



HOLINESS IN FREEDOM: IDOLATRY

1 Corinthians 10:1-22



WEEK 02

Holiness in Freedom: Idolatry

In chapters 8 and 9, Paul presents the need for those who are more established in the faith to exercise wisdom in showing love to others within the church. It was a shift from a self-centered view of personal rights to one of being others-focused.

In chapter 10, Paul presents another angle: the believer's vulnerability to sin. If one danger in exercising freedom is the lack of concern for others, another is the lack of concern for one's own potential to sin. It is easy for believers to become too comfortable in their newfound freedom that arrogance can creep into their hearts.

To illustrate his point, Paul reminds the reader of the sin of ancient Israel in the wilderness. It is difficult to imagine a more dramatic deliverance by God than the exodus out of Egypt. This makes that generation's turn to drunken partying, sexual sin, and ultimate idolatry all the more shocking (Exodus 32). Reading the story, one is tempted to question, "How could they be so dumb?" But Paul reminds the reader that, "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us" (1 Corinthians 10:11). If Israel could so easily slip into idolatry in the wilderness, the Corinthians should treat the idolatry around them with sober concern rather than reckless arrogance.

Daily Readings

- 01 1 Corinthians 10:1-22
- 02 1 Peter 2:9-16
- 03 1 Peter 5:6-12
- 04 2 Corinthians 6
- 05 2 Peter 3:1-9
- 06 2 Peter 3:10-18
- 07 Galatians 6:1-10

WARNINGS FROM ISRAEL'S HISTORY

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.² They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.³ They all ate the same spiritual food⁴ and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.⁵ Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

⁶Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.⁷ Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.”⁸ We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died.⁹ We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes.¹⁰ And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.

¹¹These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.¹² So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

IDOL FEASTS AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

¹⁴Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.

¹⁸Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? ¹⁹Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. ²²Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

WARM UP

Think of a few blessings of God you are privileged to enjoy. List three to five that come to mind and share these with your group.

Considering the list you just made, what are a few blessings of God that you often take for granted? If any were taken from you, how would that disrupt your life?

EXPLORING 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-22

In verse 1-4, Paul points to Israel's history. What were some of the blessings they enjoyed?

We are told in verse 5 God was not pleased with most of them, and they paid a stiff penalty. What examples of disobedience are listed in verses 7-10?

It seems Paul is warning the Corinthians that their situation is similar to that of the Israelites. What contemporary wisdom do we learn from verses 11-12? Have you ever been at a place where you thought you were standing firm but fell? What assurance do you gain from verse 13?

In verse 14, what encouragement does Paul emphatically give the Corinthians? Read Tim Keller's definition of an idol in the "Think" section. List some things we idolize, intentionally or unintentionally.

APPLICATION

How does Communion, the observance and remembrance of the Lord's body and blood, promote and exemplify unity in the body of Christ (verses 14-22)?

THINK

"An idol is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, and anything that you seek to give you what only God can give."

- *Counterfeit Gods*, Tim Keller

PRAYER

List one or two prayer concerns you can share with your group. Take time to thank God for the blessings of life.

