

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

1 CORINTHIANS LESSON 5 (Chapters 9-10)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). Welcome to our study of the Book of 1 Corinthians. In chapters 9 and 10 Paul is going to deal with the need to examine oneself, and the need for a person to look inside his own life to make sure that he is really living as God wants him to. Paul first looks at his own life as both a Christian and as a Gospel preacher to make sure that he is living correctly. Then he uses an Old Testament example of Israel during the time of that nation’s wanderings to show that if a child of God is not careful, he can fall away and be lost. The idea that once a person becomes a Christian, that person can never be lost is completely foreign to the teaching of the Bible. Paul shows us this in this text. In chapter 9, Paul defends his own right to be a Gospel preacher and to be paid for his services.

Paul begins the first section of 1 Corinthians 9 by showing that he has a right to be paid for his services. A worker is worthy of his wages. Paul is saying that Gospel preachers have a right to be paid, and that they have a right to be provided for (by the brethren) as they do the work of the Lord. Notice especially 1 Corinthians 9:14 where Paul says, “Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.” If a man dedicates his life to preaching the Gospel by teaching the lost and communicating the Word of God to the brethren to encourage the saints, Paul said that that man has a right to “live from the gospel,” implying that such a person has a right to be paid. Paul said that the Lord said this. But where did the Lord say this? In Luke 10:7 we see that the Lord did teach exactly that when He said, “Remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages” (a quote from Deuteronomy 25:4—“You shall not muzzle the ox while he treads out the grain”). If you have an ox working in the field, you would not put a muzzle on his mouth while he is working, would you? No one would do that. You would allow him to eat as he worked. Jesus uses this illustration of “the worker is worthy of his hire” to show that someone who is truly working in the kingdom is worthy of being paid by those who give to the Gospel cause on the first day of the week. In Galatians 6:6 Paul wrote, “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.” Christians have a responsibility to share with Gospel teachers those things that they need to survive in this life. Let us understand first and foremost, then, that Paul is examining his own life to ensure that he is working for the cause of Christ. He then lets the brethren know that he is doing the work of God, and that they have a right to pay him from the Gospel.

Paul then identifies another right that he has as a Gospel preacher—to be married. In 1 Corinthians 9:5-6 Paul identifies the fact that a Gospel preacher has a right to carry along a believing wife just as other people do. You will never find in the Bible teaching which requires that preachers live a celibate life and that they must remain single all their days. That is not what the Bible teaches, especially when the Bible has ordained that marriage is considered to be holy. In the New Testament, when we see Gospel preachers, we see that

some of them did have wives. In 1 Peter 5 we learn that Peter was an elder as well as a Gospel preacher. But what is one of the qualifications of an elder? In 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 we see that an elder must have a wife and children. In Matthew 8:14 we know that Peter did have a wife because Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law. So, yes, Paul had a right to preach the Gospel and be paid by the church for doing that. He had a right to have a wife and to enjoy such things as God had ordained as holy. However, although Paul had a right to be paid, he says in this chapter that he did not **have** to be paid. Yes, it was a right. And yes, it was something he could accept. But he did not always insist on being paid. He says that at times he chose **not** to be paid so that it would not become a stumbling block to those who did not understand his teaching on this matter. While it was a right, it was not something that Paul **had** to do.

As Paul examines himself, one of the things he sets before us in 1 Corinthians 9 is that we must make sure, just as Paul was, that we are running the race of Christianity faithfully and that we have the mind-set of winning that race. Notice what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:24—"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it." Christianity is likened to a race. We are to endure and run faithfully every day as we follow Jesus. That is the idea behind the race. In Hebrews 12:1 the Bible says, "Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Paul likens Christianity to a race in 2 Timothy 2 where he said that we must compete according to the rules. We look to Jesus, compete according to the rules, and run with endurance.

But we also must run with the mind-set of winning. Would you enter a race if you did not think you could win? Some people might. But it would not make much sense to enter a competition of some kind if you did not even have a desire to try to win. That is the idea behind Christianity. So many people get into Christianity because it's a good social thing to do. It makes them feel better. But why should we be in Christianity? Part of our reason is no doubt to serve God. But we must enter the Christian race with one goal in mind—to win! Look at what Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

"I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

Paul indicated that he had finished the race, that he had received a crown of life, and that he was ready to gain what was promised to him. Paul was not in it "just to be in it." Paul was in it **to win**. Unless you are in Christianity to win the battle and to win the prize (Phil. 3:12-14) by making it to Heaven, then you will never get there. You have to have in mind a goal if you want to achieve what you want in this life. Paul in essence says, "You must run the Christian race with a prize in mind." Notice what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:25—"Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown." What is the prize? Are we going to receive a victor's crown? Are we going to receive a victor's wreath as they did in the first century? Are we going to receive a certain allotment of money, of jewelry, or of something else of great value? No, that is not what Paul is talking about. All those things perish with using. Paul says that we must run with an imperishable crown in mind. What is he talking about? Jesus said, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Paul said in Romans 8:18, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Jesus Himself said

in Matthew 25:46 that the righteous will “go away into eternal life.” Hebrews 4:9 says that “there remains therefore a rest for the people of God.” It is a place where there will be no more sin, no more sorrow, nor more crying, and no more death (Rev. 21:3-4). It is a place where we will be in the presence of God forever. That will be our prize. And that is what gives us our endurance.

As we strive to look into ourselves, we must remind ourselves that we are running a race. We need to run to win in order to obtain the greatest prize we could ever imagine—Heaven itself! Therefore, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27 that we need to be trained with discipline. Just like a runner who must run even when it hurts, or just like a body builder who pushes his muscles to the extent that they burn, we as Christians must train ourselves with self-discipline. Notice Paul’s words: “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” The idea is that we are to train our bodies in order to bring them into subjection, lest when we go out to preach to others, but fall into sin ourselves, we become castaways. Running the Christian race means that we must train ourselves every day. We cannot get up one day and say, “I think I’ll run the Christian race today.” We have to prepare every day to run that race. Paul said, “I discipline my body.” If we are going to win the Christian race, we must discipline ourselves daily. In 1 Corinthians 6:12 Paul said, “I will not be brought under the power of any.” The only thing that we should allow to control our minds and our lives is the teaching of Jesus. Anything that gets in the way, and that pulls us off track, will cause us to lose sight of winning the race. So, Paul says that we must discipline our bodies and bring them into subjection. If we are going to win the race, we must control our bodies. As a runner approaches the last two or three miles of a long race, how is it that he is able to keep pushing himself, even though every muscle and every fiber of his body is crying out to quit? He has the goal in mind. He has trained himself. He has promised himself that he is going to endure to the end. He is going to cross the line, and he is not going to give up. Matthew 6:33 tells us to “seek first the kingdom of God.” Revelation 2:10 tells us to be “faithful unto death.” We must never give up, but must instead look to Jesus. That is to be our goal. We must train with self-discipline, or, like the person who stands up and says something, but then goes out and does exactly the opposite, we will be disqualified from the race.

In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul reminds us of an example of some people who did become disqualified. He tells us that we must make sure we do not become disqualified, and then he gives us an example of some of God’s own children who did. In 1 Corinthians 10 he draws on the example of the Israelites who came out of Egyptian bondage. You remember the setting. In the Book of Exodus, a pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph. As a result, that pharaoh became a hard taskmaster and made the Israelites work even harder. He was evil, and caused the people to be under great oppression. The people then cried out to God, Who sent Moses to deliver them through the ten plagues. At the end, God opened up the Red Sea so that the people could cross over on dry land as the Egyptians were killed by the Sea. But what happened to the Israelites after they crossed over the Red Sea? Do you remember? They began to complain and to murmur. It was amazing that they said such things, yet they did. If you read Exodus 15, 16, and 17, you can see that the people said, “How we wish we were back by the fleshpots in Egypt. You brought us out here to kill us.” These people who had cried out to God for deliverance were now blaming God and saying that He was going to kill them. That example teaches us that we must be careful, lest we become fickle, complain, and give up on the journey.

We know a little bit about these Old Testament people because 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 teaches us (as does the Book of Exodus) that these people were “baptized into Moses.” Here is the setting, which Paul explains to show Christians that those people are a lot like us.

Look in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 where Paul says, “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, “into Moses,” whereas Christians are baptized “into Christ.” Look at the former baptism, where the Israelites went through the Red Sea. There was a wall of water on both sides, and a cloud on top of them. They were surrounded by water, which is a picture of immersion—just like Christian baptism. These people were baptized into Moses, whereas Christians are baptized into Christ. Just like these people, Christians today have spiritual food and spiritual drink—which are the teachings of Christ. Jesus said in John 6 that He is “the living bread” and “the water of life.” He said that if people would come to Him, they would never hunger or thirst. In verse 3 we learn that Jesus was the cloud and rock that followed the people of Israel. He was the spiritual food and drink that they had. Paul is showing Christians that the Israelites were a lot like them. They were baptized. They found sustenance in Christ, even though they may not have known that.

Then Paul says that those people were to serve as an example to us of how we must not do certain things or we will be lost. What did those people do? We learn from verse 6 that they “lusted after evil things.” These were lustful people. They had physical lusts, passions, and desires concerning the evil things of the people around them. They allowed those things to cause them to become a part of that. Their desires were so strong that they left God, quit running the race, and got involved in sin. We today can do the same thing if we are not careful. How many people are going to be lost because they let fleshly lusts lead them off the path of righteousness? Peter said in 1 Peter 2:11, “Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.” We must realize that our flesh is not what should lead us. Our passions, desires, and wants in this life cannot be allowed to control us. John said that all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father, but of the evil one, and he who does that will pass away and be lost.

What else did these people do? Verse 7 tells us that they became idolaters like some of the nations around them. They started worshiping and looking up to false gods. The account in Exodus 20 tells us that Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments. He stayed up there a long time, so the people decided to make themselves a god. Aaron used their gold to make them a golden calf, and the people then began to worship it as god. Some people might say, “Well, I would never do that.” And Christians certainly should not do such a thing today. But can we not still become idolaters? Anything in our lives that takes first place in our lives over God becomes an idol. That is why John warned us in 1 John 5 that we should beware so that we do not become involved in idolatry. He is not necessarily talking about worshiping others gods, although that would be included. The idea is that anything that comes before Christ and takes first place—like the mighty dollar, a job, a family, or some hobby—can become our idol.

Paul then warned the Corinthian Christians not to become involved in sexual immorality. Some of the people of Israel had done that, and a great number of them died because of it. There were immoral people during that time. Some of the religions around them believed that the proper way to worship was through sexual immorality. Some of the Israelites got involved in that, and thus had problems inside their own camp. We today need to be careful, lest sexual immorality causes us to leave Christ. Hebrews 13:4 says, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” We cannot live in fornication, adultery, or immoral sexual acts and think that you will be acceptable to God. Even if no one else knows, God knows. Hebrews 4:13 says that “all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” Paul said to the Christians in Corinth, “Such were some of you,” and included in his discussion such things as those who were sexually immoral, sodomites, homosexuals, and fornicators. But he also

stressed, "Such **were** some of you." Then he went on to say, "But you were washed." When we become Christians by obeying the Gospel, we must turn away from such things. If we do not, we will be lost.

What else did these people do? They tempted Christ, and they complained. When we do not trust God, when we put ourselves in places of authority as some of them did, and when we defy the will of God by complaining, we then leave the straight and narrow path. Someone might say, "I cannot believe that these people complained. Look at all that God did. They had seen the plagues. They had seen the Nile River turn to blood. They had seen the Red Sea open up so they could walk through on dry ground. How could they complain?" Exodus 16 and 17 teaches us that they did exactly that. They complained and murmured, and because of that, they wandered for forty years until everyone twenty years old and above perished. Someone might ask, "How could they do that? How can we do that? How can we today also complain when we have so much more than they did?" Hebrews 2 teaches us that we must not neglect the great salvation that we now possess—and which they did not have. We have had the full mystery of God revealed to us. We have all the knowledge of God that we need. God's plan of salvation through His Son has come down to us. How can **we** complain? Paul said in Philippians 2:14-15 that complaining and murmuring are not things that God wants us to do. We are to make sure that we do not complain and murmur against God and His ways. We need to learn this. We need to learn, as Paul did in Philippians 3, to be content in whatever state we are in. These people should serve as our example. And here is how they should do that. Notice 1 Corinthians 10:12. In verse 11 Paul said that these people were our examples (just as Romans 15:14 teaches—that these things were for our learning). What are these people an example of? Notice verse 12 where Paul says that all these things happened to God's people who were baptized into Moses, who had found sustenance in Jesus, and who were provided for by God. These people then represent a sort of picture of Christians, which teaches us what can happen to us—that we can be lost and go to Hell. In verse 12 Paul said, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

The idea of some people today that a child of God can never be lost is a damnable doctrine that is going to lead people to Hell. This chapter overwhelmingly shows that God's children in the Old Testament violated His will and got involved in sin, causing them to be lost. They were destroyed by the destroyer, the text says. If that happened to them, and if we must "give the more earnest heed, lest we fall away" (Heb. 2:1-4), how could anyone ever say that a child of God can never be lost? The Bible overwhelmingly teaches that a child of God **can** be lost! In Galatians 5:4 Paul said, "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." The religious world today says that a person cannot fall from grace. But God said that some first-century Christians **had** fallen from grace. They, then, had become cut off from Christ. In Acts 8:20-22 we see that Simon had obeyed the Gospel. He then saw the gift of miracles being used by the laying on of the apostles' hands. So he tried to buy the gift. But Peter told him that his heart was not right with God, and then said, "Your money perish with you." What was going to perish? Simon was going to be lost. In Revelation 3:4-5 Jesus said that some would have their names removed from the Book of Life if they weren't careful. If there is ever a text which teaches that a son or daughter of God can be lost, it is Luke 15. Think about the prodigal son. He was the son of the father, where the father represents God, and the son represents one of His children (perhaps Israel). That son went away into a far land, squandered his livelihood, and was living in the muck and mire with the pigs. Until he decided to return to his father, he was lost while living in that state, even though he had been a child of God.

It is true that we can be lost. But God does not **want** us to be lost. That is what 1 Corinthians 10:13 is teaching us. Is temptation going to arise? Are there going to be struggles? Is the lust of the flesh sometimes going to be very powerful? Yes. But verse 13 gives us help when it teaches us, “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.” Temptation is something we all have to face. We will be tempted, just as Jesus was tempted (Mt. 4). But understanding what Paul says in verse 13 can help us. We must understand that no temptation will arrive except what has been common to others, too. We are not the only ones who have to suffer such things. Plus, God **will** give us a way of escape. This, too, should give us great strength, knowing that we are not the only ones who have ever suffered this—and that God makes it possible for us to deal with such things. How does God make it possible? Hebrews 4:15 teaches us that it is by the example of Jesus Who, in all points, was tempted as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 2:17 says that God gives us aid and help in time of need. How? By prayer (1 Pet. 5:7—“Cast all your cares on Him, for He cares for you”). By the example of Christ (1 Pet. 2:21). By the all-powerful Word of God (Heb 4:12). By the encouragement and fellowship of other Christians. God has given us everything we need to overcome temptation. There is no reason for us to be like those people and to be lost. We can deal with such things.

Here is one of the ways we can do that. Verse 31 sets the stage for how Christians can make sure that they do **not** fall into sin and be lost, and that they **do** endure temptation. Paul said, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” How can we “take heed to ourselves, lest we fall”? We must do everything in our lives with a single mind-set. We must want to glorify God in our lives. If a person’s goal is to glorify God, that person will have a much easier path to walk in this life. We do not have to worry about self. Jesus said in Luke 9:23 that we must deny ourselves. We must no longer live for the lusts of the flesh. Rather, we must be living for the Lord. We must realize that our purpose in living here on Earth is to glorify God. In Isaiah 43:7 God said, “Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory, I have formed him, yes, I have made him.” **Why** were we created? **Why** are we here on Earth? We are here to glorify God. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 is a powerful passage that teaches us the purpose of life. What is life all about? Let’s hear “the conclusion of the whole matter.” “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.” We need to make sure that our goal is to seek first the kingdom of God (Mt. 6:33).

As we think about the importance of examining our lives, I want to ask **you** today to do that. Look inside yourself and make sure that you are a child of God. Are you a Christian? If not, you can become one today by obeying the Gospel. You must believe that Jesus is God’s Son (Jn. 8:24). Are you willing to repent of past sins in your life (Lk. 13:3)? Will you confess the Savior, Jesus Christ, as God’s Son (Mt. 10:32-33)? If so, will you then do what Jesus said when He said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38)? Or, perhaps as a child of God, you know that you are not on the straight and narrow path. How thankful to God you ought to be that you have been afforded another opportunity to make things right. You need to repent before it is everlastingly too late (Lk. 13:3,5). May each one of us do as Paul did, and as he encouraged Christians to do: “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1 CORINTHIANS LESSON 5 (CHAPTERS 9-10)

1. What is the overall theme of 1 Corinthians 9?
2. What is the overall theme of 1 Corinthians 10?
3. What, according to 1 Corinthians 9:14, did Paul say that the Lord Himself had commanded?
4. Where did Christ teach the doctrine to which Paul was referring in 1 Corinthians 9:14?
5. What is the principle contained in Deuteronomy 25:4 (“You shall not muzzle the ox while he treads out the grain”)?
6. According to 1 Corinthians 9:5-6, what does a Gospel preacher have the right to do?
7. What important spiritual principle is contained in 1 Corinthians 9:24?
8. What important spiritual principle is contained in Hebrews 12:1?
9. In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, what did Paul say he would receive if he ran the Christian race successfully?
10. According to 1 Corinthians 9:25, what will every person receive who runs the Christian race successfully?
11. What does Matthew 6:33 tell Christians to do?
12. In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul provided an example of some people who did “became disqualified.” Who were those people?
13. According to 1 Corinthians 10:6, what had some of the people done to “become disqualified”?
14. According to 1 Corinthians 10:7, what had some of the people done to “become disqualified”?
15. According to the teaching of Hebrews 4:13, who will decide which people have “qualified” in the Christian race, and which people have not?
16. What important admonition did Paul offer Christians in 1 Corinthians 10:12?
17. What does Hebrews 2:3 urge Christians **not** to neglect?
18. According to Revelation 3:5, what will **not** happen to those “who overcome”?
19. What does Philippians 2:14 teach Christians to do?
20. What important teaching for Christians is found in 1 Corinthians 10:13?