

Central Idea: "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

Divisions:

- 1: "If you think you will stand, you will fall" – 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
- 2: "Do not harbour sin, do not play with fire" – 1 Corinthians 10:14-22
- 3: "Do not seek your good, but seek the good of your neighbour"-1Cor10:23-33

Introduction: Harvard philosopher George Santayana wrote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." History can teach us where other people have made mistakes in their lives, and if we fail to learn from how they dealt with certain matters, we too may fall when we come across similar scenarios. Paul used the history of his ancient ancestors to help correct the Corinthians from making the same mistakes that resulted in most of the rescued Israelites dying in the wilderness, never making it to the Promised Land.

Let's pray ...

Division 1: "If you think you will stand, you will fall" – 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

[**READ v1-5**]. Once again, Paul calls the Corinthian Christians "brothers," to show his concern and his love for them. He was quite tough on them, but it was out of a concern for their welfare. Tough love.

Paul, here, refers to the Israelites God led through the wilderness, five times saying ALL. All of them experienced God's saving grace and blessings, and yet most of them died in the wilderness. All of them were led by one of the greatest leaders in Scripture, and yet most of them never saw the Promised Land. Paul used this part of the Bible to warn the mature Corinthian believers that they should not get complacent and overconfident in their

daily walk with God. All Israel had been saved from the power of Egypt by the power of God, just as Christians have been redeemed from sin by the death and resurrection of the Son of God. All of them were identified with Moses in the passing through the Red Sea (this could be considered their baptism), while the Christians identified with Jesus Christ when they were baptised. And 5, all of them ate the manna and drank the water from the spiritual Rock, which God provided for them, and Christians are nourished with the spiritual sustenance God gives us, which is through the Holy Spirit<sup>(John6:63,68,7:37-39)</sup>.

In the Old Testament the word Rock is a common metaphor used for God, or things closely associated with God. The Rock was Christ, Paul said, and it was He who made the water flow from the rocks. The first part of Ezekiel 47 tells of water flowing from the temple, giving life throughout the land. And in Revelation 22, “the river of the water of life<sup>(v1)</sup>” will flow from the throne of God giving life to everything. How wonderful that water will taste!

Just as all God's blessings didn't prevent Israel from falling away from God, neither did His blessings to the Corinthian church prevent them from doing the same. (And of course the same is true today.) Paul knew that a true believer will never lose their salvation, but he also knew that not all people in a church, nor people who are baptised and take part in the Lord's Supper, are necessarily saved.

As we grow in our faith we can become complacent and overconfident, and that makes us vulnerable to the enemy, always waiting, ever looking for a thin wedge to slip into our relationship with God, or our relationships with fellow believers.

The sins mentioned in the next paragraph are idolatry, sexual immorality, testing God

and grumbling or complaining. Verse 6 reads, ***“Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.”*** And verse 11, ***“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.”*** Paul repeats himself, so it's important! He's saying the Old Testament is important, it's relevant to Christians today.

The pronouns “we’ and “our” in those two verses,” mean all the believers in Paul's day, including Paul! So, as it was true for those in the 1<sup>st</sup>C, it is also meant for us in the 21<sup>st</sup>C. But think about that. Who here would say they desire evil? Who could say, “I desire evil.” It's rather absurd, yes? So we might say, “I don’t desire evil. I don’t want it!” So this doesn’t apply to me? I don’t want that which is evil so I can skip this chapter/these verses. But if we don’t desire evil, then why do we sin? Why sin at all if we don’t desire it? This conundrum can be explained in that, as a child of God, we've been given a new nature, a spiritual nature, as believers are indwelt by the Spirit of God. Before salvation we were fleshy people, with a fleshy nature. Paul talks about the fleshy or natural body vs. the spiritual body in 1 Corinthians 15 so we’ll look at that there, but in the first half of Romans he talks a lot about sin, and in chapter 7 of Romans, about his battle with sin. [READ Romans7:15-25].

Commentator Warren Wiersbe heard of a pastor who preached a series on “The sins of the Saints,” and one member complained to him, saying, “After all, sin in the life of a Christian is different sin in the life of an unsaved person,” to which the pastor replied, “Yes it is, ...it's’ worse!” An unsaved person doesn’t know any better, but a believer does!

Paul ends verse 11 with, these examples ***“were written down for our instruction, on***

***whom the end of the ages has come.***” Paul identifies the Corinthians as being “***on whom the end of the ages has come***<sup>(v11c)</sup>.” They were living after the earthly ministry of Jesus, the “end of ages’ as Paul puts it. We call it the “End Times.” So we are also living, in the “End Times.” Verse 12 follows, “***Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.***” This is a warning to all believers, every Christian. Temptation is as sure to happen to you, as is your autonomous breathing, in and out, in order to stay alive. You cannot take on the devil and win, unless you're immersed in Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews, in 10:26-31 says what Paul implied by this saying: the responsibilities of those in the “End Times” are greater than those who lived in the Old Testament times. [READ Hebrews 10:26-31]<sup>(138)</sup>. This is serious. It applies only to true believers, but it does not result in loss of salvation. It means God will punish these people. How can this happen to a true believer? It describes a believer who first drifts away from the Word of God. That will lead to doubting the Word, and next becoming dull toward the Word, and finally despising the Word. If someone despises God's Word he wilfully sins and wilfully goes on sinning. The only cure is to wholly turn to God for mercy and forgiveness.

The lesson for us here, is never get complacent and overconfident about your faith, about your standing with, your relationship with God. Don't go down the path of Crocodile Dundee, who boasted, “Me and God, we'd be mates.” How arrogant!

Rather, search yourself for any sin lurking that you have not confessed, or sin that's really got a hold of you. “***Do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies***<sup>(Rom6:12)</sup>. [Go into my interview for ACYT]. **Q What sin do you need to repent from?** 10:13 is a great verse. If you haven't memorised it, do. God will bring it to mind when you need it.

So we who love God and love His Word, let's all aim that, whatever we do, do all to the glory of God.

Division 2: "Do not harbour sin, do not play with fire" – 1 Corinthians 10:14-22

Verse 14 says, "**Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.**" Paul calls the Corinthians "my beloved," again, a term of endearment.

Flee means to make a run for it, take flight, get away as fast as you can. Hamstring it! As we just saw, the believer who thinks he/she will stand will/may fall (verse 12 says "take heed lest he fall), but the believer who flees will be able to stand, though it may be a battle, and hard. How each person deals with temptation varies. Certainly we can choose to reject the way out and give in to the temptation, but that we have a choice means that that freedom makes us accountable to God when we do sin. And secondly, seeing that we have a choice, we can always say "no," though it may be hard. And the way out is not necessarily the removal of the circumstances, but rather the ability to stand up under them. And as we know from James 1:13, God tempts no one, but we are often tempted by our own desire. Think about that. God allows trials and temptations (Luke 4:1), It's tough, but God uses them to help us grow. It's for our own good, it helps us mature (James 1:2-4). And there's more: Jesus said in Matthew 6:13 in the Lord's Prayer, "**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**" Jesus said this to encourage us to pray for strength, and not to give in and sin. These are the words of Jesus. So ask for God's help when you're tempted; ask for God to deliver you from the evil you are facing.

Paul told the church to flee from idolatry. Why? In verses 19-20 he told them the idols are, in themselves, nothing, but that they can be used by Satan to lead you into sin. To

sit at an idol's table, or in other circumstances, could mean fellowship with demons.

Paul used the Lord's Supper as an illustration. Participation in the Lord's Supper<sup>(v16-17)</sup> includes having Communion, or sharing together, with Christ and with fellow believers taking part. Sharing the bread from one loaf further demonstrates our unity with each other in Christ. Pagans, idolaters, come together and share in a similar way. Because it's carried out in a similar way it may lower our guard and draw us in. Satan is very good at counterfeiting things of God to make them seem harmless or ok to have a look at. But they're to be avoided always. Instead, we should aim to live our lives to bring glory to God. And always pray for strength when you need it. If you know a mature Christian well enough, one you can trust, consider becoming a prayer partner, where part of that relationship can include keeping each other on the straight and narrow. This is not to be done without much prayer. You must trust one another implicitly.

Division 3: Do not seek your good, but seek the good of your neighbour-1Cor10:23-11:1

The guiding moral prerogative in this chapter is *'love for others, not looking to one's own rights'*. This is very counter-cultural in today's world, especially in the West.

Paul wrote in verse 23, as he did in ch 6:12, ***"All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up.*** The quotes around those words, "All things are lawful," indicate that Paul was quoting from a letter that the Corinthians had written to him. They were, with great pride, saying "We can do whatever we want because all things are lawful for us." So Paul replied to their boastful "All things are lawful," first by repeating it, because they were adamant about their rites, here, to buy

whatever meat from the market that they wanted, but more broadly about their rites in a general sense. Secondly, Paul says, “but all things are not helpful,” “but not all things build up.” Then Paul put these thoughts together with the principle in verse 24, **Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbour.**

Paul does not say we are to deny the freedom that we have, to enjoy God's privileges in Christ. But it is a mark of maturity when we balance our freedom with responsibility. It is our responsibility to build each other up in the faith, putting others ahead of ourselves.

The freedom we have is through Christ. He is our role model. So the freedom we have in Christ must be balanced by a desire to build up and benefit others. That should be clear, because of the statement, we are free “in Christ.”

Galatians 5:13-14, **“<sup>13</sup>For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup>For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.””**

Our freedom comes through Christ, and therefore our behaviour and mindset must match His behaviour and mindset; our freedom must look like Christ's freedom. What we do must be done to build people up, to help others, because that’s what Jesus did while on earth. He lived out the Golden Rule that He gave us in Matthew 7:12, **“*whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*”**

One other point here: all this is based on verse 24, **“*Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbour.*”** This does NOT mean we are not to also look to our own needs, because we are. Philippians 2:3b-5, **“*in humility count others more significant than yourselves.* <sup>4</sup> *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of***

**others.** <sup>5</sup> *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.*” Paul said look not only to your own interests, so we ARE to look to our interests and needs. And this does not contradict verse 24 of today's text. The key word in that verse is “seek.” Seek means to pursue, hunt for, search out for. That’s different to simply “look to” your interests and needs. To pursue your interests is more like the self-centred mindset of “This is my right!”, the “me myself and I” principle so prevalent in society.

As we know, the Corinthian church was part of a very idolatrous society. Many of the Christians would have been converted from paganism. And much of the food you could buy in the markets had pagan associations. There were many opportunities for these converted Christians to be drawn back into pagan practices. So the Corinthian Christians exercising, or even flaunting their freedom in Christ, while not being drawn into sin themselves, might have, through their actions, cause others to be affected. So Paul was arguing they should sometimes forfeit their freedom to protect others.

Paul’s main concern was about idolatry. For us in our culture, we need to be aware of the idolatry we may encounter. Christians may not realise that some activities are idolatrous and can lead people into dangerous territory. We may eat in idols’ temples, maybe at a free vegetarian buffet at a Hindu or Buddhist shrine. Some people perhaps enjoy astrology, though it has no scientific basis whatsoever. Many markets here in the Hills have astrology readings, palm reading, séances, trying to contact the dead, tarot cards, crystals, and who knows what else. Many types of pagan rites and worship are readily available, much more so than when I was growing up. If we don’t recognise them for what they are, we may somehow integrate a pagan practice or pagan ideas into our lives, in a



sense affiliating ourselves with these ways, certainly putting something ungodly in our lives, and perhaps even putting something else before God. God does not approve of His people engaging in such practices. They are a form of idolatry, and God's first commandment in Exodus 20:3 is, ***"You shall have no other gods before me."*** Plus, we may lead others astray, thinking that if a fellow Christian does it, it must be ok. God would not approve.

These are temptations for us to sin, to lure us away from God. Some may be drawn to it. Remember, our actions can, in a sense, tell others it's ok. Maybe someone listening today is being drawn or pushed into it. There may be Christians we know who were converted from other religions, like in Paul's Corinth, who would be tempted to return to these practices if they saw fellow Christians showing an interest, even if the person is doing it just as a bit of fun, and are themselves are a strong believer and would not be tempted, like the Christians in Corinth.

Rather, let's drink from the Spiritual Rock, Jesus Christ<sup>(v4)</sup>. Don't use your freedom selfishly, but consider others. Love your neighbour. In the next verse in 1 Corinthians, 11:1, Paul says ***"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."***

The one take-home from this chapter above everything else is the central idea: Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. God's glory is His splendour, His majesty. The ministry of Jesus Christ glorified God the Father. Believers are commanded to reflect the glory of God in our lives. This is our calling, Paul told the Philippians to let their lives shine brightly before others. As we live to the glory of God, our neighbours will be seeing the light of Jesus in our lives, and be drawn to Him. Let's build that into who we are in Christ.

Let's pray: