

Commentary on First Corinthians chapter 10 by Chuck Smith 9.17.23

Pastor John Donovan, cell phone 508-380-0471

Pastor Terry Gerlarneau, cell phone 603-455-4399

Web site todbc.org email us at opendoorbiblechurch@todbc.org

September memory verse Isaiah 40:8 (NKJV) The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

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Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and passed through the sea ([1Cr 10:1](#));

Now he is talking about their forefathers who were delivered out of Egypt. God used the cloud to guide them by day and the pillar of fire by night. The cloud had more than just a guiding. They were under the cloud. They were going to be spending time in that hot desert, and so what did God do? He put a cloud over them that shielded them from that hot desert. And whenever the cloud would move, they would move. And that is wisdom when you are out in the desert. And so God made a very great way of guiding them. The cloud would move and they would move to stay under the cloud.

Now, when they had come to the Red Sea and the Egyptian army came up behind them and had trapped them here in the valley, God took the cloud and moved it behind them and let it settle between them and the Egyptians. The Egyptians couldn't see what was happening, because of the fog, the cloud that had come down, and they couldn't see that the sea had departed and that the children of Israel were all escaping to the other side. And when God lifted the cloud, they saw what had happened. They saw the sea parted and they went dashing into the sea. Of course, the Lord allowed the sea to come back and they were drowned. But the cloud had a purpose more than just guiding them; it was a shelter to them. They lived under the cloud, walking when the cloud moved, living in the will of God, being guided by God through that wilderness experience. And how glorious it is that God will guide us, shelter us as we seek to walk after His will.

They passed through the sea, which is a symbol of water baptism, coming out of the life of the flesh in Egypt into a new relationship with God.

And they were all baptized ([1Cr 10:2](#))

You see that symbolism there passing through the sea.

unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and they did eat the same spiritual meat ([1Cr 10:2-3](#));

God gave them the manna, the bread from heaven that they all ate.

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And they did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ ([1Cr 10:4](#)).

So you remember, as the children of Israel came to Moses there in the area of Rephidim, the wilderness, and they said, "We are about to die of thirst, our cattle and all are about to die. What are we going to do?" And Moses went in and cried unto the Lord and said, "Lord, help me, these people are about ready to stone me." God said, "Take your rod that you used to strike the river in Egypt to turn it to blood and with the elders before the people strike the rock." And so he took his rod and smote the rock and water came forth, and the people drank and lived. They were saved. They drank, all of them, of that same spiritual Rock, and that Rock was Christ, who Himself said, "If any man is thirsty let him come unto Me and drink. And he that has a thirst let him come and drink [Jesus said] of the water of life freely." That is the last invitation in the Bible in the book of Revelation. The last invitation is for all men, "Whosoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely." The Rock smitten, if you partake and drink of Him you will have life.

But with many of them God was not well pleased: and they were overthrown in the wilderness ([1Cr 10:5](#)).

When Moses sent out the twelve spies to spy out the land, ten of them came back and gave an evil report, a report that planted fear in the hearts of the people. "The cities are big and the walls are high. And the people are like giants and we are like grasshoppers in their sight. They were huge people. We are not able to do it. We can't take it." There were two men, Joshua and Caleb, who came back bearing a bunch of grapes on a rod between them. And they said, "Look at these grapes. You have never seen anything like that in all your lives. Look at the size of the bunch of grapes here." "Oh, but we heard there are giants in the land." "Awe," they said, "they are bread for us." "Oh, we heard we can't take it." "Let's go in right now and take it." But the people listened to the ten and they turned. They didn't have faith and trust in God to deliver the land to them. So God said, "All right, you don't trust Me. You say that your children will be destroyed by them. I will tell you what. I am going to let you wander in this wilderness until this whole generation passes and your children that you say will be prey to them I will let them go in and take the land." Then began the longest funeral service in the world, forty years waiting for all of them to die. Only Joshua and Caleb were allowed to go in of that generation. So many of them perished in the wilderness.

Now these things were examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted ([1Cr 10:6](#)).

They said, "Let's go back to Egypt. Remember the garlic and the leeks in Egypt. Oh, they were so good. I haven't had garlic in so long. Just this manna and it is so bland. It is so mild. I am sick of it. Oh, if I only had the garlic of Egypt." They were desiring after the old life of the flesh, the life of Egypt, the fleshpots in Egypt.

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"And these were written for our examples that we would not lust after the things of the flesh, as they lusted."

Neither be ye idolaters ([1Cr 10:7](#)),

Now, several things here. They were lusting after evil things, the things of the flesh, desiring them. Secondly, many of them turned to idolatry. Remember, Aaron made the golden calf and the people were all dancing around the thing.

as some of them were; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day twenty-three thousand ([1Cr 10:7-8](#)).

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of the serpents ([1Cr 10:9](#)).

How did they tempt the Lord? They tempted Him because they were murmuring against God and against Moses, and said, "They brought us out in this place to kill us and it is terrible. We ought not to be here. We ought to go home." And the anger of the Lord was kindled and the serpents came into the camp and began to bite them; murmuring against God.

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all of these things happened to them for examples: that they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come ([1Cr 10:10-11](#)).

So twice here Paul says, "Now look, this is all here for an example unto you. It is all typical history. You need to learn from their mistakes. You are not to go after the flesh. You are not to desire after evil things. You are not to commit fornication. You are not to commit idolatry. You are not to murmur against God."

Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he falls ([1Cr 10:12](#)).

We are not to presume upon the grace of God.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it ([1Cr 10:13](#)).

The Bible says when a man is tempted he shouldn't say he is tempted of God. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed, and lust, when it is finished, brings forth sin. Temptation begins with the mind, the desire. What do I do with it?

Now, the temptations that we have are common to man. As I am living in this body I am going to be subject to certain temptations, the desires of my flesh, the drives of my

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flesh. That is common to man. But with that temptation, God is faithful to me. He will not allow me to be tempted beyond my limits. He will provide for me the way to escape in order that I will be able to bear it. But it is important that I take that way of escape.

God is not going to force you away from temptation. God isn't going to force you to be good. When temptation comes, there is always an escape route. God always provides the way of escape. If you fall to temptation, it is because you didn't heed the voice of God. You didn't take the way of escape that He provided. And I can testify of my own life that in every temptation where I fell there was the route of escape. I had the word of the Spirit to my heart. God said, "Get out of here." "Oh, I will just wait a little bit longer." No, I should have gotten out when the Lord said, "Get out." The way of escape was there, and so it was my failure, not God's. My sin is my responsibility, not God's. There are people that would like to throw it over on God. "Well, God made me this way and I just can't help it." Boy, you blame God for the worst things. It is my failure. God is faithful. I wasn't.

Wherefore, dearly beloved, flee from idolatry ([1Cr 10:14](#)).

Run! Get out of there!

Now, idolatry is setting up anything in your life or mine before God. It is putting something in your life before the Lord. That is idolatry. You are wrong if you think of idolatry as having a little thing that you have carved out, or someone else has carved out, and you have bought. And you kneel in front of it, and do your little thing before it, and burn candles around it, and pray to it. No! That will probably be no problem to any of you. Your idolatry is far more apt to have a shiny coat of paint, beautiful upholstery and a turbo engine inside. Something that gets in your heart and mind and life and precedes your walk with God. It becomes more important to you than your walk with God. Something that replaces God in your life. That is the idol. Flee idolatry.

I speak as to wise men; judge what I tell you. The cup of blessing which we bless ([1Cr 10:15-16](#)).

That is, when we gather together at the Lord's table and we take the cup and we bless it. This cup of blessing that we bless,

is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? ([1Cr 10:16](#))

The word *communion* there is that interesting Greek word *koinonia*. Is it not the oneness that we share with Christ, the communion that we have with Christ, or the fellowship that we have with Christ, that oneness that we are sharing with Him? This cup of blessing that we bless, whereby, as I drink, I am identifying myself with Him.

The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread ([1Cr 10:16-17](#)).

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So this communion with Jesus Christ, the blood of Christ and the body of Christ, whereby we become one with Him, and whereby we also become one with each other. As we all eat of the same bread, as we all drink of the same cup, we are becoming one with each other. Joined together in communion, joined together in commonness, joined together in fellowship, as we are, all of us, joined together with Jesus. That oneness in the body of Christ. Surely the communion service symbolizes it more graphically than anything else within the church. All partakers of the same bread. All partakers of the same cup, becoming one with Him and thus, with each other.

Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? ([1Cr 10:18](#))

Now, the idea of bringing in your peace offering and offering it unto God, the whole idea behind it was that of communion with God. So, you bring it into the priest and he would take it and butcher it and would cut a portion of the meat and would give it to you. Then you would take it out and roast it and then sit down and eat it. Now you have brought it and offered it to God. The fat and all was taken and burnt on the altar and the smoke went up as a sweet smelling savor unto the Lord. The priest took his portion, but now you have your portion. And with your family you are sitting there eating this roast beef, or this roast lamb. And as you are eating together, the idea is God has received a part of this and I am receiving a part of this, and so I am becoming one with God. For their whole concept of eating together was that of becoming a part of each other.

Say I take a loaf of bread. I break it and I give you a part of it and I take a part of it, and you eat it and I eat it. It is one loaf, but we are both eating from the same loaf. Maybe we have a bowl of soup here and we are both dipping our bread in the soup and eating it. Now that the bread that is nourishing me is also nourishing you. The bread that is being assimilated and becoming a part of the chemistry of my body is also becoming a part of the chemistry of your body. So the same loaf of bread is becoming part of you as it is assimilated in your body, but it is also becoming a part of me. Therefore, we are a part of each other, because we are both being strengthened and both of us are assimilating the same loaf of bread. And they really saw this and to them it was something that didn't need to be explained. It was just an accepted thing.

So when I offer a part of this meat to God and it is burnt on the altar unto the Lord, it is God partaking of it, and now I am eating of it, so I am becoming one with God. Beautiful thought, beautiful concept, and the beautiful awareness of becoming one with God.

Now we have that every time we partake of communion. I am becoming a part of Jesus Christ. He is becoming a part of me as we commune together and as I receive the cup and as I receive the bread, but also we are becoming a part of each other as we do it.

And so Israel after the flesh when they eat of the sacrifices. They are partakers of the altar. They are becoming one with God.

What say I then? that an idol is any thing ([1Cr 10:19](#)),

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Now we are going back to chapter 8, and the whole thing started as he was talking about them eating meat in the house of idols and some weak brother going by and seeing them eating there and thinking, "If he can do it, then I can do it," and stumbling because his conscience would bother him. You say you have freedom, and unfortunately, they were exercising this freedom of eating in the temple of the various gods there in Corinth. "I have freedom in Christ." So, Paul is coming back to that now.

What shall I say then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God ([1Cr 10:19-20](#)):

That is, the pagan sacrifices in the pagan temples are offerings unto the demons. They are not offerings to God.

and I would not that ye should have fellowship [communion] with demons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he? ([1Cr 10:20-22](#))

So Paul is really coming down on the practices of some of those Corinthians of eating meat in the pagan temples there in Corinth.

This is an interesting thing. In these pagan temples, Paul declared that actually the offerings were made unto devils, literally demons. In [Deuteronomy 32:16-17](#), He said, "They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they Him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee."

So the concept is that the worship of these false gods, the worship of these idols was, in reality, the worship of demons.

A lot of people say, "Well, all roads lead to God. And those people are so sincere in their worship, though they don't believe in Jesus. Surely God will recognize their sincerity and all, because what difference does it make, if we follow Confucius, Buddha, or whatever. Aren't we all seeking after God?" Well, that isn't the concept that we receive from the Bible. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me" ([John 14:6](#)). Paul said, "They are sacrificing unto devils. And in the same token, as you eat of the sacrifices made to God and become one with God, if you are eating of the sacrifices made to devils, then you are becoming one with the devil, with the demon that is represented in that idol. And I would not have you to have this koinonia, this fellowship, this communion, this oneness," Paul said, "with devils. Therefore, you cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and of the cup of devils. You cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils."

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Now he is no doubt thinking of chapter 32 of Deuteronomy, the thing that we just read to you. Because, again, it says that they provoked the Lord to jealousy in sacrificing to devils, and he said, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?" Are we stronger than He? Dare we to oppose Him?

All things are lawful for me ([1Cr 10:23](#)),

He comes back to this refrain.

but all things are not expedient ([1Cr 10:23](#)):

Yes, you may prove that it is all right that I am living under grace and I believe in Jesus Christ, and therefore it is all right and you may enter your argument. And yes, it may be lawful, but it isn't expedient. It is going to slow you down. It is going to hinder your progress. If you are running in the race, run to win and don't take on extra baggage or weight that will slow you down. It is not expedient.

all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not ([1Cr 10:23](#)).

There are things that tear me down and do not build me up. There are things that take me away from Christ and do not bring me closer to Christ. And my desire is to get close to Him. Therefore, though it may be lawful, you may prove that it is all right, it is taking me away from my fellowship with Him. It isn't building me up in Him, or building Him up in me. Therefore, though it may be lawful, wisdom tells me don't do it. It will slow you down. It will tear you down. I am desiring to win the race. I am desiring to be found in Christ, built up in Him.

Let no man seek his own, but every man another's profit ([1Cr 10:24](#)).

Don't just live for yourself. Don't just think about yourself, but think about others and live for others.

Whatsoever is sold in the market, go ahead and eat it, don't ask question for your conscience' sake ([1Cr 10:25](#)):

Now, a lot of the meat that was sold in the butcher shops in Corinth were used first in sacrifices in the pagan temples. So, when you went to the meat market to buy meat, you say, "I would like a pound of hamburger." Was that hamburger offered as a sacrifice in the temple? Paul said don't ask that kind of stuff. Just buy it, take it home and eat it for your conscience sake. What you don't know won't hurt you. And so for conscience sake just don't ask questions, because you know it doesn't matter. If you are asking those kind of questions, then you are going to find yourself tripping over your own conscience. So eat and don't ask questions.

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For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If any unbeliever invites you to a feast, and you are obligated to go; whatever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience' sake ([1Cr 10:26-27](#)).

So he sets before you a big steak. "Did you offer this meat as a sacrifice to a pagan god?" Paul said don't ask those questions, just eat it. You don't ask the questions for your conscience sake.

Now, if the fellow, when he sets it before you, says, "We offered this to Zeus." Then Paul said, "Don't eat it." Not that it would hurt you, but it might hurt the guy that offered it to you seeing your liberty. So if they volunteer the information, then say, "No thank you," so that you are not stumbling him or offending him.

So if any man says unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it to you, and for your conscience' sake: now the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, not always your own, but that of the other: for why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? ([1Cr 10:28-30](#))

Paul said everything is sanctified with thanksgiving. You say, "Lord, just bless this now and I thank You for it," then it is sanctified. Yet, it is going to hurt someone else. They are going to be stumbled by it. So again, the law of love, not wanting to be an offense, not wanting to hurt the weaker brethren.

Whether therefore you eat, or drink, whatsoever you do, do all to the glory to God ([1Cr 10:31](#)).

Here is the principle. Now, people who have principles don't need laws. If you are living by the right principles, you don't need rules, you don't need laws. This is the principle. So now, we are getting... this is what you want to really take note of. This is the heart of it. "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." And you are right. If I can do it to the glory of God, I am right. If I can't do it to the glory of God, then I better not do it. But whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God.

Give no offense, neither to the Jews, or to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved ([1Cr 10:32-33](#)).

And so as Paul said, don't live for your own profit, but for others. He said, "This is the way I live." My desire is that people might be saved, and so I live for their sakes, not for my own sake, not to satisfy my own flesh, not to live after my own desires, but I restrict myself. I live a careful life in order that I might win others to Jesus Christ. And so if that is the goal of my life to bring others to the Lord, then that will be the governing factor in what I allow or don't allow, what I do or don't do, what I eat or don't eat, what I drink or don't drink. It is not to bring an offense, walking in love, thinking of others, not thinking of myself. God help me to win this race and to live in love, walking in love, serving in love.