

"Therefore, My Beloved, Flee From Idolatry"

1 Cor. 10:1-14

Celebrating the Centrality of Christ in the Local Assembly

Chapter ten is a part of the larger section that runs from chapter eight through chapter ten. The entire passage is dealing with issues of liberty.

Paul's thoughts in chapter ten are a continuation of the larger idea presented in chapters eight and nine. It is important not to lose sight of the bigger picture.

I. An Old Testament Illustration (vv. 1-5)

Verses one through five speak of those with whom God was not pleased. This same example is used by the author of Hebrews in 3:13-19.

Think of the contrast created within this paragraph. The Israelites had enjoyed the full blessings of God. They had experienced God's presence in an unprecedented way, yet they persisted in their unbelief. Some of those with whom God was not pleased were believers. They rejected full confidence in God. Although there cannot be a direct "tit-for-tat" parallel, Paul's point is made. As believers we have been showered with God's abundant grace. We stand in the midst of His love's outpouring and yet we cling to idols. And in this idea, God is not pleased.

II. An immediate application (vv. 6-11)

A. Christ in the Old Testament

Verse six assures us that our Old Testament counterparts serve as examples to the New Testament Church (v. 11). The Old Testament narrative and New Testament narrative found in the Gospels and Acts do provide for us "types" or examples. The events leave imprints and those imprints are pictures. But what are they pictures of? My answer to that question is, "They are pictures of Christ."

This much is certain and seen in Luke 24:25-27. All of Scripture is a shadow that is cast by the substance who is Christ. Everything in the text is a revelation of Him. Every word, clause, sentence, paragraph, book, section, and Testament is pulling us to Him.

B. The sin of idolatry

Verse six uses the word "crave." It means, "to set the heart upon." The word itself is neutral. Color is added by the object craved. Verse seven exhorts us not to be idolaters. Yet, the fascinating element within verses eight and following is what represents biblical idolatry.

It becomes apparent that biblical idolatry is more than the bowing down before fabricated figures. Biblical idolatry is when we look beyond or outside of God for our satisfaction or contentment. When I am not satisfied with who He is and with what He has provided and is doing, then I am an idolater.

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C. The wages of sin is death

God's destruction of His people in the Old Testament was manifested in a direct and immediate way. Although God does not deal with us in the same manner as He did the Israelites, the sins represented in Old Testament Israel still carry an inherent demerit. God has woven into sin's fabric the seeds of its own destruction. Those who sow the seed of sin reap the harvest of death.

Thus Paul concludes with a final exhortation in verses 12-14.

III. A final exhortation (vv. 12-14)

A. Abandon yourself to God

The application of verse twelve strikes a sobering note, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall." We are to live life humbly. God, in His grace, provides the means whereby we can live a life of perseverance.

B. Believe there is hope

Verse thirteen is one of the most comforting verses within biblical revelation. Because of the promise of verse thirteen, we have the exhortation in verse fourteen, "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry." We can flee any and all idolatry because God is faithful. It is the faithfulness of God on which the believer perseveres in faith. Nothing else can enable finite man to endure to the end.

Verse thirteen gives several insightful statements.

First, there is a solidarity in all temptation faced by humanity.

Second, every temptation we face is being controlled by God.

Third, in every temptation there is a way of escape.

There is a sense in which God invites us to compare the Creator against the created. He wants us to look, consider, and examine. The created can never substitute for the Creator. Nothing God created can replace Him.

C. Flee idolatry

If God so chooses, He can break our addictions "just-like-that." Regardless as to how victory over addiction is achieved, the power lies outside of ourselves. We cannot do it, only God can.