

1 Corinthians 10:1-33: An Urgent Call to Faithfulness

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1 Corinthians / 1 Corinthians 10:1–33

Introduction

- <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2434944-kendall-schlers-st-louis-marathon> - Disqualified because she didn't run the race. She wanted the prize without running the race. We're much the same way - we want the prize, but we don't want to put in the work of running the race.
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27](#): Run to win the race. Discipline yourself so you will not be disqualified.
- The church at Corinth was in danger of being disqualified. They were in danger of becoming a church that was ineffective in the ministry God had called them to because of they constantly compromised their faith.
- Our effectiveness as a church in the mission God has for us is contingent upon our faithfulness to Him. A healthy church is a church full of faithful followers of Jesus.
- If you were to examine your life right now, would you characterize your life as faithful to God? Or, have you strayed from God? Have you spent more time pursuing your desires than the desires of God?
- [1 Corinthians 10](#) is an urgent call to faithfulness. In this passage, Paul issues a strong warning to the church that we need to heed. This morning, I want to show you three warnings from this passage that we need to heed if we are going to be a people of faithfulness who are effective in the mission of God.

Don't ignore the lessons from the past.

- The church at Corinth in danger of being disqualified, or not being effective in God's mission.
- One group of people, who classify themselves as mature in the faith, think it's no big deal to go to the pagan temples for social gatherings and eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols since idols aren't really gods at all.
- They don't realize they are actually a stumbling block to "weaker" Christians, and they also don't realize the potential message they are sending to unbelievers. They also don't realize they are putting themselves in a dangerous situation. By being in pagan temples, even if it's just for a social gathering, they could give in to the temptation to turn back to idolatry.
- In [1 Corinthians 9](#), Paul agreed with them, that idols aren't gods, but that doesn't mean it's wise to go back to the temples for social gatherings. In [1 Corinthians 10](#), Paul reminds the Corinthian believers of what happened with the Israelites.
- In many ways, the Israelites and Corinthian believers shared a common experience. (Paul is using typology - showing how the Exodus is a type of what was to come in Christ.) Both had spiritual privilege. They both knew the truth: there's one God. They both experienced deliverance. The Hebrews: deliverance from Egypt. The Corinthians: deliverance from sin and death. The Israelites "baptized into Moses" - a picture of salvation - Hebrews were the people of God. Corinthians - baptized into Jesus - true salvation. They were the people of God. Spiritual food and spiritual drink - manna from heaven, water from the rock. Corinthians - Lord's Supper - body and blood of Christ was their spiritual food.
- vs. 4 - drank from the spiritual rock that was Christ - Jesus in the OT - He was there - leading Moses and the people.

- The point: Israel had all kinds of spiritual privilege, just like the believers in Corinth, but God was not please with most of them. In fact, only 2 (Joshua and Caleb) entered the Promised Land.
- vs. 6-11 - They started well (deliverance from Egypt) but failed in the wilderness. Instead of following God, the Hebrews turned to idolatry. vs. 7 - “sat down to eat and drink...” Worshipped a golden calf ([Ex. 32:6](#)). They turned to sexual immorality (vs. 8) and 23,000 died (worship of Baal in [Numbers 25:1-18](#)). They tested Christ (vs. 9). Who would they trust? Idols or the true God? As a result, destroyed by snakes ([Numbers 21:6](#)). They grumbled (God is not giving us what we want) and were destroyed.
- Paul’s point: don’t let history repeat itself! The story of the failure of the Hebrews in the wilderness is an example to us of how easy it is to turn away from the true God and turn to idolatry, sexual immorality, and grumbling.
- This is a clear warning to us! Learn from Israel’s past:
- **Your spiritual privilege does not guarantee your spiritual success.** You have privilege as well - in a church where you regularly hear the Gospel. You’re exposed to the truth. People investing in you, cheering you on. But, some of us waste the privilege. We think being around the things of God makes us good with God. Your spiritual success isn’t contingent upon you being around the things of God (church attendance, etc.) but actually living out your faith - daily deciding to obey God, and discipline yourself for godliness ([1 Corinthians 9:24-27](#)).
- **A good beginning does not guarantee a good ending.** Israel began well yet ended poorly because of a lack of faithfulness. Do you know any followers of Jesus who began well but ended poorly? Who disqualified themselves because of sin? Just because you walked faithfully with God years ago, doesn’t mean you’re necessarily walking faithfully today. We tend to forget that faithfulness to God is a daily choice.

- What are you doing now to grow in faithfulness? How are you disciplining yourself? What sins are you putting to death? What spiritual disciplines do you need to grow in? Your effectiveness in God's Kingdom depends on your daily faithfulness.

Don't ignore the way of escape.

- vs. 12 - Spiritual pride plagued the church at Corinth. They were "wise" and "mature." The mature likely thought they were invincible - they thought they could go to the temples and not be influenced by the idolatry that was there. They could stand.
- Spiritual pride plagues us too - One of our favorite ways of thinking = "It won't affect me." "I can consume whatever kind of media I want, it won't affect me. I'm strong." Or, "I can befriend whoever I want, even if their values are completely different than mine. I'm strong. They can't influence me." Or, "I can do what I want with my money and not be consumed by materialism." We think
- vs. 13 - You're not as strong as you think you are yet mean of us keep living on the edge of sin. We continue to put ourselves in places and situations that tempt us to take our eyes off of God. If you keep putting yourself in the place of temptation, do not be surprised when you fall. Temptation abounds, and it is easy to fall. The more you give in to sin, the less effective you become in the ministry that God has called you to. BUT... hopeful verse. God is faithful. He is faithful to love you, and He is able to protect you. In every temptation, there is a way of escape. God will not allow you to be in a place where the temptation is irresistible (where the only choice you have is to sin).
- What is the way of escape? Jesus! He has come to defeat sin and death. He has come to transform your life, to show you a better way to live - to show you life is better when you flee temptation rather than putting yourself in the place of temptation. His Spirit! God has placed His

Spirit in you so you can wisdom to know how to respond in temptation - He convicts you, leads you, warns you. His Word! The Bible clearly tells us what honors God and what doesn't. If God has provided a way of escape, why do we find ourselves falling to sin?

- **You give into temptation because you don't think well.** You think about what you want in the moment, not what God wants. What honors God? How would your life be different if you honored God?
- **You give into temptation because you don't listen well.** You listen to the voices of others who try to draw you away. You listen to the voice of the enemy. But, you don't listen to God's voice. For some this morning, you're even ignoring what God is saying to you in this moment as we study His Word.
- **You give into temptation because you don't prioritize the call of God on your life.** God has called you to serve Him. He's gifted you to serve Him, but you care more about serving yourself than serving God.
- Don't ignore the way of escape! Look to Christ! What temptations are you struggling with that are pulling you away from Him? Ask God to help you.

Don't ignore your responsibility.

- Again, the problem with Corinth = "We have the freedom to do what we want. It won't affect us." Paul is reminding these believers of their responsibility.
- **You have a responsibility to God.**
- vs. 14-22 - "Flee from idolatry!" Paul's response: you're playing with the devil. You're trying to eat at two tables: the table of demons and the table of God. That's not going to go well for you. What will feed and nourish your soul? The table of demons or the table of God?

- The Corinthians claimed maturity - no big deal eating meat sacrificed to idols, but they failed to realize the demonic forces behind idolatry.
- A clear warning: when you willingly put yourself in a place where you are tempted to sin, you are flirting with the demonic. That should cause you to think twice about what you put before your eyes, or the kind of influences you allow to speak into your life. As a follower of Jesus, your responsibility to God - to live in an intimate relationship with Him is far more important than your personal rights.
- **You have a responsibility to others.**
- vs. 23-24 - Just because you can doesn't mean you should. What you think is permissible may lead you down a path of sin. Further, the decisions you make matter for the sake of others.
- vs. 25-30 - Paul answers the question about meat sold in the marketplace that may have been sacrificed to idols. Paul encouraged them to eat the meat unless there was someone who raised question about it. If someone knew the food was from a sacrifice and brought it to their attention, they needed to abstain. Again, Paul encouraging believers to not be a stumbling block for other believers.
- Just because you can doesn't mean you should. Do the personal decisions you make help others see Christ at work in you? Remember, we make decisions with others in mind. Do your decisions clearly show that you're thinking biblically? That you're striving to honor the Lord? That He is the priority of your life?
- **You have a responsibility to live on mission.**
- vs. 31-33 - the guiding principle for all of life's decisions: whatever you do, do it for the glory of God. In every situation you are in, in every decision you make, what brings God glory? Instead of living life on the edge of sin, why not ask, "What brings God the most glory?"

- vs. 33 - the way you live can have a tremendous impact on the lost around you. Your lost family and friends NEED to see your faithfulness to God in all things. Your faithfulness points people to the Savior.
- This is an urgent call to faithfulness. It's a call to NOT be disqualified from effective ministry because of sinful ways. It's a call to live for what matters most. How will you respond to God's call this morning?
- We strive for faithfulness because of the faithfulness of Jesus to us. He was faithful to come to this earth, live a perfect life, die in our place, and rise again so we can look forward to resurrected life.