

1 COR. 8:1 – 10:10

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B. Food Offered to Idols – (8:1 – 11:1)

Introduction to Section

Paul turns his attention to the matter of food sacrificed to idols, a subject that will occupy him for the next three chapters. I follow the view of Gordon Fee, Ben Witherington, and a number of others that the basic problem to which Paul is responding throughout this section is the eating of sacrificial food at the ritual meals in the pagan temples. In other words, the primary problem is not idol food sold in the marketplace and eaten in private homes; that doesn't get addressed until 10:23-11:1. Paul is objecting to consuming sacrificial meat in the pagan temple precinct as part of a pagan ritual.

Cultic or ritual meals were a regular part of worship in antiquity. Following the sacrifice, some of the meat would be burned before the god, some would be placed on the "table of the god," which was attended by cultic ministers, and some would be eaten by the worshippers as a feast. What was left over from the "god's table" was often sold in the marketplace.

These meals were both religious and social. The gods were thought to be present, since the meals were held in their honor and sacrifices made to them, but it was also the way in which almost every social occasion was celebrated. In this sense, one writer says the temple was the basic "restaurant" in antiquity. Gentile converts in Corinth had probably attended such meals all their lives.

Fee reconstructs the problem in the Corinthian church as follows:

After Paul left Corinth, some of the Christians there returned to the practice of attending the cultic meals. In his earlier letter, Paul forbid such idolatry (note the reference to "idolaters" in 5:10-11), but they took exception to his doing this and in their letter made four points, several of which Paul will allude to in his response:

- They argued that "all have knowledge" about idols. Since there is only one God, the idols cannot be real gods, a point with which Paul will, of course, agree. Therefore, their eating in the temple was not an act of worship but a purely social matter. They were not worshipping what they knew did not exist.
- They also have knowledge that food is a matter of indifference to God, another point on which Paul will agree. Putting this with the first argument, their conclusion is that it does not matter *what* they eat or *where* they eat. So how can Paul forbid their going to temples?

- They seem to have a somewhat "magical" view of the sacraments, a view that those who have been baptized and who take the Lord's Supper are not in any danger of falling.
- A number of them also doubt that Paul has the proper apostolic authority to forbid them on this matter. In their minds, this doubt has been substantiated by the fact Paul did not accept support from them while he was with them and the fact he seemed to compromise his own stance on eating idol food sold in the marketplace (he ate when eating with Gentiles but abstained when eating with Jews).

Those pushing to eat the temple meals probably also were arguing that others would be "built up" by taking "authority" in this matter. In any event, they pressed for this right in the name of "knowledge" and would invite other brothers and sisters to join them at the banquets.

1. Christian behavior is not predicated solely on knowledge (8:1-6) – **Now about things sacrificed to idols, we know that "we all have knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ²If anyone thinks he has come to know something, he has not yet come to know as he needs to know; ³but if anyone loves, this one [truly] knows.***

⁴Concerning, then, the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that "there is no idol in the world," and that "there is no God but one." ⁵For even if there are those called gods, either in heaven or on earth - as indeed there are many gods and many lords, ⁶but for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we are for him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we are through him.

a. Paul opens his attack on their objection to his prohibition of attending temple feasts by challenging its faulty ethical premise. The assumption behind their argument was that Christian behavior is predicated solely on knowledge, that knowing that something is not forbidden automatically authorizes one to do it. Paul's point in this section is that even if their arguments about the propriety of eating in the temples were correct, which they were not (as he will make clear in 10:14-22), the principle of brotherly love would still require that they forego the practice.

b. Paul accepts the Corinthians' point that all Christians possess knowledge, but as v. 7 makes clear, he realizes there are varying levels of that knowledge. He breaks off his comment to attack the concept of knowledge as represented in Corinth.

(1) Knowledge by itself, without any other guiding principles, simply puffs a person up. It causes him to see himself as superior and then to run roughshod over those who are beneath him. They are the ignorant who are not worth worrying about.

(2) Love, on the other hand, builds up the community of faith. It focuses one on the welfare of one's brothers and sisters.

(3) Alluding to the knowledge that some were claiming authorized their attending the temple feasts, Paul says that anyone who thinks he is in the know on such a matter does not know as he needs to know. Such a person thinks he's got knowledge, but true knowledge has escaped him because he has overlooked the essential role of love.

c. There is a textual issue with v. 3.

(1) The shorter text, found in some very early witnesses (P⁴⁶, the oldest manuscript of 1 Corinthians, and Clement of Alexandria) reads (Fee, 367) "If anyone loves, this one truly knows." That reinforces the point that love is a part of true knowing. That reading better fits the context and is favored as the original text by quite a few scholars, including Philip Comfort (*New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*, 501), Gordon Fee, Ceslas Spicq, and Anthony Thiselton

(2) The longer text of v. 3 reads: "but if anyone loves God, this person has been known by him." If that's the correct reading, Paul here reminds them that their love for God means they are known by God (special to him as recipients of his saving grace) because that "sets them apart from worshipers of false gods and delimits what they may and may not do. Those who love God and are known by God may not dally in the shrines of other gods" (Garland, 371).

d. Having interjected a qualifying word about the way of love superseding the way of knowledge, Paul in v. 4 picks back up what he began in v. 1. He naturally agrees with the Corinthian position that "there is no idol in the world" and that "there is no God but one." The fact there is only one God means that the idols of the pagan world cannot be gods.

(1) Paul begins v. 5 with the phrase "For even if there are those *called* gods," meaning things that are not really gods but are called gods by people, but he doesn't finish that sentence. It seems that he was going to say that even if there are so-called gods, they don't really exist.

(2) Instead of completing his thought, Paul interjects an acknowledgement of the fact that there are many gods (traditional Greco-Roman deities) and lords (deities of the Oriental mystery cults). They were everywhere in the ancient world. But Paul is not saying that these deities really exist (at least not as deities - see, 10:19-20); he is simply saying that people believe they exist. They are "so-called" gods.

(3) He grants that there are many "so-called" gods and lords, but that is only true for pagans. Christians know better (at least intellectually); for us there is only one God, from whom all things have been made, and only one Lord, through whom all things have been made. Garland states (p. 375), "Paul creatively christianizes the foundational Jewish monotheistic confession: 'The Lord our God is one Lord' (Deut. 6:4).

He glosses the reference to Lord and God in that confession so that 'God' refers to the Father and 'the Lord' refers to Christ."

2. Brotherly love requires in this situation that they forego eating in the temples (8:7-13) – **7But this knowledge is not in everyone. Some, by reason of being accustomed until now to the idol, eat [the meat] as a thing sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. 8Now food will not present us to God; neither if we do not eat are we inferior, nor if we eat do we excel. 9But watch out lest somehow this authority of yours becomes a stumbling-block to the weak. 10For if anyone sees you, the one having knowledge, reclining at a table in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, which is weak, be built up to eat the things sacrificed to idols? 11For the one who is weak is destroyed by your knowledge, the brother for whom Christ died. 12And by sinning this way against the brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat forevermore, so that I not cause my brother to stumble.**

a. All the Corinthian Christians knew intellectually or theoretically that there is only one God, but not all had internalized that knowledge at an emotional or experiential level. They were so used to associating with the idol as a god that they could not return to their former place of worship and join in the temple meal without some sense of feeling that the idol to whom the food was offered was real.

b. In other words, because of the relative weakness of their monotheistic convictions, they could not participate in the temple feasts as a purely social matter. For them, it was at some level engaging in the worship of an idol, and the practice therefore defiled their consciences; it violated their sense of loyalty to the one true God.

c. Verse 8 is a reference to the Corinthian claim that food is a matter of indifference to God. (NIV's "But" is better translated "Now" in this context.) They had probably taken something Paul had said about the irrelevance of Jewish food laws and converted it into a justification for eating food being sacrificed to idols. (This explains the imprecise fit of the phrase with their argument. You would expect them to claim that abstaining did not make one *superior* and that eating did not make one *inferior*, but v. 8 says the opposite.)

d. Verse 9 shows that v. 8 is part of the Corinthian argument against Paul. He cites their claim and then counters with, "But watch out lest somehow this authority of yours becomes a stumbling block to the weak." By misapplying the general freedom that Christians have regarding Jewish food laws, it would become a stumbling block for others. Paul explains:

(1) For the one with a weak conscience, meaning weak in terms of monotheistic convictions, who *sees them* (probably via invitation) eating in an idol's temple will have his conscience "built up" (a bit of irony) "to eat the things sacrificed to idols," i.e., to participate in idolatry! The weak one does not simply eat food; he eats food "sacrificed to idols."

(2) That is why Paul says in v. 11, "For the one who is weak is *destroyed* by your knowledge." By their so-called knowledge, they are pushing the brother for whom Christ died into eternal ruin. Pressuring someone to act in violation of his conscience can destroy him spiritually by beginning a hardening process, a searing of his conscience, which leads to alienation from God.

(3) Paul makes the same point in a different context in Romans 14-15 (see esp. 14:15). There he requires Christians to abstain from eating meat in the presence of a Jewish brother whose conscience was not free to eat such meat. Here he puts aside the issue of whether participating in temple feasts was morally acceptable, which he will make clear in 10:14-22 it is not, to say that even if that were the case they still are required by love to abstain from doing so in the presence of a brother whose conscience was not free to do so.

(4) By sinning against the brothers in this way, by eating temple meals in their presence in the name of enlightened freedom so as pressure them to violate their idol-sensitive (weak) consciences, they are sinning against Christ himself. Jesus so identifies with his brothers and sisters.

e. Given what he has just said, Paul in v. 13 sums up with a declaration of the principle of love put in the context of eating. Paul is not so concerned with his right to eat something, his knowledge it is permissible, that he will insist on it to the detriment of his brothers. This broader statement and shift to first person leads into the following section.

f. In applying the principle given in this section and in Romans 14-15, it is helpful to keep a number of things in mind. I have shared my thoughts on some application issues in other classes, so I won't belabor the point here. But notice the following limitations:

(1) Paul is speaking about genuine matters of *conscience*, not matters of *preference*.

(a) Of course, conscience can be malformed at a level deeper than intellectual understanding. One can assent to a truth intellectually but still have a restriction of conscience rooted in one's life experience. The intellectual understanding has not yet been internalized in the heart. And that must be respected.

(b) You may be better able to recognize how conscience can be out of step with intellectual understanding in the case of a soldier who accepts intellectually that killing is morally acceptable in a just war. He may know the reasoning behind that conclusion and may find it intellectually persuasive and yet still be unable to kill with a clear conscience.

(2) Second, he is speaking about *conduct*, not teaching, that is done *in the presence of* the brother or sister with the narrower conscience.

(a) That is why in Rom. 14:22a he tells those with a broader conscience to keep the convictions they have *to themselves before God* and why in 1 Cor. 8:10 he speaks of the one who *sees them* eating in the temple. Christians are free to enjoy the liberty they have in Christ when they are away from brothers with a narrower conscience. Indeed, Paul in Rom. 14:22b labels as "blessed" the man who can enjoy his liberty with a clear conscience.

(b) The restriction is limited to being in the other's presence presumably because doing something in someone's presence increases the pressure on that person to engage in it before he or she is truly ready. Teaching someone that his belief is incorrect also pressures him to engage in the practice, but that is acceptable because it is a different kind of pressure than modeling the behavior in his presence. It is a different social and psychological dynamic. So if, for example, one's brother cannot play cards with a clear conscience, one is free to play cards outside of the brother's presence but not to invite him over and play cards in his face.

(3) Third, he is speaking of personal conduct that the brother or sister with a narrower conscience *can be induced to imitate*. Some things are thought by some to be wrong only for the church, the congregational entity, to do. A person may believe, for example, that it is sinful for a church to incorporate or to have a kitchen. He has no problem with individual Christians incorporating or having kitchens; he just thinks it is wrong for the church to do so. I see those situations as being outside the scope of Paul's teaching here and in Romans 14-15 because an individual cannot act as a church, as a congregation, and thus the Christian with the narrower conscience cannot be induced to imitate the behavior so as to violate his conscience.

(4) And fourth, he is speaking of optional conduct (assumed to be so in 1 Corinthians 8 for purpose of argument) the foregoing of which does not leave one with only a substantially more burdensome way of obeying a divine command. I would put the dispute over one cup versus multiple communion cups in this category. Unlike abstaining from temple feasts (or from meat and wine in Romans 14-15) for the sake of a brother's narrower conscience, abstaining from multiple cups leaves only the one-cup option for obeying the command to participate in the Lord's Supper, which for many is a significant hindrance to taking the Supper. Since abstaining from temple feasts (or meat and wine) creates no such spiritual cost, does not leave one with only a substantially more burdensome way of obeying a command, the one-cup dispute seems to me to be outside the scope of Paul's teaching.

3. Response to those challenging the prohibition of attending temple meals by calling into question his apostolic authority (9:1-23)

a. Response re his not accepting their material support (9:1-18)

(1) He had a *right* to their support as an apostle (9:1-14) – **Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? ²If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.**

³My defense to those who are judging me is this: ⁴Can it be that we do not have authority to eat and drink? ⁵Can it be that we do not have authority to take along a wife who is a sister, as also the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶Or do only I and Barnabas not have authority not to work? ⁷Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Or who shepherds a flock and does not drink of the flock's milk? ⁸Do I say these things as a man, or does not the law also say these things? ⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is the [matter] of oxen a concern to God, ¹⁰or does it not undoubtedly speak for us? Indeed, it was written for us because the one who plows ought to plow in hope and the one who threshes [to thresh] in hope of sharing [in the crop]. ¹¹If we sowed spiritual things among you, is it a great matter if we shall reap your material things? ¹²If others share in authority over you, do we not all the more?

But we did not use this authority; instead, we put up with all things so that we not give any kind of hindrance to the gospel of Christ. ¹³Do you not know that those who conduct the sacred [rites] eat the things of the temple, that those who serve at the altar share in [what is offered on] the altar? ¹⁴So also the Lord ordained those who proclaim the gospel to live from the gospel.

(a) Paul now jumps the Corinthians for challenging his prohibition of attending temple meals by calling into question his apostolic authority. It seems that the challenge to that authority was being framed in terms of the fact he did not accept material support from them and the fact he seemed to go both ways on the issue of eating marketplace food.

(b) He begins with a flood of rhetorical questions, the answer to each of which is "of course." He asks "Am I not free?" which relates to their attempt to deny him the freedom to forego support from them and the freedom to eat or reject food. He picks this point up in vv. 15-23. The second question, "Am I not an apostle?" is the focus of vv. 1-14.

(c) Proof of his apostleship is in the following rhetorical questions. He reminds them that he had seen Jesus, referring to his Damascus road experience, and that they were the result of his labor in the Lord. Their very existence authenticates or serves as a "seal" of his apostleship because church planting is what apostles do.

(d) In vv. 3-14 Paul plays variations on the single theme that he had a right to their material support. It seems that his failure to take support from the Corinthians was used against him to call his apostolic authenticity into question.

[1] Philosophers in the Greco-Roman world were supported by four means: fees, patronage, begging, and working. Each of these means was viewed by some as unworthy of philosophy. By the time of his ministry in Corinth, Paul had chosen manual labor (tent making) as his basic means of support (2 Thess. 3:7-9; 1 Cor. 4:12; Acts 18:3).

[2] When later teachers, such as Apollos and possibly Peter, came to Corinth and accepted patronage, it focused attention on Paul's failure to do so. His failure to accept patronage was interpreted to mean that he had no *right* to such support, which, given that other apostles (broader than the Twelve) were entitled to it, called his apostleship into question.

[3] So Paul first establishes that he was also entitled to their financial support before he defends his renunciation of that right.

(e) Verses 4-6 are a series of intense rhetorical questions designed to force them to recognize what they should already know, i.e., that Paul has all the rights of an apostle. The first two are best translated as beginning "Can it be that we do not have authority (or the right) to eat and drink? Can it be that we do not have authority to take along a wife who is a sister, as also the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?" The expected answer is "No!"

[1] The question about the authority to take along a believing wife shows that the apostles' right to support extended to their wives as well. Not only were they entitled to support themselves but they were entitled to bring their wives and to have them supported.

[2] Given that others typically were accompanied by their wives, Paul's minority practice of not being accompanied by a wife was taken as a strike against his authenticity. His practice was attributed to the fact he lacked the apostolic authority to have a wife be supported. That was either why he did not marry or, for those who assumed he was married, why he did not bring his wife.

[3] V. 6 shows that v. 5 is related to the issue of support. Paul asks "*Or* do only I and Barnabas not have authority not to work?"

(f) In v. 7 he uses a soldier, a farmer, and a shepherd to illustrate his right to support. In vv. 8-10 he illustrates his right to support from the O.T. In v. 11-12a, he applies these points to his own situation in Corinth.

(g) In v. 12b he starts to explain why he gave up his right to support, but then adds two more pieces of evidence establishing his right to their support: general religious practice (v. 13) and the teaching of Christ (v. 14).

[1] Paul says he chose to give up his right to support so as not to hinder the gospel of Christ. He does not say how accepting support from

them would hinder the gospel, but it seems from the following paragraph (vv. 15-18) that he thinks doing so would risk misrepresenting the nature of his call by God by suggesting he had an option whether to preach, that it conditioned on his receiving support. He was convinced that in his case, perhaps because of the unusual way in which he became an apostle, that misperception could make him less effective. The bottom line is that he gave up a right out of his love for others in order that he might bless them.

[2] In both Jewish and pagan temples, the priest who served in making the sacrifices shared in the sacrificial food. So Paul is entitled to support from his religious labor.

[3] Paul clinches the argument with reference to the teaching of Christ. In Lk. 10:7 he says "The worker deserves his wages."

(2) His renunciation of his right to their support (9:15-18) –
¹⁵But I have not used any of these things, and I do not write these things in order that it might happen this way in my case. For it is good for me rather to die than – no one shall empty my boast. ¹⁶For if I preach the gospel, there is no boast for me, for necessity is laid on me, for woe is to me if I do not preach the gospel. ¹⁷For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if involuntarily, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. ¹⁸What then is my reward? That in preaching the gospel I may present the gospel without charge so as not to make full use of my authority in the gospel.

(a) Paul did not use his right to support and is not now seeking it. On the contrary, he is *firmly* resolved not to allow anyone to nullify his "boast."

[1] He feels so strongly about this because he has concluded that taking support from locals will hinder his evangelistic efforts by making it look like he has a choice of whether or not to preach, as though his doing so might depend on his receiving support. The fact is that he has no choice; God called him and put him under divine obligation to preach. By giving the impression he has a choice whether to preach he would misrepresent the true nature of his calling, which misrepresentation, in his case and circumstance, would be worse for the cause of the gospel than whatever questions his refusing support might generate. And Paul would rather die than hinder the gospel by standing on his rights.

[2] Paul "boasts" in the fact he supported himself via manual labor because this was a humbling of himself for the sake of the gospel. God used this humiliation, this weakness, to save others (see 4:12, 9:12b, and 2 Cor. 11:7-10).

(b) He explains that merely preaching the gospel does not provide him a reason for boasting (perhaps implying "unlike some others") because he has no choice in the matter. He was conscripted and is under divine compulsion to preach.

The man who is drafted and ordered into battle stands on a different footing than the one who enlists and asks to go to the front line.

[1] For if he preached voluntarily, he would have a reward: the special honor that accompanies voluntary service. But since he was drafted, since he was involuntarily assigned the task of preaching, that reward, that boast, is not available to him. He simply is a slave discharging his duty.

[2] Does he then, as a draftee, have a reward in preaching? Yes. His reward, his "boast," is the freedom to humble himself by preaching the gospel free of charge, to voluntarily forego his rights in preaching so as not to hinder the gospel. In other words, his reward in preaching is the freedom to preach without a financial reward!

b. Response re his seemingly wishy-washy conduct in matters of social relationships (9:19-23) – **¹⁹For though being free from all men, I made myself a slave to all men in order that I might gain [all] the more. ²⁰To the Jews, I became like a Jew, in order that I might gain Jews. To those under the law, [I became] like [one] under the law, though myself not being under the law, in order that I might gain those under the law. ²¹To those without the law, [I became] like [one] without the law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, in order that I might gain those without the law. ²²To the weak, I became weak, in order that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all men, in order that by all means I might save some. ²³Now I do all things for the sake of the gospel, in order that I might be a fellow sharer in it.**

(1) Having defended his apostolic authenticity by arguing for both his right to their material support and his freedom to turn it down, Paul continues with the theme of his freedom to forego his rights for the sake of the gospel to explain his seemingly wishy-washy conduct in matters of social relationships.

(a) It seems (see 10:23-33) that the problem had to do in part at least with Paul's actions toward marketplace food. When eating with Jews he adopted their dietary scruples but when eating with Gentiles he adopted theirs.

(b) This seeming inconsistency struck some as conduct unbecoming an apostle, especially an apostle who would deny them the "right" to attend cultic meals with their friends.

(2) Paul says that though he was free from all men, harking back to 9:1, he gave up that right for the sake of the gospel. He lived how others wanted him to live in order to win them to Christ.

(a) To Jews Paul became like a Jew. In other words, he would adopt Jewish religious practices, such things as their food laws, which he as a

Christian had long ago given up as being irrelevant to one's relationship with God. He would do so, however, purely as an accommodation, not because they were obligations.

(b) "Those under the law" is simply another way of referring to the Jews. He may have included this reference because the specific issue was especially related to Jewish legal requirements, not simply to matters of national origin. The parenthetical comment that he is not under the law is to clarify that his own conduct is a matter of freedom, not obligation.

(c) "Those without the law" refers to Gentiles, including the majority of Corinthian believers and those who stood against him. As he notes in 10:27, with them he ate whatever was put before him without raising questions of conscience. The fact he ate with them but abstained when with the Jews made them think Paul lacked principle.

(d) The parenthetical comment that he is not without God's law but under the law of Christ is to clarify that he is not lawless in the sense of behaving in a godless way. He is not under the Jewish law, but he is under the ethical imperatives of the Christian faith, the ethics of the new age.

(e) "The weak" are probably the socially weak, those without much social power or influence. That is the group into which most of the Corinthian Christians fell (1:26-31). Paul lowered himself by "stooping" to manual labor and doing without much (e.g., 4:8-13) so that his outreach to such not be hindered.

(f) V. 22b summarizes the argument: "I have become all things to all men, in order that by all means I might save some." That is why he made the choices that he made with regard to nonessentials, why he seemed to go both ways on such matters as marketplace food. The bottom line is that what some were interpreting as a strike against his genuineness was in reality fruit of his zeal for the gospel, a hallmark of apostolic authenticity.

(3) In v. 23 he says that he acts in this way, that he does all things for the sake of the gospel, (literally) "in order that I might be a fellow participant in it." In other words, he does this so that he might be a fellow participant [with the Lord] in the [cause of the] gospel, that he might share Christ's cause as his own, rather than have it be just an assignment that he carries out.

4. Exhortation to put great effort into Christian living (9:24-27) – ²⁴**Do you not know that all those running in a stadium run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win [it].** ²⁵**Everyone who competes in an athletic contest exercises self-control in all things. They, however, [do it] that they may receive a perishable crown, but we [to receive] an imperishable one.** ²⁶**I, therefore, run this way, not as [one] without a fixed goal; I box this way, not as one beating the air.** ²⁷**Rather, I bruise my body and enslave it, lest somehow, having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.**

a. This is a transitional paragraph in which Paul moves from defending his apostleship against their criticism of his choices to exhorting them to put great effort into Christian living. He is turning the subject back to their insistence on eating cultic meals in the temples.

b. Being faithful to Christ requires discipline, self denial, and self control. If an athlete denies himself things he wants for the sake of a perishable crown, how much more should the Christian deny himself things he wants for the sake of an eternal one?

c. Christ calls us to deny ourselves, to live as he wants us to live, and if we reject that call for the sake of self indulgence, we will be disqualified for the prize. That is why Paul is so serious about obeying. He lives a life of self discipline and denial because he has his eye on the prize, the imperishable crown that follows a life of faith (see, 2 Tim. 4:6-8).

5. Baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper will not save them if they continue eating meals at the idol temples (10:1-5) – **For I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink; for they were drinking from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was the Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, for they were struck down in the wilderness.**

a. Having exhorted the Corinthians to live a disciplined Christian life and warned them of the danger of self indulgence, Paul wants to remove any notion that their baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper makes them immune or invulnerable to disqualification. Those sacraments will not save them if they continue attending the meals at the idol temples.

b. He does not want them to be ignorant of the fact that all the Israelites who came out of Egypt participated in a type of baptism and shared in a type of Lord's Supper, yet *most* of them were struck down in the wilderness.

(1) Ancient Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage was finalized by their passing through the Red Sea, a passage that began with their going under God's guiding cloud as it moved from their front to their rear to separate them from the Egyptian army (Ex. 14:19-20). Paul characterizes this water passage of deliverance as a baptism into Moses, paralleling it to their baptism into Christ.

(2) After their "baptism," all of the ancient Israelites were sustained in the desert by the food (manna) and drink (water) that were supernaturally provided for them. They all shared in the same provision.

(a) Manna was a bread that God rained down from heaven. He provided it for the Israelites throughout their wilderness period (Exodus 16).

The drink referred to is the water supplied from the rock at Meribah in Exodus 17 and Numbers 20.

(b) The manna and water from the rock were "spiritual" not in the sense they were immaterial – they clearly were physical – but in the sense they were miraculously or supernaturally provided and they had a spiritual significance in that they served as a type or analogy of the Lord's Supper.

(c) Jews of Paul's day interpreted texts in Exodus and Numbers to mean that the rock from which God supplied the Israelites with water traveled with them during the Exodus. God continued to supply them from the same rock.

(d) Paul explains that in a sense that was correct – they *were* accompanied throughout by a Rock – but the Rock that accompanied them was not the physical rock from which the water came but the pre-incarnate Christ who was the divine source or agent of that sustaining miracle. This identification was no doubt traceable to O.T. references to God as the Rock (Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30-31). So Paul is making a powerful claim of Christ's divinity by identifying him as the Rock.

(3) Despite these sacred privileges, which were similar in kind to those the Corinthians felt (or might be tempted to feel) made them invincible, God was not pleased with *most* of them, as evidenced by the fact they were killed in the wilderness.

6. Warning not to follow Israel's example (10:6-10) – **⁶Now these things became our examples, so that we should not be people who lust after evil things, as they lusted. ⁷Neither be idolaters as some of them [were], just as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and they rose up to play." ⁸Neither let us fornicate, as some of them fornicated, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. ⁹Neither let us put Christ to the test, as some of them tested and were destroyed by the snakes. ¹⁰Neither grumble, as some of them grumbled and were destroyed by the destroyer.**

a. God's repeated striking down of "baptized communicants" of Israel serves to warn us that we should not be people who lust after evil things as they did. Paul's specific concern here is with their idolatry in attending the temple meals, as suggested by his examples of evil things.

b. Paul first urges them not to follow the Israelite example of idolatry and refers to the episode in Exodus 32 when they worshipped the golden calf.

(1) He cites Ex. 32:6b ("The people sat down to eat and to drink, and they rose up to play") rather than a text more specifically related to idolatry *per se* (e.g., 6a or 31c) because it involves the people *eating* in the presence of the calf, precisely his concern with the Corinthians attending their cultic meals.

(2) The phrase "they rose up to play" (NIV "to engage in pagan revelry") probably has sexual overtones (as in Gen. 26:8 and 39:17). It was so understood by the rabbis and by the early church. There was a connection between idol worship and sexual immorality (e.g., Num. 25:1-9), a connection that continued into the N.T. era (see, Rev. 2:14, 20).

c. The reference to sexual immorality leads into Paul's next example. They are not to engage in sexual immorality as some of the Israelites did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day!

(1) Paul probably raises this subject, not as an isolated word against sexual immorality, but because of the connection between sexual immorality and idol worship. Not only does the preceding text link idolatrous eating and sexual play, but Paul is most likely referring to the event in Num. 25:1-9 where sexual immorality is specifically joined with eating in the presence of Baal of Peor (vv. 1-3). (Paul apparently had access to a reliable tradition that of the 24,000 who died as a result of this sin, 23,000 died in a single day. If he is referring to Exodus 32 instead of Numbers 25, he may have had access to a reliable tradition that 23,000 died in a day from the plague in Ex. 32:35.)

(2) Rev. 2:14 and 2:20 connect eating idol sacrifices with sexual immorality, and 2:14 refers to the same event in Numbers 25.

d. The third example they are not to follow is the Israelites' "putting Christ to the test," which resulted in some of them being destroyed by snakes.

(1) This is a reference to Num. 21:4-7 where the Israelites complained against God and against Moses because they had to eat manna rather than more ordinary food (see, Num. 11:4-6). They detested the food God had made available to them. The Corinthians were doing the same kind of thing in complaining against Paul's prohibition against their eating idol food. What God made available, the universe of non-idol food, was not acceptable!

(2) Paul awareness of Christ's divinity is again on display when he describes the conduct of the ancient Israelites as "putting Christ to the test." This is the very thing that, according to 1 Cor. 10:22, the Corinthians were doing by insisting on their right to eat the temple meals.

e. The final example they are not to follow is the Israelites' grumbling or complaining, which resulted in some of them being destroyed by the destroyer.

(1) Paul is probably referring to Numbers 14 where the community, following the bad report about Canaan by all the spies except Joshua and Caleb, grumbled against Moses' leadership and spoke of returning to Egypt. Num. 14:37 states that those responsible for the bad report were struck down by a plague, which Paul understands to have been carried out by the Destroyer of Ex. 12:23.

(2) The Corinthians were doing the same kind of thing in grumbling against Paul's (and ultimately against God's) prohibition of their attending the temple meals.