

Eternal Gift 1 Cor. 10v1-11v1

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[0 : 00] to read to verse 22 and then pick it up again in verse 31. So let's hear God's word to us. This is God's voice.

1 Corinthians chapter 10, which is on page 1151. Starting at verse 1.

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.

They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them. And that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them. Their bodies were scattered over the desert.

[1 : 06] Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were.

As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry. We should not commit sexual immorality as some of them did.

And in one day, 23,000 of them died. We should not test the Lord as some of them did and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble as some of them did and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall.

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

[2 : 26] Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. I speak to sensible people. Judge for yourselves what I say.

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread we break a participation in the blood of Christ?

Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

Consider the people of Israel.

Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? Do I mean that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything?

No. But the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God. And I do not want you to be participants with demons.

[3 : 26] You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too. You cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he? Verse 31. So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks, or the Church of God, even as I try to please everybody in every way.

For I am not seeking my own good, but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.

Well, let's pray together. Our Father God, we thank you for your word, which is your voice to us, speaking to us clearly about your Son and about us.

[4 : 59] And so we pray that as we hear your word, we would be people who take it in, people who listen carefully, people who see Jesus and follow him as we ought.

Father, by your Spirit, take your word and plant it deep within so that we may grow and mature as your holy people.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, this week, we are all going to be sharing in the giving and receiving of gifts.

And like everybody else, I look forward to it and I'm going to enjoy it. Contrary to what everybody thinks about me being a bah humbug, I love Christmas.

But we need to keep our perspectives, don't we? Each gift we give or receive will be temporal, not eternal.

[6 : 17] Each gift will either wear out or it'll break or it'll get eaten or it'll die or it'll fall apart or become obsolete.

None of our gifts are going to last. they are all temporal. They are not eternal. So, this morning, we're going to be looking at three gifts.

The first two gifts are gifts that we receive. And if we take these gifts and use these gifts, they will lead us towards the eternal kingdom of God.

So, the gifts we receive have an eternal value. The third gift we're going to look at is a gift that we give so that others can share in the eternal kingdom of God.

So, three gifts this morning. The first two we receive, the third gift we give. So, here's the first gift and it might come as a bit of surprise or a bit of a shock to you.

[7 : 33] This gift is a warning. Be careful that you don't fall. Look at verse 12. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall.

In London, some of you will know this, that on the underground rail work, there's a station that has this automatic warning. As the train approaches the station and the doors open, there's this great big warning.

Mind the gap! Because between the train and the platform, there's a gap. And if you're not careful, you could step into the gap and you'll fall. So, if you want to make sure that you get to your destination, listen to the warning.

Mind the gap. And that's what we have in verse 12. It's a warning, but this warning is a gift to us so that we will not fall and that we will get to our eternal destination.

And to help us understand this warning, we're to go back and remember Israel's salvation from Egypt and their journey towards their destination, the promised land.

[9 : 02] Go back to verse 1. He says, I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.

It's taking us back in time to remember how God saved Israel. Do you remember the story and what happened? They followed the cloud.

The cloud was the very presence of God or representing the presence of God. And as they followed the cloud, they were led out of captivity and they were brought to the Red Sea.

And as they faced the Red Sea, they were like, what are we going to do? How are we going to get out? As Pharaoh and his armies were chasing behind them. And then God in a miraculous act parted the sea so that they could escape Pharaoh and his armies.

It was God's mighty intervening act of saving his people, rescuing them from one ruler and bringing them to himself so they could live under his saving rule.

[10 : 15] Now their experience of salvation is actually a picture of our salvation today. You see, their salvation was not just a physical leaving a land to go to another place, it was a spiritual salvation.

Have a look at these verses, verse 3. You see, as they made their way towards the promised land, look what God did, verse 3. They all ate the same spiritual food.

that was the manna that God sent. And they drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them.

You remember that on one occasion they had nothing to drink, and Moses with his staff struck the rock, and water flowed from it. That rock, verse 4, was Christ.

Christ. So when they ate this food, when they drank this water, they were in effect looking to God in faith and trusting God to save them.

[11 : 26] And that salvation, we're told, ultimately came through, verse 4, through Christ. It was a picture of Christ. So just as Christ saved Israel and brought salvation to them, so Christ is the one who has saved us and rescued us from slavery to sin and brought us out from under slavery and brought us into freedom towards our ultimate promised land, the eternal kingdom of God.

This is our salvation story. This is what God has done for us. But that salvation experience is not enough.

Have a look at verse 5. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them. Their bodies were scattered over the desert.

You see, the people of Israel thought that because God had saved them in such a miraculous and mighty way, bringing them through the waters, bringing them into the promised land and providing food and drink and heading towards their promised land, they thought, well, God has saved us, we can do as we want now.

Not so. All of the adults that left Egypt, with the exception of two people, Caleb and Joshua, all the adults died in the desert before they reached their final destination, the promised land.

[13:06] God was not pleased with their behaviour, so he judged them. And the reason for writing this is to say to the church in Corinth, listen guys, you are behaving just like Israel did in the past.

So there's a warning for you. Verse 8, we should not commit sexual immorality as some of them did when they were in the desert.

and in one day God judged them and 23,000 of them died. We should not test the Lord as some of them did and they were killed by snakes.

And do not grumble as some of them did and they were killed by the destroying angel. But it's not just the church in Corinth.

Are we any different in our behaviours? You see the story of Israel is also a warning for us.

[14:08] Verse 11, these things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come.

So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you do not fall.

Don't rely on some past Christian experience. Yes, you might have a story to tell of how God saved you. Yes, you might have been baptised.

Yes, you might share in communion. Yes, you may have your testimony to tell. But if we are not walking with Christ today in repentance and faith, it counts for nothing.

Be careful that we do not fall. You see this warning is actually a gracious gift.

[15:09] It's reminding all of us to stop and think about our walk with Christ. Christ. Don't mess with sin, he says. Don't think that it doesn't matter.

It does matter. How we live our lives today is a serious thing. So make sure we look to Christ, our rock, our saviour, so that we do not fall and that we will reach our eternal destination.

salvation. So that is our first gift, a warning, be careful that we do not fall. Here's the second gift that we are to receive, hope, participation in Christ.

So look at verse 14. Therefore my dear friends, or my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. You see Israel as a people had turned away from God, who had saved them and brought them miraculously out of slavery into the promised land.

They had turned away from God and they had now turned to their own gods who could not save them. And the warning or the message for us is that we can do exactly the same thing as they did.

[16:36] Of course we might not fashion a golden calf as they did, but we must remember that an idol is anyone or anything that replaces God.

Someone or something that is more important to you than Christ is an idol. So if work is more important to you than Christ, then work is your idol.

If your children's career is more important than our trust in Christ, then the children have become an idol. If our relationship to our spouse is more important than our relationship to Christ, then that relationship has become an idol.

If Christmas is more important to you than Christ, then it's become an idol. So, verse 14, flee from idolatry.

Don't fall as Israel did. Turn from trusting in your own idols that cannot save you and turn to Christ who is our true and ultimate gift and provides us with all that we ever need.

[17:56] Verse 16, is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ?

and is not the bread we break a participation in the body of Christ? He's talking here about the Lord's Supper, communion, which is a gift to us and we think of it as a remembrance meal.

With the bread and the wine we remember the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf. But this is much more than just a meal that we remember.

It's much deeper than that. It's a participation in Christ. So as we eat the bread and as we drink the wine, we are by faith joining or uniting ourselves to Christ.

Again, look at verse 16. He says it's a participation in the blood of Christ. It's a participation in the body of Christ.

[19 : 02] So through our eating and through our drinking together, we are saying that what Christ went through on the cross, he went through for me. His death was my death.

His condemnation for sin was my condemnation. His experience of wrath and being shut out from the Father is my deserved wrath.

So he's reminding us and saying look at the saviour who truly saves. what gift could we have that is better and greater than the gift of Christ?

So why turn to these idols and these God substitutes who can never save you, never satisfy you, or never fill you? In fact, if we participate with Christ, we can't be joined to anyone else or anything else.

Have a look at verse 21. He says, you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too. You cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

[20 : 17] You see, Israel, going back to their example, they were trying to live with a foot in both camps. They were trying to have it both ways. Oh yes, God is our salvation. He saved us from Egypt.

Egypt. But we like to turn to our own idols and live as we please and do what we like. The Christians in Corinth were no different. Oh, Christ is our saviour.

He's rescued us from the empty way of life. But we like to join in in the pagan festivals and enjoy our sexual immorality. And they're the sorts of things we like to do. I think the point is simple, isn't it?

We cannot share in the Lord's supper on a Sunday morning and then live as we please Sunday night. We can't eat the bread and in our hearts be turning to other gods for our pleasure.

We can't drink the wine and in our hearts turn to other gods for satisfaction. We can't live with a foot in both camps. Verse 21, you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too.

[21 : 28] Because what he sounds strong language to say the cup of demons, he's saying but anything else that you give your life to, idolatry, a God substitute, it's like a demon, it's other than God.

And we cannot participate in it. You see, if we participate in Christ, we are joined to Christ.

In Christ we have received the greatest gift of all, he is our hope. So when we feed on the bread of Christ, we are truly satisfied.

When we drink of the blood of Christ, we will never thirst again. It's like the rock in the desert that continued to flow. Christ is our ultimate source for all that we ever need and all that we would ever long for.

He is our salvation. He is the only one who truly fills us. We have the greatest gift of all in Christ. He is our eternal hope.

[22 : 32] So that is the second gift we are to receive. We participate in him today so that we will reach our eternal destination.

The third gift. is not so much a gift that we receive, but it's a gift we give because of what we have received.

Life so that they may be saved. Look at verse 33 of chapter 10. Comes at the end of verse 33.

For I am not seeking my own good, but the good of many, that they may be saved. You see, in Christ we have received the greatest gift possible.

Spiritual life, life with God, life to come in his eternal kingdom. And in response to this amazing gift that we have received, we are to give our lives to others so that they may be saved.

[23 : 45] So that they may share in the eternal glory that is to come. in fact, we are to use our lives for God's glory.

Two things we need to do. First, I need to ask, how does my life today affect a not-yet Christian?

How does my life today affect a not-yet Christian? Well, look at verse 31. So he says, whatever you do in life, whatever you eat or drink, whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews or Greeks. No matter their background, whoever they are, do not cause them to stumble or fall.

You see, as a Christian, I am free to do as I please, so long as I do not disobey God's word. But, I am not free to do what I please if it causes an unbeliever to stumble and fall.

[25 : 00] If my life and my actions and my behaviour becomes a barrier to someone coming to faith, I must change how I live. Second, not only must I ask how does it affect a not yet Christian, I need to ask how does my life affect other Christians.

Verse 32, do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews or Greeks or the Church of God or fellow believers, even as I try to please everybody in every way.

So, in the choices and decisions I make in life about where I go and what I do, if that causes another Christian to fall away from Christ, that means I must change how I live.

You see, how I live today, my life today is not a private individual experience that I'm huddled away and I do things on my own. It has a profound effect on the lives of others.

A church means a gathering of God's people, so what I do has an effect on the rest of the church family. So, I will seek to do all things for the glory of God.

[26 : 21] And here's the main reason, and it comes at the end of verse 33. For I am not seeking my own good, but the good of many, that they may be saved.

You see, how we live matters. How Israel lived mattered. How the people in Corinth live mattered, and how I live today matters, because it has an eternal impact on the lives of other people.

What I do with my life has eternal consequences. But because I have been saved, because I now have Christ, because of the hope and the participation in Christ, I will want to live in such a way that it leads other people towards Christ.

And isn't that our longing and our hope over the Christmas season, that our friends and our family will not fall because of us, but because of the way we live, we lead them towards being saved.

Not to be saved is to face the emptiness and the loneliness of an eternity without God, which is hell itself.

[27 : 40] You see, the greatest gift that we could possibly give anyone over this Christmas season is the giving of our own lives in service to other people. Look at chapter 11 verse 1.

Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ. That's what the Apostle Paul did. he followed the example of Christ.

And that example is really the story of Christmas, isn't it? It's all about Jesus Christ who came down to us, the God man, the one who gave up his rights, the King of Kings, the creator of the universe, who was born as a child, in the back ends of beyond nowhere, in a manger, fleeing for his life as a refugee with no one and nothing, becoming like one of us to serve the world in which he came to. But not only did he live his life in service of others, he gave his life in sacrifice so that we could be rescued from our slavery to sin, brought into the freedom of the ultimate promised land, the eternal kingdom of God.

That is what he's done for us. That is the example we follow as we give our lives. So just as the apostle Paul followed that example, so should we give our life.

[29 : 19] give your life so that, and you fill in the name, so that may be saved. So can we begin to see the importance of these gifts?

The gifts that we give and receive on Christmas morning are all temporal. They'll all disappear, they'll either break or they'll be eaten or they'll be destroyed.

or they will become obsolete. They will not last. These three gifts have an eternal value.

Receive the gift, hear the warning, so that you do not fall. Participate in the hope of Christ and the blessings that we have in him.

And having received those gifts, give the wonderful gift of your own life that will lead and point others to Christ. What greater gift could we possibly give?

[30 : 30] Let's pray together. our Father God, we pray that you would enable us, give us the humility opportunity, that we would accept and receive the gifts that you have offered to us today, that we would hear the warning so that we do not fall, that we may reach out and participate in the hope of Christ, who fills us and satisfies us like no one else or nothing else.

And Father, would you please give us opportunity that we may give the gift of our own life to others so that they may know Christ and be saved.

Father, would you please give us opportunity to serve you well and to do all things for your glory this coming week.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing together our final song.

It's chosen particularly with the theme that we've looked at in mind.