

I hope you all had a very meaningful week remembering the price Jesus paid to redeem us and considering the wonder of resurrection power at work in our lives. We are back in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Paul He has been warning the church about certain problems such as division and encouraging them to consider the weaker brother before exercising their freedoms. In the last chapter he defended his right to work without support. That chapter ended with a challenge to live the Christian life as if it was a race to win the prize. He spoke of keeping his body in subjection like athletes who trained to compete in the arena (1 Corinthians 9:24-27ⁱ).

In our passage today, Paul continues his exhortation to live holy lives. One way to do so is by learning from those who have gone before us. We can learn from our mistakes, but it is even better to learn from others' failures. ¹ *For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea,* ² *and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,* 1 Corinthians 10:1,2 Exodus tells the story of Moses leading the Children of Israel out of Egypt. It was an historical event. God had plagued Egypt and its Pharaoh until he finally agreed to let them go. As they went out, a cloud like a pillar led the way. It was a manifestation of the Lord going before them and providing shade from the desert sun (Exodus 13:21,22ⁱⁱ). At night it would turn into a pillar of fire, like a giant night light.

The Hebrews saw all physical things as a picture of spiritual things. We see in Romans 1:20ⁱⁱⁱ that God reveals His divine nature through the things that He made. That is why Jesus often used the physical world in His parables to illustrate spiritual things. This passing physical world is created to teach us of spiritual truth. People and events we read about in the Old Testament foreshadowed Jesus in the New (Colossians 2:17^{iv}).

The cloud is a picture of the grace we have when we follow God through the wilderness of this life. The wording regarding all the people being "*in the cloud and through the sea*" pictured their baptism into Moses. To be in the cloud pictured being in the Lord. In a sense Moses baptized an entire nation when he took them through the sea.

Moses declared that after him would come someone like himself. In other words, a deliver, leader, and divine law giver (Deuteronomy 18:15^v). Moses was a foreshadow of our Great Deliverer, Jesus. The deliverance and journey of the Children of Israel is a type and shadow of the great deliverance we have in Christ. But it comes with a stern warning.

³ *and all ate the same spiritual food,* 1 Corinthians 10:3 The manna was called "the bread of angels" (Psalm 78:25^{vi}). It fell faithfully every morning except on the Sabbath. You could not keep it overnight except on the day before the Sabbath. It represents our daily spiritual nourishment from the Word of God. We get up every morning and collect our spiritual manna from the Bible. Jesus said that He is the reality of the shadow, manna, for He came down from heaven as the bread of life (John 6:32^{vii}). Do you see that this is not just something we are trying to read into the Bible with creative imagination? This is the way Jesus understood the world and His role in it. Everything in creation points to Him if we have eyes to see or are willing to take the words of Jesus and the apostles at face value. The difference between eating manna and receiving Jesus is that those who ate the manna died in the wilderness. Here is what Jesus said: ⁴⁹ *Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.* ⁵⁰ *This is the bread that comes down from*

heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.*” John 6:49-51 The shadow didn’t give them life. Only the reality, Jesus’ life given for us, can give us eternal life, which is to know God and be destined for eternity in His presence (John 17:3^{viii}).

If your eyes are opened to these symbolic pictures, there are many lessons that can be learned. For example, just as they grew tired of manna, so Christians can grow tired of their daily Bible reading and prayer time. We forget that everything we need is in the Word and instead look at it as a routine rather than as our spiritual nourishment from God. Just as they longed to return to eat the garlic and leeks they ate back in Egypt, so we may long for the pleasures we once experienced in the world while forgetting the bondage of sin that oppressed us and left us feeling empty (Numbers 11:5^{ix}; Matthew 16:25,26^x).

⁴ *and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.* 1 Corinthians 1:4 The split rock of Horeb pictured Christ Jesus broken and smitten for us that we might have the water of life springing up within us. That is what Jesus was alluding to in John 4 when He spoke to the woman at the well. No wonder He said, *“If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink,”* and *“blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled,”* and *“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst”* John 6:35.

Jewish tradition holds that the rock followed them through the wilderness to provide for their thirst. It sounds like that is what is being said in this verse. Certainly, Jesus is with us through life to provide spiritual refreshment for our souls if we will come to Him to receive the living water (John 7:37,38^{xi}). I think Paul is saying that Jesus was with them in the wilderness and spoke through Moses to the people. Those words were their spiritual drink.

⁵ *Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.* 1 Corinthians 10:5 Even after all the plagues and miracles they witnessed, they died in the wilderness without entering the promised land. They refused to listen to God and have faith in His Word. They were afraid of the giants in the land, just like we fear what we will face if we step out at the leading of the Spirit into the spiritual battles we will encounter if we are to take the spiritual land. God help us to learn from their demise. Their failure is a warning to us. The older generation never got Egypt, which represents the world, out of their hearts. **They left Egypt but Egypt never left them.** They kept dreaming of going back. That is why God was not pleased with them. We need to be aware of what our hearts are set on. If it is on the seen rather than the unseen, God is not pleased with us. Without faith it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6^{xii}).

The younger generation saw the demise of the older and looked to God to defeat their enemies. They learned the lesson of faith and trust in God, though it had to be renewed after the battle against Ai (Joshua 7:2-4^{xiii}). We can’t rely on past victories.

⁶ *Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.* 1 Corinthians 10:6 The exodus and wilderness wandering and failure to take the land were examples for the generations that followed, ours included, of the miracle of being delivered from bondage to the world, God's protection and provision, our failures

to walk in the Spirit, rebelling against authority, pictures of Jesus in the cloud and tabernacle and the rock, God's loving patience, intercession, and of battles with the enemy of our soul and his forces. They teach us of opportunities to die to ourselves (Jordan), the battles of taking the land, facing giants, murmuring, failure to take it all, misunderstanding our brothers, etc. Nearly every situation in our spiritual lives has an analogy in the Torah.

However, Paul's emphasis is that though they had wonderful revelations and experiences, when the critical moment came to cross the Jordan (which represents dying to ourselves), they failed to have faith and act on all that God had shown them. In other words, never get satisfied about where you are at spiritually, thinking you have arrived. You don't know you have until you cross the Jordan (Matthew 24:13^{xiv}). How many people are convinced they are going to heaven and yet live just like the world? We think all is well because we once said a prayer. But Jesus invites those who *know* Him to enter into His joy (Matthew 25:21^{xv}). That implies an intimate relationship that is more than sitting in a pew once a week.

We must be honest about what we desire. What are we seeking? If we prioritize anything in this world above a relationship with the One who loved us and gave Himself for us, we need to get to know Him better. **To know Him is to love Him for He is more desirable than anything He has created.** All good things come from Him (James 1:17^{xvi}). He alone is complete satisfaction. Just as the people could eat each day enough manna to satisfy their hunger, so Christ is more than enough to satisfy the hunger in our souls. Nothing else can (Psalm 73:25^{xvii}).

⁷ Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." 1 Corinthians 10:7 The picture is of having begun but falling back into worldly lusts. Paul begins to list the world's pitfalls that captured the heart of the older Hebrews in the wilderness. The first is idolatry. They decided to worship the golden calf that the Egyptians worshiped (Exodus 32:6^{xviii}). Think of how crazy that is. They had seen God show that He is so much greater than the gods of Egypt. Did they think they would be welcomed if they returned? Remember the Egyptian army was decimated in the sea.

They partied like Egyptians and fell into immorality. How did idolatry lead to immorality? Gods of this world depend on the physical senses. Sight can lead to lust as was the case in Eden (Genesis 3:6^{xix}). It started with a thought that the fruit would provide something outside of God that would satisfy the hunger for knowledge. Sight moved it a step further to looking like it would satisfy the taste buds, a physical pleasure. The people had Aaron build the calf and then celebrated with a feast followed by an orgy.

Idolatry happens beneath the level of action; it happens on the level of appetite and desire. Idolatry shows up in the subtle twists of ordinary desires and activities—eating, drinking, playing, marrying, and having sex. These activities and desires are often not ends in and of themselves, but are means to another end (personal fulfillment, comfort, security, power, control, etc.). Whenever we take a created thing and put it to use in such a way as to meet a need or fulfill a desire that only the Creator can ultimately fulfill, we are committing idolatry. When we use food or substances or sex to fulfill or numb our deep desires, we are engaging in idolatry. Idolatry ultimately spoils life, because we aren't able to enjoy things for what they actually are.

Idolatry is in the air that we breathe, and it's rarely explicit. Most people don't know it's happening. They're not saying, "I want this instead of Christ"; they're saying, "I want Christ plus this." To get at the idols of one's heart, one has to step back and consider the way one's desires shape his or her life. What drives us to work (or not work) the way we do? What causes us to eat and drink (or not eat and drink) the way we do? What desires lie behind the way we relate (or don't relate) to our spouse? What do we daydream about? Fantasize about? Long for? Do we often say, "If only I had this..." or "If only I were like this..."? What is our desire pointing at? What is our affection pulling us toward? What is our end goal? Answering these questions will help one discover some of the layers of idolatry in one's own heart.^{xx}

⁸ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. 1 Corinthians 10:8 Idolatry is often the abuse of God's gifts. While marriage and sexuality within marriage is a natural desire, the Moabite women used sexual seduction to lure the Israelite men into sex outside of marriage and then to worship the Moabite gods (Numbers 25:1-3^{xxi}). The pornography epidemic is idolatry of the human form. The natural desire for beauty is made a god when the mind comes to believe the perfect beauty will bring us satisfaction, thus replacing God in our lives. Idolatry is in essence replacing God with something in His creation, something we think we can control to our liking. However, the opposite effect takes place. It ends up controlling us, for the temporary satisfaction we derive can only be reached again when we consume more (Ephesians 4:19 NIV^{xxii}). In this way it takes over our thought life and consumes our time to our gradual destruction.

⁹ We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, 1 Corinthians 10:9 This refers to one of the many times the Children of Israel murmured when they became impatient and were sick of manna. (Remember it was 40 years of it because they refused to trust God and enter the Promised Land.) If we won't move forward in faith we try to survive on past revelations and that can seem stale. We are meant to keep growing and satisfying the hunger for righteousness and knowledge of God. They caused the condition and then they blamed the Lord for it. How easily we forget our role in our present circumstances.

Paul indicates that the snakes were sent by the Destroyer, aka Satan. God allowed him to do so as a wakeup call and so that Moses would set up the bronze serpent on the pole so they could look and live. It is another picture that Jesus said was about Him (John 3:14,15^{xxiii}). We look to Him to be healed of the serpent's deadly poison we call sin.

It is interesting that some texts say Lord and others have Christ. I think it is because the copyists saw them as one.

¹⁰ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. 1 Corinthians 10:10 Not sure which account this refers to, as it would fit many of their grumbling complaints. It just seemed they refused to learn to trust the Lord regardless of how many lessons they were given (Psalm 78:49^{xxiv}). Their murmuring is an often repeated story, from the other side of the Red Sea to the entrance to the Promised Land and many times in between (Exodus 14:11,12^{xxv}; Numbers 14:36^{xxvi}). Murmuring says we are ungrateful. Like Eve in the Garden of Eden, we choose to turn our eyes from all the good blessings of God and focus on one thing we are not happy with. We want everything our way and in our time.

I slide into this so easily in traffic. We travel faster than anyone who lived in the millenniums before us with the air conditioned to our comfort, but I'm whining about the RV going five miles under the speed limit. We live better than 99% of the world but I can complain about inflation. Much of the world has no money to worry about its value. God help us to count our blessings and praise Him for all the goodness that we enjoy!

¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. 1 Corinthians 10:11 Paul repeating what he said in verse six, that all of these experiences of Israel are examples that we should learn from. God had these accounts preserved and passed down to us for our instruction. **God wants to spare us from the troubles they brought on themselves.** This is especially for our day, *on whom the end of the ages has come.* Ours is a day in which leaders are disrespected and demands are outlandish. The love of many is growing colder and colder (Matthew 24:12^{xxvii}). Lawlessness is on the increase as our government declines to uphold the laws they are sworn to enforce. Murmuring is common. Idols are everywhere. Immorality is lauded as praiseworthy. What has it come to that we have to pass laws that our K through 3rd grade children do not need sexual indoctrination!

¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. 1 Corinthians 10:12 This is Paul's point to the spiritually prideful in Corinth and for all who read his letter. We had a man in fellowship many years ago who when reading of the murmuring events or doubts of men in the New Testament would always declare how weak and stupid they were. He left the church when a movement went through town after yelling at me for not joining it. It divided the churches and destroyed the unity and never produced the promised fruit. When we can't see our own vulnerabilities, we are in great danger. Humility is necessary for endurance and unity. We must always be pressing forward in our faith seeking to know Jesus in a deeper and more personal way.

This is an expression we should all memorize. I refer to it in a little different way. "If you think you can do it, you already blew it." How we need to recognize our desperate need for Jesus in our thought life, our desires, and our daily activities. If you think you are standing well enough, thank you very much, take heed before you end up falling. Complacency and self-confidence have no place in the Christian life. We should always be like the Apostle Paul mentioned in the last chapter, running to obtain the prize. Always exercise spiritual disciplines. Always give the Holy Spirit the attention and time to examine our hearts and see if there is any wicked way in us and lead us in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:24^{xxviii}).

Questions:

- 1 What is better than learning from your mistakes?
- 2 How did the Hebrews see the world?
- 3 List some of the spiritual analogies from physical things?
- 4 Why didn't they enter the Promised Land?
- 5 What is the lesson for us?
- 6 Why are these accounts recorded?
- 7 Review the quote from Pastor Um.
- 8 How did seduction end in idolatry (v.8)?
- 9 In what ways are we tempted to murmur?
- 10 What is the summary point we should remember? How should we apply it?

ⁱ **1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (ESV)**

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵ Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

ⁱⁱ **Exodus 13:21-22 (ESV)**

²¹ And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. ²² The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Romans 1:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

^{iv} **Colossians 2:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

^v **Deuteronomy 18:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—

^{vi} **Psalms 78:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ Man ate of the bread of the angels; he sent them food in abundance.

^{vii} **John 6:32 (ESV)**

³² Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

^{viii} **John 17:3 (ESV)**

³ And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

^{ix} **Numbers 11:5 (ESV)**

⁵ We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.

^x **Matthew 16:25-26 (ESV)**

²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

^{xi} **John 7:37-38 (ESV)**

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

^{xii} **Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

^{xiii} **Joshua 7:2-4 (ESV)**

² Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, “Go up and spy out the land.” And the men went up and spied out Ai. ³ And they returned to Joshua and said to him, “Do not have all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not make the whole people toil up there, for they are few.” ⁴ So about three thousand men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai,

^{xiv} **Matthew 24:13 (ESV)**

¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

^{xv} **Matthew 25:21 (ESV)**

²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’

^{xvi} **James 1:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

^{xvii} **Psalm 73:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

^{xviii} **Exodus 32:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

^{xix} **Genesis 3:6 (ESV)**

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

^{xx} Um, Stephen T., *Preaching the Word - 1 Corinthians: The Word of the Cross*, p. 183

^{xxi} **Numbers 25:1-3 (ESV)**

¹ While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab.

² These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

³ So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

^{xxii} **Ephesians 4:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

^{xxiii} **John 3:14-15 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

^{xxiv} **Psalm 78:49 (ESV)**

⁴⁹ He let loose on them his burning anger, wrath, indignation, and distress, a company of destroying angels.

^{xxv} **Exodus 14:11-12 (ESV)**

¹¹ They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?"

¹² Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

^{xxvi} **Numbers 14:36 (ESV)**

³⁶ And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing up a bad report about the land—

^{xxvii} **Matthew 24:12 (ESV)**

¹² And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.

^{xxviii} **Psalm 139:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!