

## CGYG & LIFE Bible Study: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Simon and Nina were busy painting their condo when the phone rang. It was Nhat, one of Simon's friends from work. A devout Hindu, Nhat had nevertheless been very open to Simon sharing with him about Jesus Christ, and had even come to a number of fellowship events and Christmas service at the Chinatown Gospel Church. He was calling to invite them to the birthday celebration of his god, next month at the local temple. "Uhhh, can we get back to you on that?" Simon asked. Hanging up, he turned to Nina and asked, "Do you think we should go?" How would you advise Simon & Nina?

**-For review:** In our previous study in 1 Corinthians 9:15-27, we saw that Paul spoke of not making use of his rights and freedoms as an apostle, and instead making himself 'a servant to all' (9:19). Why did he do this? (9:19-27)

- Paul did this to win as many to Christ as possible
  - did not want to put any obstacles in anyone's way or be a stumbling block
  - sought to gain opportunities to share the Gospel with everyone
- Paul's 'boast' – the joy of being able to serve God freely, in offering the Gospel free of charge
- he did it also so he might share in the blessings of the Gospel with those whom he won to Christ (9:23)
- disciplined himself like an athlete training to compete in the Games → seeking to 'win the prize' (9:24), i.e. receive his reward from Christ → wanted to take care not to be 'be disqualified' (i.e. lose his reward; cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-15))

### Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-33

-In this chapter, what are Paul's main points about the exercise of our freedoms in Christ?

- our freedom in Christ is not a license to sin, as illustrated in the history of the nation of Israel (10:1-13) – freedom **from** sin, not freedom **to** sin
  - including idolatry / participation in worship of other 'gods' (10:14-22)
- we should exercise our freedoms not for our own benefit, but for "the good of [our] neighbor", that they might be saved and/or built up in faith (10:23-33)

### Re-read 1 Corinthians 10:1-6

-What Old Testament event(s) does Paul refer to in these verses? (**For further study:** Exodus 13-17; 32; Numbers 11-14; 20:1-13; 21:4-9; 25:1-18)

- Paul refers back to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt (described further in the "For further study" passages listed above)
  - they were all "under the cloud" – referring to the pillar of cloud showing the presence of God with them as they went (Exodus 13:21-22)
  - they all passed through the Sea that God, through Moses, parted (Exodus 14:15-31)
    - i.e. God's presence was with them, and they all experienced His mighty deliverance from bondage Egypt
- they "all ate the same spiritual food" – manna (Exodus 16) – "spiritual" in this context referring to its supernatural provision
- they "all drank the same spiritual drink" – water from the rock (again, supernaturally provided) (Ex. 17:1-7; Num. 20:1-13)

-What parallels does Paul draw between the experiences of the Israelites' and the experiences of the Corinthians believers (and more generally, of all Christians) (10:1-4)? What warning does Paul make based on the Israelites' experience (v.5-6), and how does it connect back with what he said in 9:24-27?

- Paul parallels the Israelites experience of deliverance through Moses with Christians' experience of deliverance through Christ
  - all under the cloud (v.1) → presence of God with them, just as the Corinthians (and all Christians) have in the Holy Spirit
  - passing through the sea portrayed as a sort of baptism (into Moses) (v.2) → parallels Christian baptism ('going through the waters of baptism'
    - signifying new birth through a deliverer – Israelites 'baptized into Moses', as Christians are baptized into Christ
  - eating spiritual food & drinking spiritual drink (v.3-4) → parallels the Lord's Supper, and the spiritual sustenance we have in Christ
    - spiritual food – manna → points to Jesus Christ, who is the bread that came down from heaven (John 6:25-58), whose 'flesh is true food' and whose 'blood is true drink' (John 6:55)
    - spiritual drink from the spiritual Rock → Jesus Christ also portrayed as the source of living water/water of life (John 4:10-14; 7:37-38)
      - "that Rock was Christ" – foreshadows the living water that we receive from Him, but also says that the source of sustenance for the Israelites in the desert was the same source that sustains the Corinthian believers (& all Christians)
- despite all these privileges & experiences the Israelites had, God was not pleased with most of them, and they failed to reach the Promised Land; instead, they were overthrown in the desert (v.5)
  - the warning: learn from their example (v.6) – don't think that just because you've experienced God's redemption, or because you've been baptized & participate in the Lord's Supper, that you can't be overthrown / disqualified from the prize (cf. 9:24-27), like the Israelites were
    - cf. 10:12 → take heed, lest you likewise fall!

## Read 1 Corinthians 10:6-13

-What sins does Paul specifically warn against in these verses, using the example of the Israelites (v.6-11)? How do these relate to the Corinthians, and to the issue of eating food offered to idols here in 1 Cor. 8-10?

-Paul says that the Israelites serve as an example to warn against desiring evil, as they did (v.6,11), then lists 4 sins in particular that they committed, and which apply to the Corinthians

-God had these incidents (and punishments) recorded as warnings to His people of all time to the end of the ages (v.11)

-v.7 (cf. Exodus 32:1-6, 25-28, 35)

-idolatry (probably coupled with sexual immorality – ‘play’ likely a euphemism for sexual promiscuity)

-a reference to the incident of the Golden Calf and its consequences, in Exodus 32

-many of the Corinthian believers came from pagan background in which they had engaged in idolatry

-Paul is arguing in 1 Cor. 8-10 against participating in idolatry by participating in idol feasts (e.g. 10:14-22)

-v.8 (cf. Numbers 25:1-9)

-sexual immorality – a reference to Israel’s episode of sexual immorality with the Midianite women, which resulted in 23,000 (or 24,000 in Numbers) dying (aside: reason for the discrepancy in numbers between 1 Cor. 10:8 & Num. 25:9 is uncertain)

-sexual immorality was rampant in Corinth, and even in the Corinthian church (e.g. 1 Cor. 5-6)

-further, in the incident referenced in Numbers 25, sexual immorality is specifically tied to participation in idol worship/feast → similar to the situation Paul speaks against here in 1 Cor. 8-10 (e.g. 10:14-22)

-v.9 (cf. Numbers 21:4-9)

-putting God to the test – the Israelites tested God’s patience on many occasions in the accounts of Exodus & Numbers; in the referenced episode in Numbers 21, they spoke out against Moses and against God – loathed the ‘worthless food’ that God graciously was providing them

-Paul later in 1 Cor. 10 warns the Corinthians not to put God to the test (i.e. to provoke Him to jealousy) by participating in idol feasts

-v.10 (cf. Numbers 14:1-4, 26-38)

-grumbling – unsure which OT passage Paul is referring to specifically, but the Israelites grumbled on many occasions – and paid for it

-in Num. 14, the consequences of their grumbling was that their “dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness (Num. 14:29, 32, 33)

- cf. 1 Cor. 10:5 (“they were overthrown in the wilderness”)

-a warning against the Corinthians’ grumbling against Paul for forbidding them from participating in sacrificial feasts in pagan temples

-What principles and encouragements does Paul give to help deal with temptation and avoid the same fate as the Israelites (v.11-13)? What are some practical ways you can be applying these to your life today?

-remember the examples – and warnings – provided to us in the Scriptures (v.11)

-we are living at ‘the end of the ages’ (v.11) – stay faithful because Christ will soon return

-be aware of your own weakness and take heed, lest you fall (v.12)

-don’t think that you could never fall into sin – be vigilant and take precautions

-remember that the temptations you face are ‘common to man’ (v. 13) - i.e. you face the same temptations that others face

-we do not struggle alone → can draw encouragement and support from other brothers & sisters facing the same temptations

-remember the faithfulness of God (v.13)

-He doesn’t allow us to be tempted beyond our ability to endure

-also provides the way of escape so we are able to endure – we just need to be willing to take it

-**Preview:** What specific application of the principles in v.1-13 does Paul make in 10:14-22?

-Paul calls on the Corinthians to flee from idolatry; specifically, he applies his teachings in 10:1-13 to argue that the Corinthians should not be participating in feasts involving sacrifices to pagan gods

## Reflection and application

Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 reminds us that though God’s people at the time of the Exodus personally experienced God’s mighty acts of deliverance and His supernatural sustenance, they were disqualified from entering the Promised Land because of their disobedience. Their example is a sobering reminder that our freedom in Christ is not freedom to sin. As Paul writes elsewhere, “do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” (Galatians 5:13)

How seriously are you taking sin in your life? Remember that “these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did” (10:6), and be careful that you don’t fall (10:12). Strive to walk each moment in obedience to God, knowing that He is faithful and will not let you be tempted beyond what you are able to bear; and when you are tempted, seek the way of escape that He has promised to provide, so that you will be able to endure and to persevere in obedience.