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“Paul says that the history of Israel is given to us as an example. Truly, the Old Testament exists as a pattern of fallen man. Over and over again, Israel is in distress. They call to the Lord for help. The Lord delivers them and they promise to follow Him.”

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In the previous chapter, Paul stressed the importance of discipline and training in living the Christian life. As this chapter begins, Paul uses Israel’s history as an example of the temporal consequences which may follow from a rejection of God’s moral law.

Whether his readers had once been Jews or pagans, the lesson of Israel is clear. Paul reminds the Corinthians that Israel had at one time submitted to the Lord’s will and followed His direction. When Paul refers to his forefathers “under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea,” he is recalling Israel’s exodus from Egypt. As they fled Egypt they realized the Egyptian army was gaining ground behind them while before them lay an uncrossable sea. But Moses, upon the Lord’s instruction, stretched out his hand and divided the waters. Paul says, “They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” The idea of baptism in this context helps us understand a bit more about the meaning of the Sacrament. Paul recalls that the nation of Israel demonstrated its submission to Moses’ salutary leadership by following the pillar of cloud and by crossing the sea. The people of Israel trusted in Moses as their deliverer and leader.

In the same way, Christians have been “baptized into Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:3). He suggests that when Christians are baptized, it is also a demonstration of their submission to Jesus as Savior and Lord. So, baptism is not only a means of receiving God’s grace, forgiveness, and Spirit, it also stands as a commitment that the new Christian will follow in the way of the Lord. In the case of infant baptism, the parents and

sponsors make that commitment on behalf of the baby.

By detailing the commitment Israel gave Moses, Paul begins to demonstrate Israel's submission to the Lord. That submission is reinforced by the fact that "they all ate the same spiritual food and drank the spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ." The "spiritual food" Paul describes is the miraculous manna which the Lord provided hungry Israel. In Exodus 16, the Lord promises Israel He will provide "manna," a bread-like substance for the people to eat each morning. Each morning, after the dew evaporated from the ground, a layer of flakes would appear on the ground which would be edible. In Exodus 17, the people of Israel are suffering from thirst. The Lord directs Moses to a particular rock and upon His command Moses strikes the rock. Miraculously, fresh water springs from the rock. So, Paul writes that they all "drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual rock..."

One reason Paul uses the word "spiritual" is to remind his readers that the source of the food, water, and rock was the Lord. Yet another reason is to tie Israel's experience to the ministry of Jesus Christ. Paul's illustration leads us back to John 6:31–35 where the people ask Jesus for a miraculous sign to prove his authenticity. They recall the miraculous manna in the wilderness and ask Jesus to perform something equally breathtaking (regardless of the fact the Jesus had just performed such a miracle in feeding the five thousand!). "Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' 'Sir,' they said, 'from now on give us

this bread.' Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life...'"

And when we read about the Samaritan woman at the well who encounters the Lord (John 4), we are reminded of Jesus' claim that He is the spiritual water of life who gives eternal life to all who love and trust Him. As He said to the woman, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:13–14).

So, when Paul says "the spiritual rock that accompanied them and that rock was Christ," he connects the physical sustenance which was given Israel through the manna, the water, and the rock, and the spiritual water which is promised the Samaritan woman, with the spiritual sustenance and life given Christians through Jesus Christ. God continually sustains His people both physically and spiritually.

This is rather complicated stuff! It's no wonder Peter once said about Paul's writings: "His letters contain some things that are hard to understand..." (2 Peter 3:16). No kidding!

The point of Paul's complicated connections is to demonstrate the powerful bond Israel had with the Lord. Nevertheless, they sinned against Him. In spite of His miraculous providence, they disobeyed Him. As a result, they were sentenced to wander the desert for forty years before entering the Promised Land. Of the original nation of Israel, only Caleb and Joshua were allowed entrance into Canaan. The rest of the original Israelites died in the desert.

This is an important lesson to Christians. There are temporal consequences for disobeying God's moral law. Adultery leads to divorce.

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With some of the most comforting words of Scripture, Paul reminds us that we are empowered to resist and survive any kind of temptation. He promises that no temptation is so strong that we cannot endure it. When temptation becomes too strong, the Lord will provide some means to escape, and we are to follow that alternate course.

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Stealing leads to prison. Gossiping leads to a lack of friends. We praise God that all our sins are forgiven and that the eternal consequences of sin are removed. Nevertheless, there remains an earthly price to pay for our errors.

Paul says that the history of Israel is given to us as an example. Truly, the Old Testament exists as a pattern of fallen man. Over and over again, Israel is in distress. They call to the Lord for help. The Lord delivers them and they promise to follow Him. Soon, they fall away from the Lord and find themselves in trouble at which point they again call on the Lord's help. The entire Old Testament is a model for the fallen life. The history of Israel becomes each individual's history as well.

Specifically, Paul refers to four instances of Israel's disobedience.

- The first is Israel's creation and worship of a golden calf when Moses had ascended Mt. Sinai to receive the Lord's commandments (Exodus 32:1–6).
- The second example is when Israel participated in the worship of Baal, the god of the Moabites, and engaged in sexual immorality with the prostitute virgins who

were associated with this god (Numbers 25:1–9). Now, that second incident would be particularly relevant to the Corinthian Christians tempted to worship the goddess Aphrodite. The result of this second act of disobedience committed by Israel was the death by plague of 24,000 recorded in Numbers. Perhaps Paul wasn't interested in being statistically precise, but rather wanted to underscore the reality that disobedience to the Lord leads to temporal consequences.

- The third example recalls Israel's grumbings against the Lord's providence in Numbers 21:5–6. As a result the Lord sent poisonous snakes among them and many Israelites died. The Lord directed Moses to create a bronze serpent and mount it on a pole so that the Israelites could look upon it and be healed.
- The fourth example refers to a rebellion against the Lord and Moses led by an Israelite named Korah along with 250 followers. As a result of their rebellion, the Lord consumed them with fire. Afterwards, the Israelites grumbled about the Lord's violent action against Korah, and as a result of their grumbling another plague killed 14,700 Israelites (Numbers 16).

All four examples from history are to encourage us in our walk with the Lord. Moral failings have consequences! That is not just empty preaching. That is the lesson of history. The Corinthians, then, must be strong in the face of temptation. As a matter of fact, Paul says, there is no temptation to which we must succumb. With some of the most comforting words of Scripture, Paul reminds us that we are empowered to resist and survive any kind of temptation. He promises that no temptation is so strong that we cannot endure it. When temptation becomes too strong, the Lord will provide some means to escape, and we are to follow that alternate course.

Because the Lord gives us the strength to resist temptation, the Corinthian Christians are urged to resist the temptation to paganism. Many of the Christians came from a pagan background, and it must have been difficult to refrain from worshiping the many false gods presented in the Corinthian temples.

To emphasize the singular unity Christians enjoy with each other and with the Lord, Paul refers to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The "cup of thanksgiving" which Paul mentions was one of the cups drunk during the Passover celebration. This was the cup used by the Lord to institute His Supper. Although this is a cup of wine, Paul records that it is also the blood of Christ. And the bread that is broken is recorded as being the body of Christ. These verses are supportive of the Lutheran understanding that when we receive the Lord's Supper,

we receive not only the bread and wine, but also the very body and blood of Christ. This intimate fellowship with the Lord is not all we receive. The one loaf of bread from which the early Christians partook also symbolizes the unity of the Church. Though the Church is comprised of many unique individuals, it is linked by a common doctrine.

And as support for this fellowship which exists between Christians, their Lord, and one another, Paul reminds the Corinthians that when the people of Israel ate part of the sacrifices offered to the Lord, they were participating in worship. In the same way, when the pagans of Corinth offer sacrifices to their idols during their temple feasts, they are part of the worship of demons. Notice, Paul gives no credence to the authenticity of these idols. He refers to idol worship as demon worship. Those involved may believe they are worshiping gods; in reality they are worshiping demons. So, although it is part of Christian freedom to eat the meat which at one time was offered to idols, it is not appropriate to eat that meat with other pagans during a temple feast. Because at that point, one is supporting a false, demonic worship.

There are implications here for our worship. We celebrate the Lord's Supper as people united under Christ. It is not appropriate, then, to celebrate the Sacrament in a setting which is antithetical to our faith. By doing so, we are participating and supporting the worship of something opposed to God. Practically speaking, when would this apply? This is a difficult

question, relating to one's perspective of the beliefs held by other denominations. Clearly it would be inappropriate for a Christian to participate in the Lord's Supper when celebrated by Mormons because their god is something quite different than the God of Scripture. There are some Lutherans who believe this should apply to any church not in fellowship with their own. If a Christian denomination understands the Lord's presence and promises in a different way, the argument goes, Lutherans would be involved in supporting the worship of a false god if they were to celebrate the Lord's Supper with them.

The question of eating meat sacrificed to idols once again brings Paul back to concerns about conscience. There were those among the Corinthians claiming complete Christian freedom. Their slogan was "everything is permissible." To some extent, Paul agrees. But he qualifies that freedom by saying that although much is now permissible, not everything is beneficial and constructive. Whatever we do, whatever actions we take, we must be concerned about offending those who are weak in faith and don't understand the role of Christian freedom. One should not feel guilty about buying meat in the market that was once offered to idols. Meat is part of God's creation which was given for our use. But should the occasion arise that an unbeliever asks a Christian over for dinner, then offers meat once used in pagan sacrifice and publicly emphasizes its former use, then it's probably good not to eat it. After all, by eating it, the pagan unbeliever might

think the Christian is condoning his pagan worship, and the believer who is not clear on his freedom under Christ might be offended.

The bottom line in such questionable situations is to discover what behavior, what action, will most glorify God and lead our friends and neighbors to Christ. That should be the principle which governs our decision making. And it is a good principle. Will our participation in a Masonic Lodge, for example, suggest to others that it is appropriate to believe in "the Grand Architect of the Universe" as our god? If we watch a movie of questionable taste with others, will we be signaling that it is morally upright for a Christian to enjoy pornography? If we behave questionably in our business dealings, might we be suggesting to others that Christianity condones stealing? In all these situations, the Christian must ask himself or herself, "What behavior will most glorify my Lord?" The answer to that question will go a long way in guiding us towards that which is God-pleasing.

This is Paul's example to us. And he is confident that when we follow his example, we will also be following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because, after all, Paul is an "apostle." He has seen the Lord.

PERSONAL APPLICATION*1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-34*

Father of creation, we pray that we will live as willing servants. Help us to submit our lives to You, showing honor and respect in our worship and appreciating the Sacrament of Your body and blood “in, with, and under” the bread and wine. Keep us mindful that through Your Sacrament You strengthen our faith and give us forgiveness. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

1. When Paul says God is the “head” of Christ (11:3), why does he not mean that God the Father is a “superior” God to Jesus? (Deuteronomy 6:4; John 1:1, 5:18; Romans 9:5; Colossians 1:19)

So how did the Father become the “head” to the Son? (John 17:5, 20:20-21; Romans 8:3; Philippians 2:5-7)

What was Jesus’ reward for this “submission”? (Daniel 7:13-14; Acts 2:33; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 2:9)

How does the “headship” of the Father over the Son suggest the kind of relationship God wants between a husband and wife? (Ephesians 5:21-33)

How does Paul say this relationship may be demonstrated in the Church? (11:3-10)

Why does Paul say this “headship” exists between husband and wife? (11:8-9; Genesis 2:21-23; 1 Timothy 2:13)

How does Paul suggest head coverings are cultural and not doctrinal? (11:13-16)

2. What do we receive when we take the bread and wine at the Lord’s Supper? (11:24-25, 27, 29; Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 10:16)
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What does Paul suggest we are expressing to others when we partake of the Lord's Supper? (11:26)

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3. How were the Corinthians receiving the Lord's Supper in an "unworthy" manner? (11:20-21)

Suggest some ways people today might receive the Lord's Supper in an "unworthy" manner.

What advice does Paul give to make sure the Lord's Supper is not taken "unworthily"? (11:28-29)

What seems to be the danger of receiving the Lord's Supper in this "unworthy" fashion? (11:30; Hebrews 10:29)

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4. What does Paul suggest about the presence of angels when we worship God? (11:10; Ephesians 3:10-11)

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5. What suggests to Paul that long hair is something men should avoid? (11:14)

But what scriptural example is there of God's servant growing long hair at God's command? (Judges 13:2-5)

So are Paul's words a matter of doctrine or tradition?

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6. By what means were the Christian women in Corinth worshiping the Lord? (11:5)

How does this seem to contradict what Paul says about women's worship in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35?

How would you reconcile these two passages?
