

1 Corinthians 10:1-14

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[0 : 00] Well, it's a joy to be with you this morning as we open God's Word together. Would you open up to 1 Corinthians chapter 10.! We're going to be looking at verses 1 through 14.

I experienced heavy fatigue, a strong fever, a long-lasting running nose.

But the worst of all my symptoms was that I experienced a complete loss of both my taste and my smell. So eventually, most of my symptoms had subsided after about a week.

But my smell and my taste lagged behind. So today, if I wake up and I'm having a good day, there may be about 70% of my function of smell and taste working.

And that's a really good day. But on the bad days, it's only about 20%. It is a very alarming thing to lose trust in these senses.

[1 : 23] Countless decisions that I rarely thought about depend on these abilities. But the new reality for me is that I can no longer trust my own evaluation of food or smell.

You see, I can't tell if cookies in the oven are burnt. And I can't tell if a diaper needs to be changed. Well, thankfully, we have passed that season as parents as of just a little while ago.

But one thing is very important for us to think about. So in the light of me losing this sense, I've had to retrain my own mind to not trust what I perceive to be natural to me.

So when I wake up in the morning, there's no meter that says, Ernie, you're going to feel this amount of taste or this amount of smell. Rather, I am completely unaware until I start tasting food.

So this morning, we are going to be reminded of something that is similar, but has a greater impact on how we perceive what is natural to us.

[2 : 44] See, there's a malfunctioning part of our being according to God's word, and the consequences are much more significant than what food do I allow myself to digest.

The Bible is clear that what has gone astray is actually that which comes from within. You see, it's our own hearts that have been impacted by the allure and the embrace of sin.

The Bible is filled with all sorts of warnings about the nature of a drifting heart. Jesus said what defiles a person is what comes forth from out of the heart.

And this is what our daily experiences teach us as well. We respond to our circumstances based on the things that we value inside of our hearts.

We plan for the future based on the treasures that we store up in our hearts. And we even choose our entertainment based on the things that we find beautiful and delightful to our hearts.

[3 : 55] And when the heart goes astray from the Lord, it knows no other direction but to set its course towards the ever-active pursuits and the desires of the flesh.

Listen to a few warnings before we get to our passage. Jeremiah 17 verse 9 says, The heart is deceitful above all things, and it's beyond cure.

Who can understand it? Matthew 15 verse 19, For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, and slander.

And finally, in 1 Peter 2, we read this, Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

So, this morning, as we open God's word, we are called to sober reflection, brothers and sisters. We are called to consider our own hearts and their potential for drifting to the lesser pleasures

rather than the all-satisfying worth of God that we experience through the Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 28] Okay, let's go ahead and read our passage in 1 Corinthians 10 this morning. God's word says this, For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink.

For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them, God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now, these things took place as examples for us. That we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were. As it is written, the people sat down to eat and to drink, and they rose up to play. We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and 23,000 fell in a single day.

We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents. Nor grumble as some of them did and were destroyed by the destroyer.

[7 : 07] 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.

Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

God is faithful. And he will not allow, he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. Let's pray. Oh, Father, we love you this morning.

We express our dependence by humbly listening to your word. Lord, we need direction so that you would satisfy our hearts.

[8 : 20] Lord, our hearts know no greater treasure and no greater value than what we see when we experience the love that you've shown to us in Christ.

And so this morning, would you bring fresh clarity to our minds? Would you help us to guard against the deceitful way of the heart?

And we pray that, God, you would revive our hearts and give us new courage for walking in obedience. In Jesus' name, amen.

So as you may be aware, Paul, in the book of 1 Corinthians, is addressing the church from the early 50s, from the city of Ephesus that he's writing from.

This happened during his third missionary journey, and for around 18 months, the gospel was proclaimed to this city by Paul, along with Aquila and Priscilla and the good news of Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and resurrected, was received by this New Testament church.

[9 : 36] But much like our context in America, the surrounding culture of Corinth was corrupt with materialism, positioning for prominence, and pagan practices of sexuality.

The Corinthians, greatly influenced by their surrounding culture, invited significant compromise into the body. In fact, some of the strongest words of the New Testament are directed towards these Corinthians, who were also divided by quests for worldly prominence and gain, and compromised by their pursuit of the flesh.

You see, they had lost their ability for resisting the flesh, so much that Paul says at the beginning of chapter 3 of this book. He says, But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

Their infancy was defined by their fleshly association. And while these types of strong words are all throughout 1 Corinthians, we are reminded that even in the dangerous state of drift, Paul expresses great confidence in the grace of God that served as the anchor of hope for this church.

See, though they are weak in their practice, the grace of God is abundantly sufficient to lead them in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

[11 : 24] In chapter 1, Paul writes this, I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus.

that in every way you are enriched in Him in all speech and in all knowledge. So, we pick up in chapter 10 as Paul provides words of warning then for this church.

And they follow three basic points that we will consider this morning in our gathering. Here are the three points if you're taking notes. Number one, our shared history of misdirected hearts.

Number two, drifting hearts in action. And number three, how God's faithfulness overcomes the tempted heart.

In consideration of our first point, our shared history of misguided hearts, Paul directs us towards a brief history of God's people in the post-Egypt exilic wandering in the wilderness.

[12 : 43] Why does Paul want the Corinthians to remember the exile experience? Well, it's more than just a historical knowledge that Paul is after.

He begins to answer this question in verse 1 of our text. He says this, For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that your fathers were all under the cloud.

Paul appeals to the Corinthians by calling them to a state of alertness. They have struggled resisting sinful patterns because they have been careless, they have been groggy, they have been unconcerned and far from alert.

The phrase which Paul uses in verse 1, I do not want you to be unaware, is captured in some translations a little differently. And he says in these translations, I want you to be aware. But I think the former is actually more helpful because the same root word which we derive the word agnostic from is the one that Paul uses.

[13:54] And to be an agnostic, as we know, means to be without knowledge. So Paul does not mean just an intellectual knowledge, like I said already. Rather, the knowledge that he speaks of is the type that recognizes warnings from the past.

See, the danger of the past is meant to awaken the Corinthians, and it's also intended to waken us up, and particularly any of us who are prone to slumbering.

We also see that in order to move from knowledge towards application, the Corinthian church is called to identify the fathers with themselves.

This is really important for us to recognize because by way of our identification as God's people, we are called to do the same.

These are our fathers, and these are our brothers, and also our sisters who were called to wander in the wilderness because of unbelief.

[15:00] It's helpful to remember that the Corinthian church was not Jewish by lineage, just like we are. Paul is saying that there is a union that we share with God's people which transcends bloodlines.

So, their training is our training, their failures, are our failures, and the same ones that our hearts will be inclined towards.

It's like when we go to the doctor and for your annual checkup, the doctor provides a long list of questions about the history of health in your family.

So, if he discovers that there is a genetic line that traces cancer back a few generations, then he is going to provide some very firm warning and directions about how to guard against that danger.

To do otherwise would be disastrous. So, what Paul is helping us to see here is that without knowledge, either by a lack of familiarity with the biblical past, or to be those who have knowledge but do not apply the warnings of that knowledge to our heart situation, well, that would be to embrace biblical foolishness and infamy.

[16:29] Let's continue on in verses 2 and 3. It says this, our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea and all ate the same spiritual food.

See, God's people had experiences that would have seemed to prevent them from falling away from faith in the living God. They had a unified experience, didn't they?

The young and the old, the strong and the weak, none of the people of Israel escaped the powerful demonstration of God's mighty deeds amongst them.

In fact, during this period, God's people still bore scars from slavery that they were delivered from. Their own eyes had witnessed the cries and the devastation from Egyptian parents who grieved when their firstborns were struck down.

They knew what it was like to feel dry grains of sand upon their sandals in the middle of the Red Sea and to see the cloud of the Lord leave day after day.

[17:52] And yet, these people, these fathers of ours, though unified died in experiences and witnessing the great acts of the Lord wrongfully trusted in their experiences while their hearts were absent of faith.

So, Hebrews 4, 1, a familiar passage, says, therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear, lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.

For good news came to us just as to them, but the message that they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.

And furthermore, lest we mistakenly assume that the Israelites failed to walk by faith because they didn't experience the same hope in Christ that we do, there's some clarity that Paul helps us to arrive at in verse 4.

It says this, for they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. See, there are differences of opinion regarding what Paul here means regarding the rock of Christ. [19 : 20] There was a rabbinic tradition that taught there was at some point a literal rock, maybe that bookended the beginning and the end of the exile experience, that provided a literal fountain of water.

But I tend to agree with some others who assert that this is a reference to a type of the Lord's supper meal that is spiritually symbolized during their time in the wilderness.

See, this idea fits well with Paul's discussion of the Lord's supper later in the chapter. And on either account, what is being communicated here is one important thing.

A communal experience, even of the ministry of Christ, does not prevent hearts that can drift towards unbelief if our hearts are not engaged with the Lord.

It was for this reason that Paul says in verse 6, nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

[20 : 31] So let's take a quick minute here to reflect on the nature of our own hearts. You little ones who are listening, your experience growing up with parents that love the Lord, God's word says that experience is not enough.

Coming to church and being surrounded by other believing friends and adults will not save your soul. There is a danger to our souls to think otherwise.

And adults finding a church that has expository reform teaching that we enjoy, that's a wonderful gift. But it is a terrible parachute to rely on.

And it too can have disastrous consequences if it exists to serve your comforts rather than to drive you to the hope of your salvation, namely Christ himself.

See, we have all sat through great sermons and been led by great Christ-exalting worship and yet have had hearts that were hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

[21 : 52] I certainly have. this is a warning, brothers and sisters, and let this warning have its effect by awakening us from a deep slumbering fog and confidence in our own circumstances.

Point number two, drifting hearts in action. Verse seven says this, do not be idolaters as some of them were, as it is written.

The people sat down to eat and to drink and they rose up to play. The circumstances that Paul is describing here point us back to the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel established in the Old Testament, particularly Exodus 24 through 32.

Now this is a sobering scene which Paul is referencing. The people of God have agreed to keep the covenant of the Lord, and the covenant is confirmed by the shedding of covenant blood.

Just listen to chapter 24 in verse 6. Moses took half of the blood and he put it in the basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar.

[23 : 18] Then he took the book of the covenant and he read it in the hearing of the people and they said, all that the Lord has said, all that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.

You can almost hear or imagine the confidence by which the people of God spoke these words.

And Moses took the blood and he threw it on the people and he said, behold the blood of the covenant of the Lord that he has made with you in accordance with all these words.

So what happens next in this account is not a surprise to most of you. Moses delayed from returning from Mount Sinai where he had encountered the glory of the Lord.

God and as he does so, the people demand to Aaron that Aaron would fashion for themselves idols out of the spoil that God had previously given into their hands.

So in doing so, their hearts are swept away towards the desires of the flesh. See, they have abandoned worship of the one true God and they have turned towards satisfaction in food and in playful entertainment.

[24 : 43] Paul continues on to elaborate on some other examples of the misguided heart amongst the people of Israel. In verse 8, he says, we must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and 23,000 fell in a single day.

Now, how did 23,000 people fall in one day? Well, it was not because the people of Israel were not properly trained for battle.

It was not because they didn't have enough evidence that God was powerful enough to destroy any enemies in opposition.

No, rather, they saw the attractive of the daughters of Moab, and they measured on the scale of human desire whether God's glory among the nations or the fleeting pleasures of a one-night encounter was of more worth and value.

See, that scale should not be a difficult one for us to balance and measure. But how dark are the recesses of the wayward heart.

[26 : 06] The warning here is a warning not because it is some far-off danger that happened to them, but rather a grave warning for us because our own hearts can and at times do drift towards the lesser pleasures of the world.

Paul provides one additional example in our text in verses 9 and 10. He says, we must not put Christ to the test as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents nor grumble as some of them did and were destroyed by the destroyer.

So we can remember many different examples in this period in which the people of Israel grumbled and complained. At the waters of Marah, the people of Israel responded to thirst with great grumbling and it was just three days after walking through the middle of the Red Sea.

In Exodus 16, in the wilderness of sin, only 45 days removed from the Red Sea. the people again expressed disdain to Moses and to the Lord and what they said was they were terribly desiring the Egyptian meat pots that used to fill them and their request to Moses or their complaint to Moses was that they didn't even have a chance to die in the brutal land of captivity.

So do we see the point that Paul here is making? Our complaints and our groaning over our temporary circumstance! imply that Christ is not enough.

[28 : 09] Maybe he appears to be enough to you when things are going well. But as soon as the hunger pains begin or when the thirst of hard circumstances arrives at our door, then the worth of Christ is placed back on the scale for testing.

Which desire has greater supremacy in our hearts? Our idols or the God who called us out of the great darkness and into his marvelous light.

So the heart is capable of this you might ask. Yes, it is. The testing of the Lord's worth is not so far from us as we would hope.

In these examples we're reminded to be aware of where our hearts can go in all types of circumstances. In some circumstances our hearts respond to trials by turning to idols of comfort. In others we respond to abundance with the idol of self dependence. And in other circumstances we respond to God's great demonstration of his power with self confidence and pride.

[29 : 35] God's heart So the case has been made from God's word this morning that the human heart is an unreliable and unstable foundation to depend on.

And it is. We must not move forward so quickly that we do not give weighty consideration to the condition of our own hearts. verse 12 says therefore in other words here comes the response that Paul provides in light of all of these grave warnings.

He says let anyone who thinks that he stand take heed lest he fall. So be vigilant brothers and sisters.

Be not slumbering and be not overconfident in your own heart. Let me ask you this.

Where does your heart go when God has brought abundance? Is it to self satisfaction? Does the guard on your heart drop as if you have landed in the land of safety just after a week of good family devotions?

[30 : 54] Do you at times excuse yourself from transparency with the brothers and sisters, the saints who are called to help you guard against the deceitfulness of sin according to Hebrews 3?

Or where do you go when the Lord has removed his earthly comforts? So brothers and sisters, do we have anywhere to go for hope?

Not from our own hearts, but praise be to God in our third point, he has not left us without abundant hope. How God's faithfulness overcomes the tempted heart.

Notice verse 13, it says no temptation, no temptation has overtaken you which is not common to man.

God is faithful, and he will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape so that you may be able to endure it.

[32 : 09] See, Paul uses two negating words in verse 13 that essentially cancel each other out. He could have said a little differently, the temptations which have come upon you are common to man.

He knows how many times the evil one has distracted your heart from seeing God glorified through obedience. He knows that this week it may have felt like 500 times you were tempted to drift towards this temptation that you faced.

And it is very clear in this verse that he wants us to know that he knows. You see, it is because he knows that we can and we should have hope.

His knowledge of our sin has compelled and has moved his heart in such a way to show us compassionate and gracious loving shepherding care.

Remember that as we failed over and over in our temptations so much so that the Bible says we were dead in the trespasses of our sin.

[33 : 33] It was at that time that God sent forth his own son. We know from this text a couple very important things.

So let's take one more look at this phrase which says this, God is faithful. See, Paul has a very specific point in drawing us to the faithfulness of the Father.

Faithfulness is a mark of consistency. That's how we normally think of faithfulness. but it's also a picture of one who has a record of fulfilling the promises that have been made.

So Paul is not saying that you in this verse have great abilities to overcome temptation, but rather that the one who has always kept his promises will keep them again and he has promised to bring help in your temptation.

as you fix your eyes on the promise keeper himself, the faithful one, God will lead you towards the way of escape. The way of escape is not some trap door that we are just to look really hard for in temptation.

[34 : 59] No, the way of escape is seeing God as the greatest treasure that he is. It comes by remembering that God's faithfulness is most clearly seen in the work of Jesus Christ, his one and only son.

Listen to these words of Charles Spurgeon describing the faithfulness of Christ's own love for his people. He says this, there are no ups and no downs in the love of Christ towards his people.

On their highest table wars, he loves them, but equally as well in their Gethsemanes. When they wander like lost sheep, his great love goes after them, and when they come back with broken hearts, his great love restores them.

By day and by night in sickness and in sorrow, in poverty, in famine, in prison, in the hour of death, the silver stream of love ripples at their side, never stayed and never diminished.

Forever is the sea of divine grace as its flood. The sun never sets and the fountain never pauses.

[36 : 24] See, as we behold the glory of God in the face of Christ, God's own son, our hearts can taste what the superior joy actually is.

Temptation towards anger, temptations towards lust and of jealousy and of sexual perversion, they lose all their appeal before the one that our hearts were fashioned to enjoy.

Let me ask you this, have you assumed defeat in the face of temptation? God is faithful. Have you neglected the power of the gospel to lead you towards victory?

God is faithful. Or is God calling you again to renew your fight against temptation, remembering that his faithfulness is enough?

if you have not put your trust in Jesus, this hope may sound like an amazing reality to be able to overcome the wayward heart.

[37 : 44] See, the God of the universe understands the heart of his children and their inclinations towards sin, and yet he has not abandoned us.

Well, let me lovingly remind you, if you have not put your faith in this God that we are describing, then there is another picture of God that you must come to realize.

God is amazingly abounding in loving care for his children, but he is also just and he hates sin.

See, he hates sin so much that God has decreed it must be punished. And the Bible says that you are called to turn to your sin this morning, acknowledging your own guilt before God, and to place all of your trust in the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ to be able to be his son or his daughter.

This hope can be yours this morning. But for the rest of us, God is calling us to once again consider the nature of our own hearts.

[39 : 09] We can drift into slumbering quite easily, but we are to not forget that there have been many greater people than us that have drifted away from the Lord by confidence in their own

hearts.

A closing word from Psalm 40 as we give one more thought to this God that we can rejoice in who helps us in our time of need.

Psalm 40 says this, verse 1. I waited patiently for the Lord. He inclined to me and he heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and he set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

prayer. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and they will put their trust in the Lord.

[40 : 25] Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust, and who does not turn to the proud.

Skipping down to verse 16.

But may all who seek you rejoice, and be glad in you. May those who love your salvation continually say, great is the Lord.

As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer.

Do not delay my God. Let's pray.