**“A Way Of Escape”**

*Being the Church –* 1st Corinthians 9

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Raphael Giglio 3-10-22

His goal was to do everything and anything he could do for the sake of the gospel.

He said *“I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.* (v. 22)

Paul was able to “become all things to all people” by entering into the communities and into relationships with the people he was trying to reach.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 all have a similar thread throughout them, Paul addresses the issue of eating food sacrificed to idols, lists his rights as an Apostle, and encourages believers to keep one another from stumbling.

It probably could have been one long chapter (73 verses, most chapters are under 40). But it was decided by Stephen Langton, an English Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church and Archbishop of Canterbury who in 1204 (over 800 years ago), to divide the Bible into the chapters we have now.

In this chapter, Paul dives into Israel’s history under Moses and points out examples of what happened to them when they were disobedient to God. He also talks about the dangers of idolatry and why we should not abuse the freedoms we have in Christ.

We will take it part by part and see what God has for us as a takeaway from this plentiful chapter.

CHAPTER 10

**10**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 food **4**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.

**6**Now 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.”

*(Note: the destroying angel is seen throughout the Old Testament, sent by God to punish the wicked, including the homes in Egypt of those who did not have the blood of the lamb on the doorposts in the Passover account.)*

**Examples from the Torah**

**V. 1 - Passed through the Sea**

**Ex. 14:21-22** **“**Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground.”

**V. 2 - Cloud** – by day (Fire by Night) – God lead them, protected them and provided for them.

**Ex. 13:21** “By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.”

**V. 3 - Spiritual Food** – Manna (what is it?)

**Ex 16:15 “**When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them,  “It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.”

**V. 4 Drank from the Rock?** “for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ”

There are a variety of different interpretations on what Paul was talking about here. He seems to imply that they was a Rock following them around the desert for 40 years as a portable drinking fountain, and that Rock was Jesus. It’s true that God provided water for them through rocks,  once at the *beginning* of the wilderness period (Exodus 17) and again toward the *end* of the 40-year period (Numbers 20), but did Jesus follow them around in the form of a rock to provide water for them? Many scholars have their own conjecture on this but there is no written explanation in the Bible. It’s possible that they took along a large concave flat rock (like a giant birdbath), and just as the manna miraculously showed up on the ground each morning, the rock was miraculously filled with dew, with enough water to drink.

***Numbers 11:9*** *“When the dew settled on the camp at night, the manna also came down.”*

All this was written to show us, that even though the Lord showed them miraculous favor in the wilderness, freeing them from slavery, providing for them in the desert, they still rebelled and turned their hearts against Him. And there were consequences.

**Vs. 9 – Some of them were “killed by snakes**”

When the Children of Israel spoke against God and Moses in the wilderness;

**Numbers 21:4-9“**They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; **5**they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

**6**Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. **7**The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

**8**The Lord said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” **9**So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

This account in the Old Testament must have been one of Jesus’ favorite Bible Stories. Because the idea of people being hopeless and dying, finding salvation in simply believing and looking upon what God was lifting up, was exactly the example he used with Nicodemus to bring us John 3:16.

**John 3:14-16** “**14**Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, **15**that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” **16**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Examples and Warnings:

**11**These 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.

### Never believe the lie that you are tempted beyond what you can handle, there is always a way of escape if you are willing. *(more on that later)*

### Idol Feasts and the Lord’s Supper

**14**Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. **15**I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. **16**Is 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? **17**Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.

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

*“The cup of the Lord and the cup of demons?”*

He is primarily addressing those who were participating in BOTH the Christian community (including communion),

*as well as* the idol worship at the Corinthian pagan temples.

Paul says that the idols are nothing, but “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they *sacrifice to demons* and not to God” (1 Cor. 10:20). Did you catch that? Even though the idols are fake, and the false gods don’t exist, there was still a spiritual danger at the pagan religious ceremonies. Demons *were* present there.

The Devil is the deceiver that holds captive worshipers in false religions, and therefore Paul is saying that the sacrifices that are made to idols, are actually being made to demons. This can be said of all false religions, even those that exist today.

The Devil is clearly behind the deception that keeps people blind to the Truth of God’s Word, and ‘salvation through His son’.

There is only one true God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6). And all of the various rival “gods” are deceptions, being propagated by the Devil to keep people from knowing God.

### The Believer’s Freedom

**23**“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. **24**No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.

**25**Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, **26**for, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.”

**27**If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. **28**But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. **29**I am referring to the other person’s conscience, not yours. For why is my freedom being judged by another’s conscience? **30**If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for?

**31**So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. **32**Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— **33**even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

Once again Paul is bringing up the “meat sacrificed to idols” controversy. And again he is saying that there is nothing wrong with the meat, and since idols are not real, it’s fine to eat it, However, if it offends someone who is really bothered by it, then it should be avoided, because *your relationship with that person is of more importance than your personal rights.*

But the bigger issue he is addressing is *liberality* among believers.

Paul says;

V.23 “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.”

We live in an age where many church legalistic customs have disappeared.

There was a time not to long ago where there were many rules in place for Christians to adhere to that would be an offense to ignore;

No Dancing

No Secular music or movies

No alcohol of any kind

Women only wore dresses, never pants.

No Jeans in church

No open-toed shoes at church (believe it or not)

It’s left us with a culture that instead now says*, “I can do anything I want” with regard to these things and others, I am free in Christ.”* In other words, as long as the Bible doesn’t specifically condemn it, I can do it as often and as much as I like.

But Paul is telling us clearly, Yes, you have many freedoms, but we should live in such a way, that we are willing to forfeit these freedoms if they are an offense to another’s conscience. He also states that while some things may be lawful, they do not edify. Meaning they could be harmful to your physical or spiritual health.

This is what he meant in chapter 9 when he said “ I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, … I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave.”

*I have a cousin, in Florida, who at age 42 decided to compete in the South Florida body-building contest, competing with guys who were mostly in their 20’s and 30’s, and won first place. His approach was strict diet and weight training. He would only eat certain high-protein foods in very small quantities. I asked him if he was allowed to certain fruits and meats, his response was, “I am allowed to eat anything, but there are very few things that will help me achieve my goals, so I only eat those.”*

This needs to be our approach to how we live our lives and what we do and don’t do with our diet, our time, our energy and our devotion. We should focus on the things that “edify” and avoid the things that don’t, even if we are allowed to do any of them.

Lastly, regarding Temptation

**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.

### Never believe the lie that you are tempted beyond what you can handle, there is always a way of escape if you are willing.

*When* you are tempted;

**First:** You have to believe that sin is not something that you should desire. It’s not something that is good, that you don’t “get” to partake in. It’s something that is bad and will have a detrimental effect on your relationship with God and others. It is something that the devil is trying to tempt you with to keep you off-track, and prevent you from achieving what’s best for you in life.

**Second**: As you’re being tempted, pray as Jesus taught us in the Lord’s prayer. The sixth request; “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

In other words, “Lord, Help me steer clear of temptation, and also the Evil one who is trying to direct me there.”

**Third:** Find the “Exit Sign”. “But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out.”

*Disney’s Pirates of the Caribbean story: The ride stalled in the dark, we were in the middle of a bay with s Pirate battle going on all around, Swords, muskets, knives, cannons! “ A voice came on and said, we are experiencing a ride malfunction, remain in your boat. I wanted to find a way out for me and my family, suddenly the lights turned on, you could see everything,. The whole setting was fake. We were in a huge fluorescent lit warehouse, on a narrow track in a foot of water, with concrete sidewalks on either side of us. And along every wall there were “Exit Signs”. If we wanted to get up and leave, we could have done so easily.*

There is always an Exit Sign somewhere. You just have to trust God that He will provide a way of escape. You also have to trust Him, that the plan He has for you is better than the deal that Satan is tempted you with.

The best way to stay on the right path is to live according to the Word of God and hide it in your heart.

Ask Him to help you, teach you and direct you, and trust that He will.

***Closing prayer from Psalm 119***

**Psalm 119:9“**

“How can a young person stay on the path of purity?  
    By living according to your word.  
**10**I seek you with all my heart;  
    do not let me stray from your commands.  
**11**I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.  
**12**Praise be to you, Lord; teach me your decrees.

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34 Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law  
    and obey it with all my heart.  
**35**Direct me in the path of your commands,  
    for there I find delight.  
**36**Turn my heart toward your statutes  
    and not toward selfish gain.  
**37**Turn my eyes away from worthless things;  
    preserve my life according to your word.”