1 Corinthians 10:12-22

Temptation & a preview of the Lord's Table

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and 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. 14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

15 I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. 16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? 17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. 18 Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? 19 What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?

# Introduction

Paul’s efforts so far in this letter have been to squash division, question leadership abusing their position, and to call believers from carnal practices unto godly, biblical practices in their personal lives. The last passage called out the practice of idolatry in Israel at mount Sinai and how God was not pleased with that, and therefore the principle carries over that believers should not follow into those same patterns, lest they be tempted. This next passage is going to take a brief interlude into temptation as well as a continuation on into a clarification on what those idolatrous interactions represent to the outside world and why we as believers should consider not interacting with them.

# Tempation

## The Standing Faller

In the flesh our sense of confidence in where we are now in our mindset and behavior can deliver a false comfort. The flesh is always going to do better next time; not make that mistake again; and become perfect. These are the lies that Paul is warning against here. Or as John put it, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” [1 John 2:16] Paul’s warning here, which is translated ‘thinks’ has to do with the concept of opinion. The standing is bound to the opinion of standing rather than the fact of the standing. Paul warns that they should see that they don’t fall.

Given the issues of leadership, division and carnal confidence Paul is continuing with this section on Israel’s fall and the desires of the flesh (aka temptation) to lay out a heavenly perspective on things.

Those who fall are falling due to temptations that are common to man. Paul calls out that the type (federal head) is the thing that is struggling with temptation. ‘Man’ is not just anthropos (one man) it is anthropinos – of man’s type.

*Why is it that these temptations should not be common to the believer then?*

## Wrestling with the Flesh vs. Victory in the Spirit

Paul’s starting point for the believer is God. God is the one here involved and creating context. His will (allowance) is that you will not be tempted beyond things that you have the power to handle. Along with the temptation will come the way out so that you can endure the temptation.

However, all of this is contingent on one really, really important principle: You will need to know that you’re beholding as the temptation comes. As Colossians 3:1-3 tells us we have a responsibility to be perceiving things from a heavenly perspective. This has a dampening effect for the flesh because the flesh is very interested in the self, the present, and the control is with the flesh. When we see the events of life in an eternal perspective, a heavenly position, and with God’s handle on things we cannot frame them in helpless, overwhelming terms.

*How do we begin to perceive circumstances as we set our minds on things above?*

*How do we recognize a non-heavenly minded prayer on events?*

As we ask what are the prayers and the lives of the saints who are abiding through trials and tribulations we don’t ask to delineate the righteous from the unrighteous, but to seek the biblical principles to apply. The Spirit moves us from a position of self-centered thinking from phrases like, “I am standing,” to, “I am resting.” We move from prayers of, “Help me not to sin,” to, “May a rest where you have me in complete trust of who You are as God over my circumstances seeking my growth and strength.” We see the focus of 1 Peter 2:19 as our own focus, “…so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;”

# Idolatry, Communion, and God’s Discipline

## Therefore, Flee from Idolatry

We see a repeated call from Paul to flee from the practices of idolatry within Corinth, and within the body as a whole. We can see this concept of idolatry as the ascribing of worth-ship to anything that is not God. As Paul called out in 1 Corinthians 6:18: flee immorality. Paul uses this term, “flee,” to help them instead find focus on heavenly things. 1 Timothy 6:11 tells us to flee from carnality and seek righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. In other words we flee from worldly influences, we flee from fleshly influences, and we flee from that which would seek to control us, and instead rest in the Spirit and prove out what the mind of Christ looks like within circumstances.

*Does idolatry seek merely to cope during trials? If not, what else? How are those things unbibilical?*

## I Speak as to Wise Men

Paul then calls the believers to be serious and to know that he’s not mocking them in their culture of sophists. He wants them to take on the next section with sobriety and in light of revealed biblical truth. If the people in Corinth are to judge themselves they will need to do so with revealed Christian doctrine in mind.

*Why does Paul call out his tone here?*

## Communion

Communion, as we know it, is a piece of Christian culture that we may find ourselves slipping into a rote pattern of observance. The believer, we find, is doing something that has past, present, and future lenses.

* The remembrance draws our attention to what Christ did and who He was
* The present act of the ceremony reminds us of our value and our identification with Him even now
* The future return of our bridegroom, our reigning, our heavenly citizenship’s result. His glory and our glorification become the longing of our hearts as we rest in His work on the cross

So as believers we take communion as a sharer in the one, Christ, and as co-sharers together.

Paul’s emphasis here is the believer’s partaking in or sharing in Christ’s work with the focus on Christ rather than a sense of self-aggrandizement for participating. We’ll see in chapter 11 that the church had become revelers not in Christ, but in the feasts they constructed around communion.

The act of communion, as Paul calls out here, is one that joins us to Christ, through salvation, and therefore is one that has an outflowing of Christ’s life as the expectation. Because Christ was the sacrifice once and for all, we participate in His offering through communion.

## The Communion Over Sacrifices

Paul, therefore, moves from the one sacrifice of Christ back into the same principle when applied to the Jewish temples, and then back out to the secular temples to help bring perspective on what our association with certain practices may signal to others.

The temple sacrifices brought focus on God and the nation of Israel’s relationship with God – all other nations recognized this relationship (and generally rejecteded it). The God of the temple and the participants in the sacrifices were affiliated, so when Paul moves out to the secular temples – where he earlier pointed out they had permission to eat meat from because the gods were not real – he is talking about affiliation with those gods and those practices from an outside perspective. Paul clarifies that the spiritual powers that are there are demons – of God’s creation – and not the imagined gods. This, however, creates a communion with the wrong source, and that is his concern.

*Are we as believers guilty by association?*

# Conclusion

Paul’s hard work, that was empowered by the Holy Spirit, and sacrificial love, which was motivated by God’s grace, brought him to Corinth where this body was formed through the Spirit and the gospel in the lives there. His concern for the body were that they create a legacy through an abiding life and have an outreach through a Christ-focused lens on their world. The liberty of Christianity when abused was causing this church to be divided and temple sacrifices were part of the problem. Paul’s direction here is not to lessen liberty, but to bring a greater clarity to the impact our actions have on those within the body and those outside of the body.

He also took a brief passage to give us a context of abiding while being tempted by others to do something that we should not be doing ourselves. Setting our minds on things above should be our, “default position,” so that we can be overcomers and not, “succumbers.”