever you do.”

Work.

Rest.

Family.

Friendships.

Everything.

“Do all to the glory of God.”

To glorify God means to show how great and good He is.

Every part of life can display His worth.

This answers the question about food offered to idols.

The question is not just, **“Is it allowed?”**

The question is, **“Will it bring glory to God?”**

Cross References

Colossians 3:17

> Whatever you do, in word or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Colossians 3:23

> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord and not for people.

1 Peter 4:11

> If anyone speaks, he should speak as one speaking God's words. If anyone serves, he should serve with the strength God gives, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Spiritual Principle

The goal of the Christian life is the glory of God in everything.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

There is no part of life too small to be done for the glory of God.

XXXII. GIVE NO OFFENSE

1 Corinthians 10:32 — To Jews, Gentiles, or the Church

"Give no offense, either to Jews, or to Gentiles, or to the church of God,"

Paul names three groups.

Jews—God's ancient people who did not yet believe in Jesus.

Gentiles—the nations who did not know God.

The church of God—believers from both groups.

Christians must not needlessly offend any of them.

This does not mean Christians should never say anything people disagree with.

The message of the cross itself offends many.

But we must not put unnecessary obstacles in anyone's path.

Our behavior should never be the reason someone rejects Christ.

Cross References

Romans 14:13

> So let's stop judging one another. Instead, decide never to put anything in the way of a brother or sister that would make them stumble or fall.

2 Corinthians 6:3

> We do not put any obstacle in anyone's way, so that no one can find fault with our ministry.

Romans 15:2

> Each of us should please our neighbor for his good, to help him grow strong in faith.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel may offend, but our behavior should not.

Application

Is there anything in how you live that might keep someone from Christ?

XXXIII. THAT THEY MAY BE SAVED

1 Corinthians 10:33 — The Profit of Many

“just as I also please all people in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.”

Paul points again to his own example.

“I also please all people in all things.”

This does not mean Paul was a people-pleaser who changed the truth to win approval.

It means he gave up his own preferences to serve others.

“Not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many.”

He put others first.

And his goal was clear:

“That they may be saved.”

Everything Paul did was aimed at bringing people to Christ.

This ties together Chapters 8, 9, and 10.

Love limits liberty.

The gospel is more important than rights.

And all of it is for the glory of God and the salvation of others.

Cross References

Romans 15:1

> We who are strong should help carry the weaknesses of those who are not strong, and not just please ourselves.

Romans 15:2

> Each of us should please our neighbor for his good, to help him grow strong in faith.

1 Corinthians 9:22

> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that by every possible means I might save some.

Spiritual Principle

The goal of Christian freedom is not self-pleasing but the salvation of others.

Key Truth

The best use of our freedom is to help others come to Christ.

XXXIV. FIVE GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 10

1. History Is Written for Our Instruction

Israel's failures in the wilderness were recorded for our warning.

Principle:

We must learn from Israel to avoid idolatry, immorality, testing God, and grumbling.

2. God Limits Temptation

“God is faithful.”

Principle:

Though trials come, God is faithful to provide a way of escape so His people can endure.

3. Idolatry Is Deadly

“You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.”

Principle:

Participation in idol feasts is fellowship with demons and cannot be joined with the Lord's Table.

4. Christian Freedom Is Governed by Love

“Let no one seek his own good, but the good of others.”

Principle:

Our liberty must never become a stumbling block for a weaker brother or sister.

5. Everything Must Glorify God

“Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

Principle:

The believer's ultimate aim is to magnify God and to seek the good of others.

XXXV. ISRAEL'S BLESSINGS AND ISRAEL'S SINS

Verses 1–10 set Israel's privileges beside Israel's failures.

Five Blessings All Israel Shared

- They were under the cloud.

- They passed through the sea.
- They were baptized into Moses.
- They ate spiritual food.
- They drank from the spiritual Rock, which was Christ.

Five Sins That Brought Judgment

- They craved evil things.
- They worshiped idols.
- They committed sexual immorality.
- They tested Christ.
- They grumbled.

Key Truth

Being surrounded by God's blessings does not guarantee faithfulness to God.

XXXVI. FOUR PROMISES ABOUT TEMPTATION

Verse 13 is one of the most encouraging verses in the Bible.

1. You Are Not Alone

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity.”

2. God Is Faithful

“But God is faithful.”

3. God Sets the Limits

“He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.”

4. God Provides a Way Out

“With the temptation will also make the way of escape.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every temptation comes with a door marked “Exit,” and God Himself put it there.

XXXVII. GUIDANCE ON IDOL FOOD

Chapters 8–10 give a complete picture of how to handle food offered to idols.

Temple Feasts

Do not go.

Eating in honor of idols is fellowship with demons.

Meat in the Market

Eat freely without asking questions.

The earth is the Lord's.

A Meal in an Unbeliever's Home

Go if you wish, and eat what is served.

When Someone Says, “This Was Offered to Idols”

Do not eat it, for the sake of that person's conscience and your witness.

In Every Case

Seek the good of others.

Do everything to the glory of God.

Key Truth

Christian freedom is real, but it is always guided by loyalty to Christ and love for others.

XXXVIII. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 10 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Christ Was with Israel in the Wilderness

“That Rock was Christ.”

Christ Can Be Tested

Israel tested Christ in the wilderness.

Christ Gave His Body and Blood

The cup and the bread are a participation in His blood and body.

Christ Unites His People

“We, being many, are one bread and one body.”

Christ Is the Jealous Lord

He will not share His people with idols.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The same Christ who provided for Israel in the wilderness provides for His church today.

XXXIX. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why does Paul tell the story of Israel in the wilderness?

To warn the Corinthians.

Israel had great spiritual privileges, yet most of them fell in the wilderness because of sin.

The Corinthians must not think their privileges made them safe.

Question 2

What does it mean that “that Rock was Christ”?

Christ was present with Israel, providing for them in the wilderness.

He was the true source of their life.

Question 3

What five sins of Israel does Paul warn against?

Craving evil things, idolatry, sexual immorality, testing Christ, and grumbling.

Question 4

Why is grumbling so serious?

Grumbling shows a lack of trust in God's goodness.

In the wilderness, it led to judgment.

Question 5

What does “let the one who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall” mean?

Overconfidence is dangerous.

The person who thinks he cannot fall is in the greatest danger.

Question 6

What does verse 13 promise?

Our temptations are common to all.

God is faithful.

He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear.

He always provides a way of escape.

Question 7

Why does Paul say to “flee” from idolatry?

Idolatry is too dangerous to play with.

The best way to escape it is to run from it.

Question 8

What does the Lord's Supper teach about our relationship with Christ and each other?

It is a participation in Christ's body and blood.

It also shows that all believers are one body.

Question 9

If an idol is nothing, why is idol worship dangerous?

Because behind idol worship stand demons.

Taking part in idol feasts means fellowship with demons.

Question 10

Can a Christian eat meat bought in the market?

Yes.

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.

Believers can eat without raising questions of conscience.

Question 11

When should a Christian not eat something?

When someone points out that it was offered to idols.

Eating then could wound a weak conscience or look like approval of idol worship.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 10 change about the way Christians live today?

1 Corinthians 10 should cause believers to live:

- Learning from the mistakes of others.
- Humble and watchful, never overconfident.
- Trusting God's faithfulness in temptation.

- Fleeing idolatry in every form.
- Loyal to Christ alone.
- Seeking the good of others.
- Enjoying God's gifts with thanks.
- Doing everything for the glory of God.

XL. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 10 asks several important questions.

Am I Learning from the Failures of Others?

Or do I think I am too strong to fall?

What Am I Craving?

Are my desires leading me toward God or away from Him?

Do I Grumble?

Or do I give thanks?

Am I Looking for the Way of Escape?

When temptation comes, do I take the exit God provides?

Is There an Idol in My Life?

What competes with Christ for my loyalty?

Do I Take the Lord's Supper Seriously?

Do I remember what it means to share in Christ?

Am I Seeking the Good of Others?

Or only my own good?

Am I Doing Everything for God's Glory?

Even the ordinary things?

XLI. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Privilege Is Not Protection”

Israel had every advantage.

God's presence in the cloud.

God's power at the sea.

God's bread from heaven.

God's water from the rock.

Christ Himself was with them.

And yet most of them fell.

The Corinthians had every advantage too.

Baptism.

The Lord's Supper.

Spiritual gifts.

Great teachers.

And yet they were in danger.

It is possible to be surrounded by blessings and still drift from God.

It is possible to sit in church every week and still be playing with sin.

This creates a powerful principle.

God's blessings are meant to draw us closer to Him, not to make us careless.

The answer is not fear.

God is faithful.

He provides a way of escape.

The answer is humble watchfulness and wholehearted loyalty.

Principle:

Spiritual privilege is a call to faithfulness, not a license for carelessness.

XLII. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 10 was written to a church that felt very safe.

They were baptized.

They took the Lord's Supper.

They knew idols were nothing.

So they felt free to go to idol feasts.

Paul warned them with Israel's story.

He encouraged them with God's faithfulness.

He commanded them to flee idolatry.

He taught them to seek the good of others.

And he lifted their eyes to the highest purpose of all.

The glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10 therefore reminds us:

Never think you are too strong to fall.

Never play with sin.

Never forget that God is faithful.

Never divide your loyalty between Christ and anything else.

Never use your freedom without thinking of others.

The church does not need people who feel safe while playing with sin.

It needs:

Humble believers who learn from history.

Watchful believers who flee temptation.

Loyal believers who belong to Christ alone.

And joyful believers who do everything for God's glory.

The same truth still calls us:

Tell people that God is faithful.

Tell people that there is a way of escape.

Tell people that Christ is the Rock who gives living water.

Tell people that every part of life can glorify God.

And in all you do:

Take heed.

Flee idolatry.

Seek the good of others.

Glorify God.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the record of Your people in the wilderness, written for our warning and our hope.

Thank You that Christ was the Rock who provided for Israel, and that He provides for us today.

Thank You that You are faithful.

Thank You that You never allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear.

Thank You that You always provide a way of escape.

Thank You for the cup and the bread, by which we share in Christ and in one another.

Forgive us when we have craved what is evil.

Forgive us when we have grumbled instead of trusting You.

Forgive us when we have tested Your patience.

Forgive us when we have been overconfident and careless.

Forgive us for every idol we have allowed into our hearts.

Help us learn from the failures of others.

Keep us humble and watchful.

When temptation comes, open our eyes to the way of escape and give us strength to take it.

Help us flee from every form of idolatry.

Keep our hearts loyal to You alone.

Teach us to seek the good of others before our own.

And in everything we do—whether we eat or drink or whatever we do—may we do it all to Your glory.

“Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” — 1 Corinthians 10:31

Central Truth

Spiritual privileges do not protect those who play with sin, but God is faithful to help His people escape temptation, so believers must flee idolatry, seek the good of others, and do everything to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10 in One Sentence

Paul warns from Israel's history that spiritual privileges do not protect those who play with sin, promises that God is faithful to provide a way of escape in temptation, commands believers to flee idolatry because they cannot share both the Lord's table and the table of demons, and calls them to seek the good of others and do everything to the glory of God.