

## CHAPTER TEN

### *Analysis*

- A. Paul wanted the brethren to know that the remark he had just made about being rejected was illustrated by the experience of the fathers (1-13).
1. He reminds them of the things of that experience which illustrated the possibility of successfully running the race (1-4).
    - a) Things that were related to the beginning of the race.
      - (1) All were under the cloud.
      - (2) All passed through the sea (thus escaping from Egypt.)
      - (3) All were baptized unto Moses (submitting to his divinely appointed leadership) in the cloud and in the sea.
    - b) Things that were related to the running of the race.
      - (1) All ate the same spiritual food.
      - (2) All drank the same spiritual drink.
      - (3) That is, they kept drinking from a spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.
  2. He reminds them also of their tragic failure in the wilderness journey (5).
    - a) With most of them (all but two) God was not well pleased.
    - b) They were overthrown in the wilderness (because they lost sight of their goal, the promised land).
  3. He points out that these things were examples for the Christians (6-11).
    - a) They were examples to keep the Christians from the longing desire for things that were evil (6-10).
      - (1) Idolatry and its attendant sins (7).
      - (2) Fornication that some committed which resulted in the fall of 23,000 of them.
      - (3) Making trial of the Lord that caused them to perish by the plague of serpents.
      - (4) Murmuring (grumbling against God's program for them) that caused them to perish by the destroyer.
    - b) These were examples written to admonish the Christians upon whom the ends of the ages are come (11).

## I CORINTHIANS

4. In the light of this, he presents a solemn exhortation (12-13).
  - a) He indicates that what happened to Israel can happen to the Christian for he says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."
  - b) He shows, however, that one need not fall if he observes these principles:
    - (1) Temptations are on the human level.
    - (2) God is faithful and will not let you be tempted beyond your ability to withstand trial.
    - (3) He will make the way of escape that you may be able to endure it (God does His part; you must do yours).
- B. Paul presents a strong plea for his beloved fellow-Christians to flee from idolatry (14-22).
  1. He appeals to them as men who are capable of thinking to decide for themselves the merits of what he is saying (14-18).
    - a) He points out the significance of the cup and the bread.
      - (1) As to the cup which he calls a cup of blessing and which we bless, he asks, "It is a sharing in the blood of Christ, is it not?"
      - (2) As to the bread which we break, he asks, "It is a sharing in the body of Christ, is it not?"
        - (a) This means that we are many are one body as represented by the one loaf.
        - (b) That this is true is indicated by the fact that we all partake of the loaf.
    - b) He cites the example of Israel and asks, "The one eating the sacrifices are sharers in the altar, are they not?"
  2. He shows what is implied by this reasoning (19-22).
    - a) He asks, "Is the thing sacrificed to the idol anything, or is the idol anything?"
    - b) He answers by showing what is wrong with this practice:
      - (1) Pagans do sacrifice to demons and not to God.
      - (2) He does not want his brethren to become sharers with demons.
    - c) He proceeds to point out the impossibility of a Christian sharing in two completely opposite forms of worship.
      - (1) You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and of demons.
      - (2) You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.
      - (3) By two questions, he shows the folly of attempting to do so.

## CHAPTER TEN

- (a) Are we provoking the Lord to jealousy (by such conduct)?
  - (b) We are not stronger than He, are we?
- C. Paul cites the law of expediency to indicate the rule of conduct for one who might be involved in eating meat sacrificed to idols (23-33).
1. The principle involved in the law of expediency (22-24).
    - a) What is lawful should also build up the body of Christ: "All things are lawful; but not all things build up."
    - b) What is lawful should also benefit one's neighbor: "Let no man seek his own, but his neighbor's good."
  2. The principle applied to food sold in the markets (25-30).
    - a) Where no investigation is necessary:
      - (1) No need to investigate it's source for the sake of conscience.
      - (2) Why this is so: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."
    - b) Where there is no reason to refuse an invitation to dine with one who is not a believer:
      - (1) If you are invited and you are so disposed, go.
      - (2) No need to investigate the source of food set before you for the sake of conscience.
    - c) Where it might be necessary to forgo eating in the event it is pointed out that the food had been used in idol worship.
      - (1) The reason why this might apply:
        - (a) For the sake of the one who reveals the source of the food.
        - (b) For the sake of conscience.
      - (2) Paul explains the matter of conscience in such a case:
        - (a) It is not the conscience of the believer who understands about idolatry.
        - (b) But it is for the sake of the other's conscience who does not understand.
      - (3) He explains how the principle of limitation of liberty applies to such cases:
        - (a) Forgo eating, for why is my liberty judged (condemned) by another's conscience—that is of one who does not understand about idols?
        - (b) He gives thanks for the food, and asks, "Why am I evil spoken of when I eat?" This too can be avoided by forgoing the right to eat.

3. His concluding statement of principles governing the matter of eating meats sacrificed to idols (31-33).
  - a) In eating and drinking, "Do all things to the glory of God."
  - b) Give no occasion of stumbling to Jews, Greeks, or to the church of God.
  - c) Do not act selfishly, but for the good of the many just as Paul does.
  - d) The goal to keep in mind: "That they may be saved."

*Text*

10:1-13. For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, that our fathers were all 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 food; 4 and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ. 5 Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown 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. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 Neither let us make trial of the Lord, as some of them made trial, and perished by the serpents. 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer. 11 Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. 12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it.

*Lesson From the Experience of the Fathers (1-13)**Commentary*

*For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant.*—The closing thought of chapter nine about being rejected is continued in this chapter as the word "for" indicates. It is well to watch for these connecting terms in order to keep in mind the progress of the apostle's thinking. Too often we neglect these little words, especially when we come to the chapter division and as a result neglect to see the close connection between the chapters.

Paul is fond of the use of the term "brethren" because of his deep love and concern for all the members of the family of God. This word gives him an opportunity to show his concern particularly when he must rebuke them for failures or solemnly warn them of the perils that beset their way.

The word translated "ignorant" just as our own word simply means without knowledge. But our word seems to be harsher than the term Paul used. This may be the result of the way we use it or what we imply by it. Paul certainly was not chiding them when he said, "I would not have you ignorant." We are accustomed to a positive expression of this thought. We would prefer to say—and in doing so, more nearly express Paul's thought and spirit—"I do not want you to be without knowledge," or better, "I want you to know." He was concerned that they know the lessons taught by the experience of their fathers in the faith.

*our fathers.*—How could Paul take an example from the Old Testament Scriptures and use it with reference to a Gentile congregation? How could he speak of the ancient Jews as their fathers? We are aware of the fact that the church at Corinth was made up of Gentiles, perhaps for the most part, but there were Jews in it also. The Jew with his background of Old Testament history could be expected to understand such an illustration. Gentiles also could appreciate these Old Testament backgrounds just as we do today. God's kingdom is made up of believers in Christ whose spiritual heritage goes back to the faithful Abraham and to the nation that owes its origin to him. Paul argues in *Romans* that Abraham was the father of us all, not just the Jews who believed but the believing Gentiles also (Rom. 4:11, 16-17). This is the reason, then, for calling their attention to the fathers. The church recognizes no such distinctions Jews or Gentiles (Gal. 3:28).

Paul used the experience of Israel as they escaped from Egypt to show that the mere possession of rights, liberties, and blessings did not in itself guarantee victory. The Israelites had freedom, adequate leadership, and divinely provided sustenance but failed to enter the promised land. Their failure illustrates in a negative way what Paul had presented in a positive form in his illustration of the one who wins the race because he exercises self-control in all things.

*all under the cloud.*—God guided Israel through the trackless wilderness and protected them from the burning heat by day and gave them light by night (Ex. 13:21-22).

Panic struck the fleeing Israelites as they came to the Red Sea. Pharaoh and the Egyptian armies closed in on them as they camped by the sea. There was no possible way to go around the sea. There was no way to retreat. They murmured in their fright and wished they had died in Egypt. But "Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of Jehovah" (Ex. 14:13). They could see the Egyptians in close pursuit, but Moses said they were to see them no more. "The angel of God who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them: and it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel" (Ex: 14:19-20). As the children of Israel went through the sea on dry land, the Lord looked forth from the pillar of fire and of cloud and caused the Egyptians to be thrown into confusion as they saw that their chariots were becoming hard to move. Then Moses, at the command of the Lord, stretched forth his staff over the sea and the Egyptian armies drowned in the same sea through which the Israelites had passed in safety to the other shore (Ex. 14:15-31).

The cloud, then, represents the blessing of guidance and protection. Paul wanted the Christians to remember this as he urged them to follow the rules of self-control so that they would not be disqualified in the race for the crown of life.

*all passed through the sea.*—Various attempts have been made to discredit this statement. But the evidence of history as given in *Exodus* is sufficient to justify Paul in saying that they all passed through the sea. The assumption that they went through some shallow water to the north will not fit the description of the event as presented by Moses. To those who believe in God and His power, there is no problem in accepting what Moses said about it. God who made the universe and called the nation of Israel into existence was able to roll back the waters of the sea and let His people pass through on dry land.

*were all baptized.*—We have no clearer example showing that in baptism the sinner is separated from his sins. Israel was separated from the enemy in the Red Sea where the Egyptian army drowned. The Corinthians were to remember that they had been baptized, sanctified, and justified through the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. They were to enjoy the blessing of separation from sin by following the rules of life's race that led to the crown of life.

This incident also shows the action of baptism. There was a wall of water on either side of the people as they passed through the seas and the cloud was over them. They were baptized in the cloud and in the sea, not just the sea. It took both to complete the figure. The Egyptians were, of course, drowned in the sea, but this was not the figure of baptism, for baptism represents the way of escape from the bondage in sin.

*unto Moses.*—The preposition translated "unto" indicates progress toward some goal. It is motion whether in space or thought realm. It can be translated "into" or "for" or even "in" according to some scholars. The latter is evidently true in the later development of the language. But direction toward a goal or entrance into something or purpose seems to fit most of the cases in which it is used in the New Testament. Their baptism did bring them into the state of submission to his leadership. It was for the purpose of separation from Egypt and coming into the relationship that recognized Moses and their leader that they were baptized.

Baptism for the Christian means separation from sin and acceptance of the leadership of Christ who has all authority in heaven and on earth. He is both Lord and Christ. He saves, but He also requires the Christian to acknowledge His authority. How else can the Christian hope to run successfully the race and win the crown of life?

*did all eat the same spiritual food.*—Israel, cut off from all source of supply, was fed by the manna that God provided as they journeyed from Sinai to the promised land. The manna ceased on the day after the Israelites encamped at Gilgal where from that time on they were to eat the fruit of the land. See Joshua 5:10-12. Long before that time, however, Israel grew sick of the food that came from heaven. They said, "Our soul loatheth this light bread" (Num. 21:5). But many generations later, the group that ate the loaves and fish that Jesus miraculously supplied for them suggested that Moses had done a superior thing in giving their fathers the manna. Jesus had to remind them that it was God, not Moses, who gave the manna in the wilderness (John 6:31-32).

The manna represents the blessing of sustenance enjoyed by Israel. Thus it reminds the church at Corinth that they were being sustained by the blessings that came from Christ.

*did all drink the same spiritual drink.*—According to the record, water flowed from the rock only twice to quench the thirst of the children of Israel. The first time was at Rephedim where the thirsty

people cried to Moses to give them water to drink. They murmured against the Lord and charged Him with bringing them into the wilderness to die of thirst. God said to Moses that He would stand before him upon the rock in Horeb. Moses was told to strike the rock. Water gushed out when he did it. See Ex. 17:1-7.

The second time was at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin where Miriam died. The people were again without water and again the grumbling complaint arose when they said, "Would that we had died when our brethren died before Jehovah" (Num. 20:3). They neither remembered the time when God gave them water from the rock nor were they aware of the privileges that they were enjoying of drinking from the spiritual rock that accompanied them. But once again, the Lord told Moses to take the rod and assemble the people and speak to the rock and bring forth to them water from the rock. Moses said, "Hear now, ye rebels, shall we bring forth water out of this rock" (Num. 20:11)? He struck the rock twice and water came flowing from it to give the congregation and their cattle a drink. But Moses failed to give glory to God for the water. The Lord said to him, "Because ye believed not in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (Num. 20:12).

The expression "all did eat" considers the whole experience of Israel during the time that the manna was supplied. In the same way, the expression "all did drink" takes into consideration the whole time during which the Lord provided water for their wilderness journey. Twice on the journey, they drank from the water that came from the rock, and they also drank from the streams and pools to which the Lord led them.

*spiritual.*—Why does Paul describe the food and drink of the Israelites as spiritual? Some suggest that it was because God gave the food from heaven and the water from the rock. But Paul says that they continued to drink of the spiritual rock that accompanied them. A possible solution the problem is suggested by his remarks about the spiritual things he shared with the Corinthians in contrast to the material things which he had a right to expect them to share with him. That spiritual thing was the word of the cross that brought spiritual life to them. He says that Israel continued to drink of a spiritual rock that accompanied them and that rock was Christ. This is not to say that the literal rock from which the water flowed was a type of Christ, but that there was a spiritual rock from which

a life-giving stream flowed and that was Christ. A suggestion as to the spiritual food they enjoyed in the wilderness is given in Moses' words just before they went over into the promised land: "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live" (Deut. 8:3). Did Christ provide through Moses some spiritual food and drink for the children of Israel? His teaching did point to Christ (Deut. 18:15). Jesus said that Moses wrote about Him (John 5:46). The real significance of the manna is pointed out by Jesus in His discourse on the bread of life which He delivered just after the miracle of feeding the five thousand (John 6:31-35). It is possible that Paul is saying that Christ was present with His people all along the wilderness journey and that He was sustaining them spiritually by every word that proceeded out of His mouth for their direction, protection, and encouragement. For the New Testament teaching about water as a symbol of Christ, the source of eternal life, John 4:14 and 7:37-39. The Holy Spirit was given to the apostles who believed on Christ and from them He sent forth the message of eternal life that was like a flood of life-giving water. On the Day of Pentecost, men received this message of life and repented of their sins and were baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38).

*with most of them God was not well pleased.*—This is the point in the illustration: Paul had certain rights and liberties as a Christian and as an apostle, but he was willing to forgo his rights in order to make sure of winning the crown of life and not be disqualified in the race. The fathers had blessings, but were not willing to exercise self-control in all things. Therefore they were overthrown in the wilderness. They failed because they forgot their goal, the promised land.

Paul says that with most of them God was not well pleased. In fact, this included all of them of responsible age except Joshua and Caleb. The spies who had been sent in to the land came back with glowing reports of a land flowing with milk and honey, but they also said that there were giants in the land. The people were filled with fear and wanted to return to Egypt. Joshua and Caleb urged them to go up and possess the land. They said, "If Jehovah delight in us then will he bring us into this land and give it unto us" (Num. 14:8). Because they would not listen to the plea of these who had confidence in God, the Lord said to them, "As I live, saith Jehovah, surely as ye have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you: your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of

you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, that have murmured against me, surely ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear that I would make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephuneh, and Joshua the son of Nun" (Num. 14:28-30).

This tragic failure, the details of which are given in the specific cases that follow, is a solemn warning to the church at Corinth not to follow their example. They were, however, well on their way to do so as Paul plainly indicates.

*these things were our examples.*—We are indebted to the fathers for so many things. The priesthood of the Old Testament time helps us to appreciate our relation to Christ as high priest. The writer of *Hebrews* helps us to see this as well as the lesson of the system of worship in connection with the tabernacle. But in practical living, the example of the Israelites from the time of their escape from Egypt until they finally were located in the promised land is one filled with both warnings and encouragements for the faithful follower of Christ. *we should not lust after evil things.*—The word translated "lust" simply means strong desire. That desire may be for what is good. In that case it may be rendered "desire." For example, Jesus said that the prophets desired to see the things which His disciples were permitted to see (Matt. 13:17). The word is found again in its intensified form in Jesus's statement about His desire to eat the passover before His suffering (Lk 22:15). But when John speaks of the strong desire for the things of evil, we translate this word as "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life" (I John 2:16). For an example of the use of the term in both the good and bad sense, see Gal. 5:17.

Paul's evident purpose in his strong admonition in this chapter is to have the Corinthians have their hearts set on the things of Christ rather than on the things of evil.

*Neither be ye idolaters.*—The experience of the fathers had a particular application to the problem of idolatry in Corinth. Just as Israel pretended to worship God while partaking of idolatrous feasts so some of the Corinthians were attempting to worship Christ and at the same time participate in pagan worship. The incident to which Paul refers is the sin of Israel at Sinai when they made the golden calf and proclaimed a feast and said that these are the gods that led us out of Egypt. See Ex. 32:7-8.

*rose up to play.*—This word was used to describe the activity of children at play; but it was also used to describe the actions of the children of Israel in their worship of the idols. It is even used to describe David's expression of joy when the ark was brought up to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6:14). It is sometimes translated "dance" but with no reference to the modern dance which may often be described more accurately as "works of the flesh." See Gal. 5:19-21.

*Neither let us commit fornication.*—See comment on chapter five and six for the situation that existed in the church at Corinth. Paul was not dealing in mere hypothetical situations; he was facing the problem that actually existed at Corinth. The incident in the experience of the fathers to which he referred was their immoral conduct with the daughters of Moab. See Num. 25:1-18. Balaam had attempted to pronounce a curse on Israel but had been unable to do so. They involved themselves, however, in a curse by their immoral conduct that brought death to twenty-three thousand of them.

*Neither let us make trial of the Lord.*—This incident is described in Num. 21:4-9. The people complained about the things the Lord was doing for them. They were tired of the manna; they wanted to go back to Egypt. The Lord sent fiery serpents among them to punish them. Finally they acknowledged their sin and begged for relief. Moses was instructed to make the bronze serpent and lift it up so that those who were bitten could look at it and live. For further history of this bronze serpent see II Kings 18:4. Recall also Jesus' words to Nicodemus based on this incident of lifting up the serpent (John 3:14-15).

This incident had a definite bearing on the situation at Corinth. In their eagerness to exalt men to the place of leadership in the church, they had forgotten that the church was the temple of God and that their bodies were temples of the Holy Spirit which were not to be used for immoral purposes. See chapter six.

*Neither murmur ye.*—The word "murmur" suggests the guttural sound one makes when he grumbles about things that cause displeasure. It describes the complaint of the fathers against the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Actually their complaint was against the Lord for He had appointed these men to serve the people. The grumblers perished when the earth opened up and destroyed them. See Num. 16:3, 31-35.

But Paul had in mind the complainers at Corinth. Some of them had contended that he was not an apostle. The whole issue of apostolic preaching became the subject of criticism of envious men who

wanted to have authority over the church. See chapter nine for his defense of his apostleship and his rights as an apostle and as a Christian.

*for our admonition.*—Will the admonition go unheeded in the church today? The modern church faces virtually every problem that the church at Corinth faced. There is a serious question whether or not it will accept the admonition of the Lord through His apostle. If it fails, destruction is as inevitable now as it was then.

*upon whom the ends of the ages are come.*—The context seems to indicate that this is a reference to the climax of the history of the fathers with its lessons for those in the Christian age. We can reap the benefit of the examples of their failures as well as their successes. *him that thinketh he standeth.*—Were there some in Corinth who believed that they could not sin? The most dangerous position one can possibly occupy is the place of the self-satisfied one who assumes that he cannot be overcome by Satan in this life. The whole history of the fathers points out the folly of this assumption. Peter also boasted that he of all the apostles would never forsake Jesus. He said that he was willing to go to prison and to death with Him. Apparently, he was sincere about it; but he failed to reckon with the situation in which was soon to find himself that led him to deny that he had ever known such a person as Jesus.

*no temptation but such as man can bear.*—To those who would complain that the experiences of the fathers were different and couldn't possibly have a bearing on the trials through which they were going, the apostle had this reminder: the trials of the Christian were only human trials, that is, exactly as they were in the days of the fathers. God does not permit them to suffer trials that would be for angels or others above the human level. See the story of Job for the limit God placed on the activity of Satan as he tested the faith of God's servant.

John points out that there are just three things that make up all that is in the world of evil: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the reckless disregard for God in this life. All three of them were present in the temptation of man in Eden. We can easily identify them in the Wilderness temptation of Our Lord. Adam fell in the Garden, but Jesus endured all of Satan's efforts to cause Him to sin, yet without sin. Moreover, He showed that it was not necessary for any man to be overcome by the factors of Satanic temptation, for He used the Word of God to defeat the tempter. That same Word is

available to man for the same purpose. Let no one say that He defeated Satan as the Son of God. He was the Son of God, but He was also man. James says that God cannot be tempted (Jas. 1:13). Jesus' temptations were all on the human level just as ours are. We have the whole armor of God with which to withstand the devil. The shield of faith is sufficient to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. See Eph. 6:16. It certainly behooves the Christian to know God's Word and to trust Him, and to be on guard against the attacks of Satan at all times.

*Text*

10:14-22. Wherefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. 16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? 17 seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread. 18 Behold Israel after the flesh: have not they that eat the sacrifices communion with the altar? 19 What say I then? that a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have communion with demons. 21 Ye cannot dring the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

*Flee From Idolatry (14-22)*

*Commentary*

All that the apostle has said on the subject of idolatry in answer to the question of the Corinthians is now brought to focus on his concluding exhortation.

In itself, he has indicated, there is nothing to an idol. Therefore, meats used in idol worship are not affected as items of food. But the Christian has an obligation to his brother in Christ who may not possess this knowledge. Love builds up; Paul pleads the cause of love as he urges his beloved fellow-members of the body of Christ to flee from idolatry.

*Flee from idolatry.*—Idolatry is like a plague; it is a fearful evil; in it lurks a hidden danger. If the fathers were overcome by the sins that accompanied idolatry, how could the church hope to escape a like fate except by fleeing from this evil?

*I speak as to wise men.*—That is, to men who were able to think. This is not the same word translated "wise" in 1:26 where Paul says that there were not many among them who were wise according to

human standards. Greeks were worshippers of wisdom, but theirs was a wisdom of the immature as opposed to the mature wisdom which Paul preached in the message of the cross.

But these brethren were capable of using the minds God had given them. Paul appeals to them to do so in this matter of idolatry. He gives them concrete cases dealing with the subject that will help them as thinking men to make the right decision.

*The cup of blessing which we bless.*—Since he has discussed idolatry and its feasts, it is appropriate that he call their attention to the church and its worship of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

When the supper was instituted, Jesus took the cup and said, "This is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you" (Lk 22:20). In so doing He set it aside for a holy purpose, that is, blessed it by pointing out its meaning. Matthew says that "He took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and He gave to the disciples, and said, Take eat; this is my body" (Matt 26:26). The act of blessing was in the consecration of the cup to serve as the reminder of the blessing which Christ brought to His followers through His death.

The cup was not only blessed, it also contained the symbol of the blessing of remission of sins which Christ provided for us through His blood.

Christ also gave thanks for the bread and the cup (Lk 22:17; II Cor. 11:24). So we also give thanks for the cup, and, in doing so, we should remember that it was set aside for the holy purpose of reminding us of the blessing of remission of sins through the blood of Christ. Thus, we both give thanks and bless (consecrate) the cup in the Lord's supper.

*is it not a communion of the blood of Christ?*—This is said to show the thinking men among them that they cannot be idolaters and at the same time partake of the Lord's table. "Communion" means fellowship, or participation in a thing. Its root is a close synonym of the word "partake" which is found in verses 17 and 21. To say that the cup is a communion in the blood of Christ is to say that it is a means by which the Christian has a share in the blessing that comes from the pouring out of the blood of Christ, that is, remission of sins.

*is it not a communion of the body of Christ?*—What is true about the share we have in the cup is equally true of the bread. The bread is a symbol of the body of Christ. In His discourse on the Bread

of Life, Jesus explained His relation to His followers as the source life. As the fathers ate the manna—the only food available to them at the time—so the believers are to eat the living bread that came down out of heaven, that is, believe on Him to have life. He said, “the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world” (John 6:51). The bread of the Lord’s supper is a symbol of our participation or sharing in the blessing of eternal life. See John 6:40, 51, 53.

*one bread, one body.*—Not only do we as Christians participate in the life that is given through Christ, but we also have a relation to each other which is suggested by the one body of which we are members. There is only one bread which represents the one body which is the church. There are many members, but only one body. This is an important lesson on the unity of the members of the church and particularly so for the Corinthians in view of their divisions. In this context, the lesson is clearly one that shows the impossibility of being members of the body of Christ and at the same time being members of the demon that was worshiped in idolatry. All of us share in the blessings that come from the one loaf, the symbol of the unity of the body of Christ.

“One bread” means one kind of bread, not just one piece of bread. The bread Jesus used in the institution of the Lord’s supper was the unleavened bread of the passover feast. It is altogether fitting that we should use only unleavened bread in the Lord’s supper. The very principle of excluding leaven from the feast of passover suggests the necessity of the church excluding sin from its life. See I Cor. 5:6-7. To force this phrase to mean one piece of bread is to go beyond the requirements of the symbolism. There are congregations that are too large to be served by one piece of bread. But the one kind, unleavened bread, serves to remind them that they are one in Christ.

*Behold Israel after the flesh.*—The church as the spiritual Israel of God is to take a lesson from the history of the fathers. They who had a share in the sacrifice offered on the altar were in fellowship (partnership) with God. The worshiper shares in the sacrifice and becomes a partner of the deity who is thus worshiped. That is true whether they worshiped God or some demon represented by an idol.

*to demons, not God.*—The apostle has carefully laid the ground for the main thrust of his argument against Christians participating in idolatrous feasts. He did not say that the meat used in such feasts was thereby made unfit for food, nor did he say that an idol was anything in itself. But there is more to idolatry than appears in the external

ceremony of worshiping it: Gentiles sacrifice to demons and not to God.

*communion with demons.*—Christians should have fellowship or partnership with Christ, not demons. The enemies of Jesus attempted to discredit Him before the multitudes by saying that He was in league with Beelzebub, the prince of demons or Satan. See Matt. 12:24-30. Jesus easily refuted their charge by (1) showing that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, and (2) indicating that the pretended work of the Jewish exorcists was clearly counterfeit, and (3) presenting the illustration of the strong man's house. But no doubt there were some who did believe the false charge in spite of His defense.

Paul had the same difficulty at Philippi (Acts 16:11-18). He had to reject the testimony of the soothsaying girl who followed him saying, "These men are servants of the Most High God." This, of course, was true, but the apostle could not afford to have it said that he was an associate of demons.

This was the problem faced by the church at Corinth. If Satan could make some believe that the Christians were actually worshiping demons, then he would be able to discredit the church in the eyes of the pagans. Therefore, Paul said, "I would not that ye should have communion with demons."

*Ye cannot.*—There are some things that are impossible. To attempt to do two things that are absolutely opposite to each other such as drinking the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons simply results in demon worship. The worship of Christ is nullified. Jesus said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). God will not tolerate the worshiper who owns allegiance to demons.

*Or do we provoke the Lord?*—The reference is to the history of Israel as suggested in Deut. 32:21. Israel was continually going astray by worshiping idols. Like a husband who is made jealous because of an unfaithful wife, God is said to be jealous because Israel worshiped what was a "no-god." This was an insult to God. Were the Corinthians trying to make Christ jealous by paying homage to demons—evil spirits under the control of Satan?

*are we stronger than he?*—The quotation in Deuteronomy suggests that the Lord would provoke Israel that worshiped the "no-god" by giving consideration to those who were no people—that is, to those who had no standing in their eyes, the Gentiles. Did the Corinthians suppose that they could safely provoke the Lord by worshiping de-

mons? Did they assume that they were strong enough to keep Him from rejecting them and turning to others who would be faithful to Him?

*Text*

10:23-33. All things are lawful; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful; but not all things edify. 24 Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's good. 25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, eat, asking no question for conscience' sake; 26 for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. 27 If one of them that believe not biddeth you to a feast, and ye are disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience' sake. 28 But if any man say unto you, This hath been offered in sacrifice, eat not, for his sake that showed it, and for conscience' sake: 29 conscience, I say, not thine own, but the other's; for why is my liberty judged by another conscience? 30 If I partake with thankfulness, 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. 32 Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God: 33 even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved.

*Limitations of Christian Liberty (23-33)*

*Commentary*

*All things are lawful.*—This principle was used in 6:12 with reference to the use of the body. It seems to mean that there is a lawful purpose for everything God created, but it certainly does not imply that anything evil is lawful. Perversion of God's intended purpose results in evil. The principle is applied to meats that had been used in idolatrous worship. Such use did not harm them as food, but it might not be expedient to use them. Why? They might cause offense to the weak brother who did not understand this. In which case, it would be better to forgo the right (liberty) to eat. Selfishness leads one to insist on his right, but Christian consideration for others may often cause one to give up his right.

*Let no one seek his own.*—This principle can apply to many other things than meats. The lowliness of mind that causes each to look to the things of others rather than of self would solve much of the difficulty that occurs between brethren in the church, and perhaps in all the world as well. See Phil. 2:1-5.

*asking no questions.*—That is, do not conduct an investigation to discover the source of the food that may be set before you. Even if it

had been used in pagan worship, it was still good for food. One need not let it bother his conscience for the earth is the Lord's and all that fills it.

*if one of them that believe not.*—It was wrong for a Christian to be found eating in a temple of an idol, for his example might cause some one who did not understand to be led into idolatry. But the apostle is now considering another situation. In the event of a Christian being invited to the home of one who is not a Christian it is all right to go if one is so disposed. He need not trouble his conscience over the food since he knows that even if it had been used in idol worship it was good for food.

*But if any man say unto you.*—This was the thing to be concerned about. If one should say that the food had been used in the sacrifice to an idol, the Christian was to refrain from eating it.

*for conscience' sake.*—That is, for the sake of the conscience of the one who revealed the source of the food. Do not allow your liberty to be condemned by the scruples of another. But how can this be prevented? By forgoing the right to eat the meat when the weak brother reveals that it has been used in an idol's feast.

*If I partake with thankfulness.*—The Old Testament gave certain regulations as to clean and unclean animals, but Paul, in his letter to Timothy, says, "nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer" (I Tim. 4:4-5). But the problem at Corinth was somewhat different. Would the fact that one thanked God for his food be sufficient to satisfy the conscience of the brother who believed that he was worshipping an idol if he ate food that had been sacrificed to the idol? Paul's question is: "If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced?" Actually there was no reason why he should let this happen for he could forgo his right to eat the food and avoid the criticism. This is in accord with the principle of limitation of liberty which he has used as the solution of the problem throughout his discussion. No mere saying of thanks over food could change the mind of a weak brother who believed that eating the sacrifice would constitute worship of the demon. His sense of right and wrong is offended; for that reason one should refrain from eating even though he had given thanks for the food.

*do all to the glory of God.*—This is another principle regulating the conduct of the Christian. This like the principle of limiting liberty requires one to forgo certain rights for the sake of others. Do not offend Jews, or Greeks, or the church of God:

*as I please all men.*—See comment on 9:20-22. The apostle had set the example which he calls upon the Corinthians to follow. The goal he had in mind for himself and for them was the winning of some to Christ that they might be saved.

### *Summary*

The closing remark of chapter nine, "lest I myself be rejected," is explained in chapter ten. The abuse of rights can result in one being rejected. Take the case of Israel: they escaped from Egypt, but most of them did not reach the promised land for they perished in the wilderness. Among the many sins that caused them to fall was the sin of idolatry, the very thing about which Paul warned the Corinthians. Concern over being rejected is no idle thing. Israel fell, and the one who thinks he stands must take care lest he also fall.

The experience of the fathers had many lessons for the brethren at Corinth. Their escape from Egypt through the cloud and through the sea was like baptism. The fathers were sustained by food and water that was miraculously given to them. Paul speaks of their spiritual food and drink, for they continued to drink from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

But God was not pleased with most of them, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Just so, Paul warns the Corinthians not to lust for the things of evil. He warned against the sin of idolatry, and cited the example of Israel's worship of the golden calf at Sinai. Sin caused twenty-three thousand of them to fall in one day. Fiery serpents caused the complainers to perish. These things were written to admonish the Christians not to enter into such sinful practices. In view of this evidence, no one was to imagine that he could not. But it is not necessary to be overcome in temptation, for God will not permit a trial to befall one which man cannot endure. God is faithful and will along with the temptation provide the way out that it may be endured.

Summing up the whole argument about idolatry which began in chapter eight, Paul says, "Flee from idolatry." Then he turns to the Lord's supper to enforce his appeal. It is impossible to eat at the table of the Lord and at the table of demons also. Idolatry in reality is demon worship. The cup which we bless as we speak of its significance is a sharing of the blood of Christ. The bread which we break is a sharing of the body of Christ. Because there is one bread, we are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Israel became partakers of the altar when they ate the sacrifice that was offered on it. This

## I CORINTHIANS

does not say that there is anything to idolatry, but it is mentioned to call attention to the fact that idolatry is actually demon worship. Paul did not want them to be partakers of the demons who were worshiped in idolatry. The Lord would not permit one who is an associate of demons to be a partner with Him by eating at His table.

The closing word in answer to the question about meats sacrificed to idols brings up the law of expediency. There is a limit to the thing that is lawful, for not all things build up the body of Christ. Therefore, let no one seek his own welfare, but that of others.

As to the meats sold in the markets, eat them without inquiring into the source of supply for conscience' sake. The Lord created the earth and all that fills it. So, if some unbeliever invites you into his home, and you wish to go, eat the food set before you without asking about its source. But if one should say to you that it had been used in idol worship, don't eat it. You are to refrain for the sake of the conscience of him who called it to your attention. Why is liberty limited by the conscience of another? To keep him from stumbling, for Paul said, "If meat causes my brother to stumble, I will eat no more meat" (8:13). The Christian is to do all things for the glory of the Lord. Cause no one to stumble, neither Jew, nor Greek, nor the church of God. Be imitators of Paul as he imitated Christ and gave up his rights to win some to Christ that they might be saved.

### *Questions*

1. What is the connection between the thought of chapter ten and the closing thought of chapter nine?
2. Why did Paul use the word "brethren" in this chapter?
3. What was Paul's purpose in using the word "ignorant"?
4. How can we express the thought and spirit of the apostle on this matter?
5. How could Paul effectively use the examples of the Old Testament in discussing the problems of Gentile Christians?
6. How could he speak of the ancient Israelites as "our fathers" when writing to the Gentiles?
7. What are some of the things God provided for the fathers as they left Egypt?
8. How does their failure to enter the promised land illustrate the necessity of exercising self-control?
9. What is the history of the cloud that appeared to Israel during their journey from Egypt to the promised land?

## CHAPTER TEN

10. What was the situation of the Israelites as they came to the Red Sea?
11. How did God protect them?
12. What blessings are represented by the cloud?
13. What has been said in an attempt to discredit Moses' account of the crossing of the Red Sea?
14. What did Moses say about it?
15. What evidence is there to support his account?
16. What relation does the crossing of the Red Sea have to baptism?
17. What is meant by saying that they were baptized unto Moses?
18. What is the history of the manna?
19. What is the history of God's providing water for Israel on their journey through the wilderness?
20. What was the attitude of the fathers toward the manna?
21. How did the people in Jesus' time regard it?
22. Why does Paul say that they ate spiritual food and drank spiritual drink?
23. What is meant by the statement that a spiritual rock followed them?
24. What is meant by the statement that the rock was Christ?
25. How does God provide spiritual food for His people?
26. How did the Holy Spirit provide the life-giving stream of truth for sinful men on the Day of Pentecost?
27. Why did Paul say that God was not well pleased with the fathers?
28. What is the history of the refusal of the fathers to enter the promised land?
29. In what way were the failures of the fathers examples for us?
30. What is the meaning of "lust"?
31. What is the history of the idolatry which the fathers practiced at Sinai?
32. What is meant by the statement "rose up to play"?
33. How did the fathers make trial of the Lord?
34. What use did Jesus make of the incident of the fiery serpents?
35. What bearing did this have on the situation in the church at Corinth?
36. What are some of the occasions of murmuring of the children of Israel?
37. How did the complaints of the fathers explain the problem which was present at Corinth?
38. Why were the failures of the fathers written in the Old Testament?

## I CORINTHIANS

39. What position in history does the church occupy?
40. What may be the most dangerous position for a Christian to occupy?
41. What evidence have we that God expects His people to be victorious over temptation?
42. What provision did He make for their victory?
43. Why did Paul say, "Flee from idolatry"?
44. What is the difference between the references to wise men in 10:15 and 1:26?
45. What did Paul want the Corinthians as wise men to do?
46. Why is the cup called "the cup of blessing"?
47. What does "communion" mean?
48. What is the significance of the one bread?
49. How did the experience of Israel as they brought the sacrifices to God reveal to the Corinthians the evil of idolatry?
50. What was the reality back of the idol which the pagans worshiped?
51. Why did the enemies of Jesus attempt to show that He cast out demons by Beelzebub?
52. What are some of the impossible things for the Christian?
53. What did Paul mean by the question, "Do we provoke the Lord?"
54. What did he mean by the question, "Are we stronger than he?"

## CHAPTER TEN

55. How does the law of expediency apply to the matter of meats sacrificed to idols?
56. What other rule did Paul give for this situation?
57. What did he mean by "ask no questions"?
58. Was it ever right for the Christian to be found in a pagan temple partaking of the idolatrous feast?
59. Under what circumstances did Paul say a Christian might eat meat that had been sacrificed to an idol without investigating its source?
60. What should he do in the event some one called attention to the fact that the food had been used as a sacrifice to idols?
61. Whose conscience is to be considered in exercising one's liberty?
62. What is the place of thanksgiving in relation to eating food?
63. What is the meaning of Paul's question, "If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced?"
64. How could such a criticism be avoided?
65. What should be the purpose of the Christian in all his activity?

### *For Discussion*

1. What bearing does the faithfulness of the Christian in partaking of the Lord's supper have on a victorious life?
2. What are some things that your group could do to increase its effectiveness in winning some to Christ?