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1 Corinthians

But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness. 1 Corinthians 10:5

Despite the Israelites having all of the privileges which Paul mentioned in the preceding verses (baptism in the cloud and the sea, the spiritual food, and the spiritual Rock), he shows that it didn't profit them at all in their spiritual lives. He leads into this with the word "but." Despite all of the proofs and all of the physical demonstrations of God's presence among them, instead of having faith that He would see their redemption through to a good end, they failed to trust.

What God looks for is faith in Him and His promises. What He got was rebellion and a stubborn, stiff-necked attitude. And because of this "with most of them God was not well pleased." Because they lacked faith in Him and His provision, He rewarded them with what they accused Him of.

Time and again, the Israelites complained and accused the Lord of wrongdoing. One example is from Numbers 14:2-4 -

"And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, 'If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! ³ Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?' ⁴ So they said to one another, 'Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.'"

After this, Moses petitioned the Lord to pardon the people, but there would be a penalty for their lack of faith. This is recorded later in the chapter -

"Then the LORD said: 'I have pardoned, according to your word; ²¹ but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD— ²² because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, ²³ they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. ²⁴ But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it. ²⁵ Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.'" Numbers 14:20-25

The Israelites would receive the punishment that they deserved. Because of their lack of faith, "*their bodies* were in the wilderness." This was the very thing that they had said would happen and so their words were used as a witness against them. Despite this though, there was grace in the sentence. Instead of being snuffed out immediately, they would be allowed to live out their lives and raise their children until they were old enough to assume the responsibility of going into Canaan. This is detailed later in the same chapter -

"But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. ³² But *as for* you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. ³³ And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness. ³⁴ According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, *namely* forty years, and you shall know My rejection. ³⁵ I the LORD have spoken this. I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die." Numbers 14:31-35

In the end, only two of the 603,550 registered males who were of fighting age were permitted the honor of entering the promised land. Figuring in the women, well over a million people would die as they wandered through the wilderness. Such was the price for lacking faith and rebelling against the Lord.

Life application: God asks for faith in His faithless creatures, so a little bit will do. He asks us to trust Him, even when times seem out of control. If we truly believe that He will fulfill His promises, we will continue to trust Him and to praise Him each step of the way. With this, He will be well-pleased.

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 1 Corinthians 10:6

"Now these things" is speaking of those with whom "God was not well pleased." They had seen the miracles and been sustained by God's gracious hand, and yet they rebelled in various ways which Paul will explain in the verses ahead. Because of their rebellion he noted in the previous verse that "*their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness." It is all of this that he is referring to as examples.

This word translated as "examples" is the Greek word *typoi*. It could be referring either to the pictures of Christ and thus be translated as "types" or "foreshadowing events." Or it could be translated as "examples" and thus be referring to the scattering of the bodies based on rebellion. As he hasn't yet explained the examples which caused the deaths, some scholars insist that it is speaking of the pictures of Christ. However, because he just mentioned the deaths of the people and he will continue to explain that, others insist this is what he is referring to. There is no reason to assume that he isn't speaking of the entire process though. The types of Christ and their subsequent rejection led to the deaths of the people.

Either way, Paul's continued statement in this verse is that we should learn "that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted." If we have been redeemed by Christ, then we should follow Christ, trust Christ, and fix our eyes on

Christ. It makes no sense to call on Christ and then to ignore the very salvation that He has provided.

Life application: The Old Testament is often overlooked by many Christians. And yet, it has been given to show us the logical progression of redemptive history as God slowly reveals Himself and His plans to the people of the world. The Old Testament allows us to know where we have been, where we are going, and the pitfalls to avoid in our walk.

And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” 1 Corinthians 10:7

In the previous verse, Paul spoke of lusting after evil things. Continuing on, he next warns against becoming "idolaters as *were* some of them." The very people who had been redeemed from the bondage of Egypt, and who had seen the marvelous works of the Lord, fell into idolatry. Rather than honoring the Creator, they worshipped before the created. This account is found in Exodus 32:1-6 -

"Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, “Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”

² And Aaron said to them, “Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me.” ³ So all the people broke off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* to Aaron. ⁴ And he received *the gold* from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf.

Then they said, “This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!”

⁵So when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow *is* a feast to the LORD." ⁶Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

Paul, citing this account and saying "As it is written" is intended to show that it was specifically recorded for our learning and our instruction. The people failed to conduct themselves in a manner which was in accord with the glory of the Lord which they had beheld. A question that could be asked then is "What was wrong about the people sitting down and eating and drinking and rising up to play?" The answer is not that the actions were specifically wrong, but the context of their actions was. They directed them towards the golden calf, not towards the Lord.

People need to sit down, people need to eat and drink, and the Bible shows that properly directed worship can be brought to a very emotional state. A great example of this last category is found in 2 Samuel 6. David danced and leapt before the Lord as the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the City of David. His wife Michal didn't approve of his conduct and rebuked him. His response was that, "*It was* before the LORD, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel. Therefore I will play *music* before the LORD. And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight." 2 Samuel 6:21, 22

This verse which Paul is citing cannot be used as a reason to forbid dancing. There are churches that do forbid dancing and they use verses like this one to justify that stand. However, this is not the intent of what Paul is saying here. Rather, that is a manipulation of Scripture which cannot be justified.

Life application: There is nothing wrong with rejoicing and praising before the Lord. There are abundant examples given in Scripture which show people praising the Lord with their voices and in dancing. If our hearts and souls are directed toward the Lord, then we are given the freedom to jump and shout praises to Him or beat on drums as we praise Him. Surely the Lord is worthy of our praise.

We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 1 Corinthians 10:8

Paul is quite clear here, as he is throughout his writings, that sexual immorality is unacceptable. And this isn't just Paul, but it is a precept which permeates Scripture, even to the very last page of the Bible. Revelation 22:15 says that the sexually immoral will be excluded from entrance into the gates of the New Jerusalem. There, they are lumped together with dogs (those who are unclean and who would go after their own vomit), people who practice magic arts, murderers, idolaters, and those who love and practice falsehood.

In other words, sexual immorality is not an acceptable part of a Christian's walk. In today's world, this seems almost foreign to us. Even churches allow the most sexually depraved of people to participate in their services and excuse it by saying that God would "want them to be happy." Happiness is irrelevant. What matters is obedience to the Lord. As an example of this, Paul goes back to the account of the Baal of Peor in Numbers 25:1-9. There it says "the LORD's anger burned against them."

It was an incident they were reminded of later in Numbers and then in Deuteronomy before entering Canaan. They will continue to be reminded of it in the books of Joshua, the Psalms, and Hosea. Likewise, Paul reaches back to it to show the severity of the judgment for what occurred. He says that "in one day twenty-three thousand of them died." It was a huge price to pay for the faithless actions of the people.

As a note concerning this, Numbers 25:9 places the number at 24,000 instead of 23,000. There have been several suggestions as to how the numbers can be reconciled. It is possible that 23,000 were killed by the plague which resulted, and the other 1000 were killed by those who defended the Lord's honor by using the sword against their own countrymen. Another view is that the number could have been a round number. If it were 23,600, then it could be rounded up or down. Another explanation is that 23,000 fell "in one day" as Paul says and the other 1000 died the next day.

The most probable is that Paul was referring to those killed by the plague only and not those killed by the sword, thus showing the severity of the Lord's judgment. If this is the case, then it was a tradition handed down in the society and not something specifically recorded in Scripture. The main issue though is in regards to sexual immorality. It is considered unacceptable and the Lord will judge those who violate this precept.

Life application: The Lord intends for those who engage in sex to be married - a male to a female. Any other sexual contact is considered immoral.

*Lord, You have granted to man that He can take a wife
Someone to share their walk together all of their days
You would have them to remain together till the end of life
Living in holiness and bringing You honor and praise*

*Help us in our weakness to be stout and strong
To be faithful to one another as the years go past
Yes Lord, help us in this all our life long
To be obedient to You until You call us home at last*

...nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 1 Corinthians 10:9

The words in this verse continue to refer the wilderness wanderings of the Old Testament between the exodus and the arrival of the Israelites in Canaan. During that time, this is recorded in Numbers 21 -

"Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the

way. ⁵ And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For *there is* no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." ⁶ So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died." Numbers 21:4-6

God had time and again provided for the people and demonstrated His care of them. He had sent the Angel of the Lord before them to lead the way and to ensure their care. However, the people "spoke against God and against Moses." In this they were showing a willful disregard of God's care for them. Paul's words though tie this account to Christ. "Nor let us tempt Christ." It is another implicit reference to the deity of Jesus. His presence was there with Israel in the wilderness. If this was Jehovah, and yet Paul now identifies Him as Christ, then the connection is obvious - Jesus is Jehovah incarnate.

Paul uses two different words for "tempt" here, the first being *ekpeirazōmen*. It is an important compound which means "to tempt out." In other words, "to try to the utmost." It is used only three other times in the Bible - in Matthew 4:7, Luke 4:12, and Luke 10:25. Each of these was a tempting related to Christ, twice it is quoted by Jesus during Satan's tempting of Him and once by a lawyer of the law.

To "tempt" when applied to man involves inducing him to sin. When it is applied to God, it carries a different signification, that of trying his patience and provoking Him to anger. This is what is being conveyed here by Paul. The people tried the Angel of the Lord's (Christ's) patience and suffered the consequences of their attitudes. We are instructed to not so tempt the Lord's patience now. He is the same Lord, eternal and unchanging. Our rebellion can only be met with His hand of discipline.

Life application: The warnings of the New Testament aren't given for us to ignore. How often do we hear Christian friends around us complain about how their life is going and yet we see that they have not been faithfully following the Lord. Should discipline be unexpected in such a case? Of course not. Our acts of disobedience

will suffer consequences. Let us learn from those times and resolve in our hearts to be obedient to the word God.

...nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 1 Corinthians 10:10

The word used by Paul for "complain" is the Greek word *gogguzó*. It means to whisper, murmur, or grumble. He is asking his readers to not engage in this type of activity, which they clearly had been as they divided into factions. Rather than building one another up, factions that arise inevitably work to tear one another down. In the case of those in the wilderness, there were complaints against Moses. Because he was the one chosen by God to lead them, it was an indirect complaint against the Lord. This is evident because they "were destroyed by the destroyer."

There is no one incident which involved this complaining, but a series of complaints which seemed to arise any time that things got a little bit tough. Instead of seeing the tough times as a chance for God to reveal His glory, they saw them as chance to complain. When they did, the destroyer would reveal God's glory in another way. This destroyer is certainly the same one who killed the firstborn at the Passover and who continued to destroy pockets of resistance throughout their wanderings.

He further brought destruction to Israel and against Israel's enemies after they entered Canaan. This is recorded time and time again throughout the Bible. Paul's words show that this hard and unrepentant attitude against God is not just some "Old Testament" concept, but something that we need to watch out for as well. Were it not so, he would not have included the words here in 1 Corinthians. His words in the next verse will confirm this.

Life application: There is a difference between idle grumbling and calling out erroneous doctrine. Just because we don't particularly like a precept from the Bible or a teacher of the Bible, this no excuse for grumbling against them.

However, if someone is actively teaching a falsehood, they need to be called out for it. Too often, followers of an unsound Bible teacher will accuse his detractors of attempting to "divide Christ." This terminology is used to get the detractors to remain quiet, as if they have done something wrong when the opposite is true. The teacher of false doctrine is the divider of Christ. Never be afraid to uphold the purity of God's word above all else.

*The Bible is precious and altogether pure
It gives us guidance for our daily walk
And so on it's precepts I remain confident and sure
And of it's doctrines I will constantly talk*

*When someone teaches it in a way which is not right
I know it is my duty to ensure their error is noted
It is too precious to be treated with contempt or spite
And it should never be mishandled or misquoted*

*It is our guide and the book which is given to instruct us
It is the wondrous gift of God to reveal His heart in Jesus*

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

1 Corinthians 10:11

"Now all these things" is referring to the examples that Paul has cited from verse 1-10. But it is also certainly referring to all of the body of Scripture which comprises the age of the law. God chose examples from the life of Joshua, Samson, David, and others as well as from the time during the captivity with Esther and Mordecai, from the post-exilic times with Nehemiah and Ezra, and so many more examples for our learning and instruction. Ellicott notes that, "The

verb "happened" is plural, referring to the multiplied occurrences which the Apostle has just mentioned; but 'written' is singular, referring to the sacred record in which the historical facts are handed down."

The lessons to be found in the Old Testament serve "as examples" for our instruction and edification, and "they were written for our admonition." We are to read them and learn from them, not simply ignore the Old Testament nor to read it as a mere curiosity of times gone by. God selectively chose these stories to teach us. It needs to be understood though that this was not the sole purpose of why "these things happened to them." Rather, they literally happened to the people as they lived out their own lives. A zillion other things happened to them as well, but these were selectively chosen for our learning. Therefore, there is the reality that God used the events of real people's lives to assist later people in how to conduct their own lives.

The word "happened" is in the imperfect tense to show the slow and successive unfolding of those events in history in order to reveal exactly what God determined we should know. And there is another, unstated, reason for these selected moments. They are given to reveal Christ. Paul alluded to that earlier and Jesus says it explicitly in John 5:39 -

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."

Lastly Paul notes that these things occurred and were then recorded and given to us "upon whom the ends of the ages have come." This phrase shows us that the Church Age is the last age before the end times will be ushered in. The previous dispensations were leading to Christ; Christ has been revealed; and now that He has been revealed, we are living in His age of grace. Everything has worked in the past to bring us to this point in history, after which will come the tribulation period. Paul goes to great lengths in the book of 2 Thessalonians to show us this is true.

The sequence of events then is 1) the rapture which ends the church age; 2) the tribulation period where the world will be judged for rejecting the grace of Christ; and 3) the millennial reign of Christ. The fact that the church age has lasted 2000 years shows us the great harvest which has been on-going during all of that time. When it ends, the world will be ripe for judgment. Why? Because they have rejected the very words that we are looking at now - examples for our learning and admonition.

Life application: Don't just pick up the Bible and flip through the pages for something curious to read. Rather, pick it up and read it with fervent desire to know Christ and to learn from the past!

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

1 Corinthians 10:12

There is no reason at all to assume that Paul is speaking about a "loss of salvation" here. He has been using lessons from the exodus and the wilderness wanderings to show that the people lacked faith in God's continued hand of support for them. They failed to trust that what He started He would also see to its completion.

They had Moses to lead them, and yet they failed to trust him. They had the cloud and the pillar of fire there as a display of God's glory and they failed to acknowledge that He was there with them. When they became needy, they were given manna, water, and quail and yet they failed to trust that God would continue to meet their needs as time passed. They had seen the destruction of the armies of Egypt, and yet they feared going in to possess the land of Canaan. On and on it went, a lack of faith leading to times of judgment. Even Moses, because of His actions, was excluded from entering the land of promise.

These people, with the evidence right before their eyes, fell into disbelief time and time again. Paul admonishes us to be more stout and steadfast in our faith and practice. We have the truth that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. We have the complete Bible given to us for our instruction and growth. We have promises

in the word which show us that even death cannot separate us from the love of God which is found in Christ Jesus. And yet, we allow our faith to become weakened through temptation, through privation, and through neglect of meditating on His word.

At these times, we aren't going to lose our salvation. We "have" been forgiven; past tense. We "have" been sealed with the Holy Spirit; past tense. We "are" seated with Christ in the heavenly places; done deal. These things are told to us to remind us of this and to keep us from falling. And yet, from time to time, we hear of a great preacher, teacher, or Christian professor falling into sin; maybe adultery. We see people neurotically worrying about whether they will be raptured along with the rest of the church because they failed to cross a "t" or dot an "i".

Likewise, people come to Christ, but never grow in the knowledge of the word and they flounder about in a state of theological confusion. Others forget that they have been saved at all (see 2 Peter 1:9). We are asked to not only ensure our salvation by calling out to Christ for His unmerited favor, but to walk in our salvation, getting ever-closer to Him. If we do this, we will be firm and fixed upon the Rock and filled with the Water of life in those times when difficulties arise.

Life application: In the morning, read your Bible and think on Christ. During the day, meditate on the word and think on Christ. In the evening, pick up your Bible and read it again and think on Christ. Be firm, fast, and secure in your walk with Christ and you won't fall.

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*. 1 Corinthians 10:13

In the preceding verse, Paul gave those at Corinth a warning when he said, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." Now he gives

them a note of up-building and encouragement. The temptations that they faced in seeking divisions or facing decisions concerning eating or not eating certain foods, etc, are regular temptations that "are common to man." In other words, they are a part of the human experience, just like the temptations of those in the wilderness. There was nothing supernatural about their temptations and they could have resisted rebelling, but instead, they lacked faith in God's provision and fell into weakness.

Those at Corinth were following this same human pattern, but they had the power to prevail if they so chose. They had the truth of the gospel and they possessed the knowledge that "God is faithful." From those Old Testament passages, they saw that God never abandoned His people, even if they may have thought that He did. The Corinthians had the surer foundation, which is the word of God, to look into and see this.

As a further encouragement, Paul instructs them with the happy thought that God "will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able." God is not in the business of "causing" His people to fall. Rather, He has placed us in the stream of humanity and our experiences are those which humans can and should expect. In those experiences, temptations are a natural part of what occur. This was seen in the Garden of Eden, this was seen at the time of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, and it was seen when David saw the beautiful Bathsheba and desired her.

These and other examples show us that some failed and some prevailed. When Joshua and Caleb set out with the other spies to investigate the land of Canaan, they held fast to their faith in the Lord while the other ten weakened. It was a common human experience and each had the ability to stand fast in their convictions or to waffle in them.

As a continuation of his encouraging words, Paul then tells those in Corinth (and thus us) that with whatever temptation we face God "will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." As noted above, God is not in the business of trapping us in our weakness. Because we are humans and share what is common to humanity, then the weaknesses we face are merely human

experiences and thus can be overcome, even from a human perspective. With the surer word of God and the sealing of the Holy Spirit, how much stronger should we be in the face of these things? There is never a scenario that we will face where defeat is inevitable. Rather, when we are pulled away by our own lusts, we voluntarily give way to sin.

This is why it is so important to follow the three avenues of spiritual strengthening that we have available at all times –

- 1) *Praying to God*. We can simply talk to Him about our needs continuously. Every moment can be a moment of prayer if it is a conversation with Him.
- 2) *Knowing the Bible*. If we read and apply the Bible to our lives, we will have that sure foundation on which we can stand when temptations arise. We can draw from the well and be reinvigorated with the lessons it has taught us.
- 3) *Fellowshipping with other believers*. In our weaknesses, we can be strengthened and encouraged through communion with others. They can provide us the "pat on the back" that we need and they can often give us additional perspectives into the word of God that we may have missed.

Life application: Pray without ceasing, read and meditate upon God's word, and fellowship with other believers. In doing these three things, you will be strengthened and built up in your faith and in your walk with God.

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 1 Corinthians 10:14

"Therefore" is given to lead us to a summary thought concerning the previous words of instruction. In verses 1-5, Paul showed how the Israelites had actually partaken of the spiritual goodness of the Lord - the cloud and the sea, the spiritual food, and the spiritual rock (from which the water issued forth). These were there for the people and sustained them as they travelled. And yet, instead of clinging to that which gives life, they turned their backs on Christ and followed a different path.

In verses 6-10, we were shown that some fell into idolatry, some into sexual immorality, some into tempting Christ through their speaking out against Him as if He were incapable of properly providing for them, and some merely complained about their circumstances instead of being grateful for His provision. Paul showed that their lives were given as examples for us to learn from. He also instructed us that we should take heed of these things because we all share in humanity and are susceptible to falling as they did. But in a note of encouragement, he said that God will always provide a way out when we are tempted. This is where his thoughts have led to and they bear directly on his previous discussion about foods sacrificed to idols which was seen in chapter 8.

Eating foods is a neutral matter, even foods sacrificed to idols - because idols are nothing. However, idolatry is harmful and sinful. It is also tempting and destructive as his examples have shown. Idolatry leads to barriers between God and us and destroys our intimate fellowship with Him. Therefore, we shouldn't see how close we can get to it without going over the line. Instead we should turn our backs to it and run from it. The Apostle John has the same word of admonition for us. As the final thought of his first epistle, he closes the letter with, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen" (1 John 5:21).

In spiritual matters, we are to remain in fellowship with God in ways which He has personally authorized such as reading and studying His word; praising, worshipping, and praying to Him; and fellowshiping with other believers. In doing these things, we will be kept safe from the sins which we can so easily fall into.

Life application: An idol is not necessarily a piece of stone, wood, or metal that is set up to worship, but rather it is anything which replaces devotion to God in our hearts. Sex, money, over-indulgence, etc., are things which tear our hearts and minds away from the Lord. Let us continually walk with Him and purposely flee from idolatry.

I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. 1 Corinthians 10:15

Paul has just written in the previous verse that we are to "flee from idolatry." This was based on his words concerning what occurred during the wilderness wanderings of Israel. Through idolatry, the people's hearts and actions were turned away from God and it resulted in punishment, death, and destruction. Such lessons were recorded to keep us from falling into the same type of situation. Now he is going to spend the rest of chapter 10 explaining this from the perspective of the work of the Lord and how we are to relate to that.

In his words of this verse though, there may be a hint of irony attached. He says, "I speak as to wise men..." Saying this, he uses the same word, *phronimos*, that he used earlier in his letter -

"We *are* fools for Christ's sake, but you *are* wise in Christ! We *are* weak, but you *are* strong! You *are* distinguished, but we *are* dishonored!" 1 Corinthians 4:10

He very well may be using that previous statement to help them realize that they don't know everything and that their actions can have the most severe of consequences. If this is his intent, then it explains why he showed those Old Testament examples first. And so to now bolster their wisdom, he tells them to "judge for yourselves what I say."

Life application: The hand of Paul exudes wisdom partly because he was well educated in the things of God as a Pharisee before coming to Christ. He was able to tie the symbolism of the Old Testament in with the reality of what Christ had done. He was specifically chosen by the Lord to be His apostle to the gentile church. Further, he was filled with the Spirit of God who led him in his writings in order for us to gain this wisdom and not fall into error. Remember that it is the epistles of Paul which are intended to guide the gentile-led church until this dispensation ends.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 1 Corinthians 10:16

Paul's previous words asked for us to flee from idolatry and then he immediately asked us to judge his words, as to whether they truly are words of wisdom (he said to them "I speak as to wise men."). In this then he is asking us to use wisdom and grow in wisdom by reflecting on his words of instruction. And so he begins with, "The cup of blessing which we bless." Three thoughts on what this may mean arise. The first is that the cup is the means by which we receive a blessing. In other words, we are blessed as we partake of the cup. The second is that the cup is a cup by which we bless the Lord. And the third is that this is a Hebraism (a Hebrew term) which describes the cup.

Scholars argue over which is intended by Paul, but in actuality all three ideas have merit. The first is certainly true in one sense. We *have been* blessed (past tense) through receiving Christ, but yet we are commanded to participate in the Lord's Supper as well. Paul will note this in the coming chapter. The Lord surely looks with favor upon those who partake of this holy sacrament as He instructed us to do. The second concept has merit also. We offer our praise and thanks back to the Lord when we are obedient to His directive. Our taking of the cup is an act of blessing *toward Him* in this regard. And finally, the term "the cup of blessing" is comparable to what is mentioned in Psalm 116 -

"I will take up the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the LORD." Psalm 116:13

In this psalm, the term *cos yeshuot*, or the "cup of salvation" is used. This actually then forms a pun on the name of Jesus, which is Yeshua. The "cup of Yeshua" was anticipated in the 116th Psalm. In other words -

"I will take up the cup of Jesus,

And call upon the name of Jehovah."

It is an Old Testament picture of the incarnation of Jehovah in the Person of Jesus. Paul then is using the "cup of blessing," or *kos habberakha*, as a Hebraism - the cup stands in regard to the "state of blessing" just as the psalm's cup stood in regard to the "state of salvation." It is this "cup of blessing which we bless" that Paul equates to "the communion of the blood of Christ." This brings to remembrance the words of the Lord (which Paul will explain in the coming chapter) that the cup is His blood. But what does that exactly mean?

Because He held a cup of wine in His hand when He said that, it is intended to mean that it is a picture of His death, not a literal nor a spiritual drinking of His blood. Paul confirms this in his words of chapter 11 when he says that in the meal "you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." It is a *picture* of the suffering of the Lord; a remembrance of His work.

After this, Paul notes that, "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ." Again, this is a pictorial remembrance of the broken body of Christ. Jesus held the bread in His hands and said, "This is my body." It is not His literal body, nor is it a spiritual body. Instead, it is a symbolic representation of His death. And in that death we share "the communion." The Greek word for "communion" is *koinōnia*. It is a "participation" or a "fellowship" in this wondrous act. As Vincent's word studies notes concerning the Passover observed by the Jewish people in relation to the Lord's Supper, "The Passover was celebrated by families, typifying an unbroken fellowship of those who formed one body, with the God who had passed by the blood-sprinkled doors."

There is no reason to assume that we either literally eat the body of Christ (Catholic transubstantiation), nor that we somehow spiritually partake of the blood of Christ, becoming sharers in His divine life (Calvinist doctrine). When we call on Christ, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit and it is in that act that we share in His divine life. The cup and the bread as noted by Paul here are symbolic representations of that awesome position in which we stand.

Finally, there is curiosity by many as to why Paul places the cup first in this verse instead of the bread first as other verses place it. The most likely reason is that Paul took the extra time to deal with and explain the bread (verse 17) and so he dispensed with the matter of the cup first.

I will take up the cup of salvation in my hand

And I will call upon the name of the Lord

It is in the name of Jesus where I take my stand

And in His name I am attentive to God's word

For He is the very Word of Life, this I know

And in Him alone can I live and grow

I will take up the cup of blessing in my hand

And in the name of Jesus will I ever bless my God

It is in His name alone where I take my stand

And in Him alone will I fellowship in the path I trod