*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

February 10 - 15

*First Corinthians Chapter Ten*

**Monday, February 10 1 Corinthians 10:1-5**

*“Don’t forget about our ancestors in the wilderness”*

Paul uses numerous examples of the sins of the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings to warn against Corinthian participation in idolatrous idol feasts. In verses one through four he describes four privileges the Israelites received. The first two, guidance by God in the cloud and crossing the Red Sea, prompts Paul to conceive of these acts by God as a kind of baptism as followers of Moses, with baptism here suggesting identification with and allegiance to the leader of their spiritual community.

The second set of privileges they received on their journey was manna and quail for food, and supernaturally provided water. From a Christian perspective, Paul recognizes Christ as the pre-existent Son of God, active with God the Father in creation and redemption, and hence the agent of both physical and spiritual nourishment for his people in the desert. Yet none of these miracles guaranteed that the children of Israel would enter the Promised Land. Disobedience caused most of them to forfeit the promise and die in the wilderness.

*I recognize, Lord, that there are consequences for disobedience. Amen.*

**Tuesday, February 11 Exodus 16:1 – 17:7**

*“Once more the people complained”*

These two stories deal with the Israelites grumbling because of a lack of elements vital to their survival in the desert: food and water. Israel has miraculously crossed the Red Sea and will continue to wander in the wilderness for forty years until, under the leadership of Joshua, they cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land. To use an analogy, if Israel’s departure from Egypt is her “birth,” she is now in her period of infancy, the beginning where God is taking his people by the hand, providing for them, and teaching them patiently and lovingly about who he is and what he has in store for them. These stories, therefore, are not just about the murmurings of God’s people, but God’s care for them.

Having left Egypt under the most miraculous of circumstances, they quickly descend into the sinful pattern of using their own perception of their situation as the standard by which to judge the love and provision of God. They have not yet learned that even though they are in a desert with no food or water, God is greater than their circumstances.

*I live by faith in you, Lord, not by worrying about my circumstances. Amen.*

**Wednesday, February 12 1 Corinthians 10:6-13**

*“These things are warnings for us”*

Paul recalls four ways in which many of the Israelites proved faithless and suffered for their sins: idolatry, sexual immorality, testing the Lord, and grumbling against the Lord and his appointed leaders. He exhorts the Corinthians to learn from the example of the Israelites, refraining from such behavior so that their hearts do not become set on evil things.

Paul summarizes the significance of these warnings for the Corinthians in verse 12 – even those who think they stand securely should take care lest they fall. After all, the pagan temple feasts in Corinth involved similar idolatry, sexual sin, and trying God’s patience. Nevertheless, these verses are all balanced by the marvelous promise of verse 13. The circumstances that tempt us to sin are never qualitatively different from those which God’s people of every era have experienced, and we never have to give in to them. There is always an escape-hatch, which is defined as a way to persevere without sinning in whatever difficult situation we find ourselves.

*Help me endure temptation, Lord, so that I will not sin. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

February 10 - 15

*First Corinthians Chapter Ten*

**Thursday, February 13 Numbers 16:1-50**

*“They incited a rebellion”*

This dramatic chapter reveals the Lord’s response to those who rebel against him and his chosen leaders. The Israelites have previously talked about choosing someone to replace Moses and Aaron. Now Korah announces his candidacy. Backed up by a formidable group of 250 reputable chieftains, Korah and his associates confront Moses and Aaron. As the Lord himself said, the whole nation is holy. So how can Moses and Aaron claim higher status and presume to judge the Israelites for behavior that they, that is, Moses and Aaron, find objectionable?

Moses responds by challenging the rebels to burn incense in order to test their claim to holiness. Korah & Co. accept the challenge, and the Lord emphatically shows his displeasure with their rebellion. When on the next day the Israelite community grumble against Moses and Aaron, blaming them for the deaths of the Lord’s people, the patience of the Lord is at an end. Moses and Aaron fall on their faces, and only Aaron’s mediation with incense saves the community from extermination.

*We accept or reject your will, Lord, each with accompanying consequences. Amen.*

**Friday, February 14 1 Corinthians 10:14-22**

*“Flee from the worship of idols”*

Paul returns to the topic of idol meat in Corinth. Although the food itself is morally neutral, Paul does make one absolute prohibition: eating it in the context of explicitly pagan worship services is always wrong. In such cases eating is idolatry. To cement his position, Paul offers two further analogies, from the sacred meals of Christianity (vv. 16-17) and Judaism (v. 18). Partaking of the elements of the Lord’s Supper – the bread and the wine – involves a participation with the risen Lord and an appropriation of the benefits of his shed blood and broken body. So too in ancient Judaism, those who ate sacrificial meat in the temple communed with God and appropriated the temporary forgiveness associated with those animal sacrifices.

The application to religious temple feasts in Corinth follows naturally. Pagans too commune with the spiritual beings they worship. Demons – fallen angels – are the true objects of pagan ritual, however unwittingly they may be worshipped, and it is unthinkable for Christians to participate in such devotion.

*Reveal the works of Satan, Lord, that we may not be blind to them. Amen.*

**Saturday, February 15 1 Corinthians 10:23 – 11:1**

*“Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God”*

Apart from the unique instance of eating during pagan worship, believers have the freedom to partake of meat offered to idols so long as it is for God’s glory and others’ well-being. While Paul has stated that “everything is permissible, but not everything is good for you” (6:12), he now adds the statement “but not everything is beneficial.” Here he is thinking more of the corporate than the individual effects of exercising freedom in Christ. He applies this principle to the purchasing and consuming of meat sold in the Corinthian marketplace, and eating it in a friend’s home. In each instance, the likelihood was great that the meat would have been sacrificed to idols.

The chapter ends with Paul restating the twin principles of freedom and restraint, now in the context of God’s glory – that which conforms to his standards and priorities. Paul does not want to lead anyone into sin, whether outside or inside the church, but his most basic underlying motive is the salvation of as many as possible. In this he is an imitator of Christ.

*For your glory, Lord, will I live my life in relationship to others. Amen.*