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GENUINE SPIRITUALITY: A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS
 #24

WRITTEN FOR OUR INSTRUCTION
1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13

INTRODUCTION

Self-control, given by the Spirit (Galatians 5:23) and guided by the Word, is essential to final salvation. Thankfully the Spirit enables us to be self-controlled when He gives us a new heart at regeneration (Galatians 5:16). So our self-control is the result of God's sovereign work in our hearts; therefore we need not fear losing out on final salvation. What God has begun, He will complete (Philippians 1:6). Gradually, God enables us to bring every part of our lives into one unity of purpose; to glorify Jesus. While this process is never complete in this life, more and more ground is taken as we *work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12b-13)*. The Bible proclaims that our sins are forgiven because of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. The Bible also warns us against carelessness or a lack of self-control. The Bible warns Christians against living fragmented lives that are not brought into conformity with the law of God. 1 Corinthians 10 contains Paul's warning to the Corinthians against carelessness. Paul has compared himself to a disciplined athlete striving to obtain the prize. He wants the Corinthians to follow his example and to avoid the example of Old Testament Israel.

The Old Testament is the inspired history of God's chosen people, Israel, and that history was written down *for our instruction (v11)*. Paul teaches us a lot about the Old Testament in today's text. First, every episode recorded in the Old Testament occurred so that the Church could have an example to follow or avoid (v6a, 11). Further, those events are designed as a warning to turn us away from craving evil things (v6b). The very events which took place were ordained by God so that we could learn from them (v6a, 11). In other words, when God was dealing with Israel, He had us in mind. The Old Testament stands as an inspired warning that the people of God must never become careless or lack self-control (v12). Paul now specifically applies all of these things to the church at Corinth and every other church as well.

1. THE CHOSEN PEOPLE OF GOD ARE GIVEN 5 SUPERNATURAL BLESSINGS (10:1-4)

(1.1) Guidance (v1a)

*14 Then He led them with the cloud by day
 And all the night with a light of fire (Psalm 78:14).*

(1.2) Deliverance (v1b)

*12 He wrought wonders before their fathers
 In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.
 13 He divided the sea and caused them to pass through,
 And He made the waters stand up like a heap (Psalm 78:12-13).*

(1.3) Leadership (v2)

31When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses (Exodus 14:31).

(1.4) Spiritual Food (v3)

24He rained down manna upon them to eat

And gave them food from heaven.

25Man did eat the bread of angels;

He sent them food in abundance (Psalm 78:24-25).

(1.5) Spiritual Drink (v4)

15He split the rocks in the wilderness

And gave them abundant drink like the ocean depths.

16He brought forth streams also from the rock

And caused waters to run down like rivers (Psalm 78:15-16).

The Corinthians may have thought their participation in the sacraments caused them to *stand* (v12) with such strength that they were beyond falling into temptation and sin. The spiritual food and drink of verses 3-4 appear to be analogous to the communion bread and wine. Additionally, the explicit reference to baptism (v2) indicates the Corinthians viewed the sacraments as some form of superstitious protection against moral failure even to the point they were willing to go back into the pagan temples and participate in those feasts. Paul's point is that supernatural blessings do not guarantee ultimate salvation.

Paul points out the seriousness of Israel's sin that when the nation rejected God in its pursuit of idols, the people actually rejected Jesus (v4). It was Jesus feeding Israel in the wilderness. It was Jesus providing them with water on their way to the Promised Land. In fact, Jesus is, and always has been, the source of His peoples' spiritual nourishment. So to turn away from guidance, deliverance, leadership, food and drink is to turn away from Jesus.

2. THE CHOSEN PEOPLE OF GOD ARE GIVEN 5 STERN WARNINGS (10:5-13)

After describing God's blessings upon Israel, Paul points out Israel's failure to persevere under the blessing of God (v5). Israel's failures came in 5 unambiguous areas of temptation. Paul reminds us of these 5 sins because they are *common to man* (v13). They are part of every believer's life. Everyone in this room finds all five of these temptations to be powerfully alluring. *Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall* (v12).

(2.1) Do not crave evil things (v6)

Here we encounter an important theological truth; a justified person is simultaneously sinner and saint. That means that his sins, all his sins, are forgiven. It also means that his regeneration is not yet complete; corruptions remain within the new man. Even though God implants new life within the believing sinner, much of the old life remains and manifests itself as we crave evil things. Don't forget how Israel craved the comforts of Egypt once they encountered the difficulties of the wilderness. Don't forget how they craved meat when fed manna. Don't forget how Israel craved the respect of the surrounding pagan nations even to the point of rejecting God's revealed will. Don't forget how this blessed nation craved something 'better' than God's blessings.

(2.2) Do not worship idols (v7)

Israel's craving for evil things naturally led them into idolatry. In this most basic form, idolatry is giving your supreme loyalty to someone and something other than Jesus. If we do not find Jesus and His providence satisfying, idolatry is the inevitable next step. Paul reminds us to watch our loyalties. This verse directly refers to Israel's idolatry recorded in Exodus 32. This kind of idolatrous feast is precisely what Paul will finally forbid the Corinthians from attending. Along with feasting in the presence of an idol, the people shouted, sang and danced. All of this has overtones pointing to immorality that caused the Lord to send a strong rebuke.

(2.3) Do not practice immorality (v8)

Immortality was common among Old Testament Israel and New Testament Corinthians. Numbers 25:1-9 records such an event from Israel's history and Paul references that event here in verse 8. He knows that craving evil things leads to idolatry and idolatry leads to immorality. When a person's soul is not satisfied in Christ, he will almost surely believe his body to be his sole source of happiness and immorality will shortly follow.

(2.4) Do not test God (v9)

Craving evil things, idolatry and immorality all test God's kindness and patience. Numbers 21:4-7 points out that Israel tested God. The result: they *were destroyed by the serpents*. Just as Israel put Christ to the test with its continuing sin, so the Corinthians tested Jesus by eating at His Table and the table of demons. You simply cannot please God by living a double life. To attempt such a thing is common and foolish.

(2.5) Do not complain (v10)

Finally, what is at the heart of the previous four sins? Essentially, it is a foolish dissatisfaction with Jesus and His providential rule over our lives. Therefore, we crave evil, worship idols, practice immorality and complain against Him. Israel experienced fatal judgments on at least two occasions: Number 13:1-48 & 16:1-50. The Israelites grumbled against Moses and the Corinthians grumbled against Paul. In either case, God's appointed messenger was not to be despised. God's providence was not to be scorned.

CONCLUSION

Really, as with Old Testament Israel, every time we give in to the temptations listed here, we turn away from Jesus. I do not mean that we lose our justification, but I do mean we are not satisfied with how Jesus rules our lives. Therefore, we turn away from Him and turn to some passing pleasures that are found in sin. The key to our sanctification is a continuing joy in Jesus. If we are happy in Him, then we do not crave something else. We certainly are less likely to reject His deliverance, guidance, spiritual food and drink. We will find it easier to reject idols, immorality and complaining. If we are happy in Jesus' providential control over our lives, complaining makes no sense at all. But honestly, many of us find it difficult to continually be happy with Jesus and how He rules over our circumstances. So what hope is there? *God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it (v13b)*.

Two promises emerge: (1) God will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability to deal with that temptation and (2) God will provide a way out of sin enabling you to endure the trial. Seeing the kindness of God, don't live daring God to judge you. Do not take His kindness lightly [Romans 2:4].