

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 23 March 2026

Greetings.

Today's 'Musings' below consist of a revised and expanded version of notes on 1 Corinthians 10. 1-14, which appeared in 'Studies in First Corinthians', published by Precious Seed Publications in 2016 and reproduced with kind permission.

Here are **ten 'tasters'**:

**(i)** The main point which Paul wishes to draw from the history of 'the Exodus generation' of Israel is that spiritual privileges never guarantee spiritual victory; that is, that great blessings in themselves are no insurance against falling to temptation.

**(ii)** In the race described at the end of **chapter 9**, all start, all run, but **only one** wins; in the history detailed at the beginning of **chapter 10**, all start, all are equally favoured, but **only two** finish the course.

**(iii)** The prize is won by the athlete by discipline. It is lost by the Israelites through indulgence.

**(iv)** The children of Israel are the only people of whom I know who were baptised without even getting their feet wet. Indeed, the only people who did get wet that day were the Egyptians—and they weren't baptised—they were 'drowned'!

**(v)** In **verses 1-4**, Paul had listed five of Israel's initial blessings; in **verses 5-10**, he lists five of their subsequent failures and sins. Everything went wrong for Israel because, although God met their needs, they didn't meet His requirements

**(vi)** In **chapter 8**, Paul had taught them that a believer's attitude to idol meat should be determined by his concern for his brother because **his brother** is 'weak', but, in **chapter 10**, he teaches them that a believer's attitude to idolatry itself should be determined by his concern for himself because **he** is considerably weaker than he thinks.

**(vii)** We are most vulnerable when we least realise it.

**(viii)** If **in verses 1-12** we are admonished by Israel's failures, in **verse 13** we are encouraged by God's faithfulness.

**(ix)** Our temptations ... are resistible ... God proportions the burden to the back.

**(x)** In some cases, God may remove us from the situation of seemingly unbearable temptation, while in other cases He may provide strength or other resources within the situation to strengthen us, so that we may endure the temptation and remain faithful to Him.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

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## Warnings from Israel's history in the wilderness: 1 Corinthians 10. 1-14.

### SCRIPTURE

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 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." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

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.

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

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

1 Corinthians 10. 1-14 (*The New King James Version*)

### INTRODUCTION

In the opening section of 1 Corinthians 10, the apostle points the Corinthians to one of the great lessons to be learnt from the experience of Israel during their wilderness wanderings.<sup>1</sup>

The '*For*' with which Paul opens the section (not '*Moreover*' as in the KJV and the NKJV) directly links it to the closing verses of chapter 9, which picture the Christian life as a race and which ends with the terrifying possibility of disqualification from winning the prize.<sup>2</sup> As he had earlier done in verses 7-10 of chapter 9, Paul now proceeds to back up his illustration taken from contemporary life, with clear biblical evidence and support.

The truth is that the Corinthians were far too complacent and self-confident, even to the point of throwing themselves in the way of temptation by partaking of idolatrous feasts.<sup>3</sup> And the main point which Paul wishes to draw from the history of 'the Exodus generation' of Israel is that *spiritual privileges never guarantee spiritual victory*; that is, that great blessings in themselves are no insurance against falling to temptation. And there is always the grim possibility that one who begins well may end badly.

Just as for a contestant to *compete* in a race isn't for him to *win* the race, so for a generation of Israelites to *set out into the wilderness* wasn't for them to *enter the land*. Indeed, in the case of Israel, *all* start but *almost all* are disqualified before the end.

In the race described at the end of *chapter 9*, *all* start, *all* run, but *only one* wins; in the history detailed at the beginning of *chapter 10*, *all* start, *all* are equally favoured, but *only two* finish the course.

If, then, at the close of chapter 9, Paul observes that it is *self-control* which largely distinguishes the winner of the race from the other runners, he now shows that *self-indulgence* lay at the root of Israel's failure to reach the promised land.<sup>4</sup>

### EXPOSITION

#### (i) Israel's blessings, vv. 1-4.

Paul uses the word '*all*' five times in this sub-section to stress that the blessings of the Exodus generation of Israel were common to every one of them. They *all* enjoyed supernatural *direction and protection* ('*all*. . . were under the cloud, *all* passed through the sea'), they *all* enjoyed supernatural

identification ('all were baptised into Moses'), and they all enjoyed supernatural provision ('all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink').

### Verse 1.

When Paul says 'all our fathers were under the cloud' he uses a tense<sup>5</sup> which speaks of some continuing action in the past. From the very moment the people left Egypt, they all experienced the guidance of the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. But when he says 'all passed through the sea', he uses a very different tense,<sup>6</sup> which suggests a completed, finished experience. Israel had been boxed in, with the Red (or 'Reed') Sea before them, the wilderness on either side and the chariots of Pharaoh behind them. But, at the critical moment, God acted swiftly and decisively, parted the waters of the Sea and let Israel pass through.

The children of Israel are the only people of whom I know who were baptised without even getting their feet wet.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the only people who did get wet that day were the Egyptians—and they weren't baptised—they were 'drowned'!<sup>8</sup> When Paul says that they 'all were baptised into Moses', he uses a form of the verb<sup>9</sup> which may suggest the voluntary nature of the act; that is, that they chose to submit to this 'baptism' and, in doing so, submitted themselves to the leadership and authority of Moses.

And they were all sustained by the same divinely-provided food and drink.<sup>10</sup> In describing both the food and the drink as 'spiritual', Paul isn't denying that it was literal food and drink. It certainly was that. Only literal and physical food could have met Israel's need at the time. As I understand it, Paul uses the word 'spiritual' to remind the Corinthians that both the food and the drink were of undoubted supernatural origin.

Paul's statement, in verse 4, that 'Christ' was the 'spiritual Rock that followed them' raises some interesting questions. I suggest that Paul was giving the word 'Rock' a double meaning. There can be no doubt that Paul has in mind the fact that the water which God gave Israel to drink had (on at least two occasions) come quite literally from a rock.<sup>11</sup> But, by playing on the word, he switches the meaning *from* a literal rock *to* a well-known title of God Himself—'the Rock'.<sup>12</sup>

It is worth noting that this particular title of God occurs five times in Deuteronomy chapter 32, from which chapter the apostle will cull two of his Old Testament references later in our chapter.<sup>13</sup>

I suggest that 'the Rock' was a particularly appropriate divine title for God to reveal Himself by in the wilderness, conveying, as it does, ideas of stability, permanence, immutability and faithfulness, and standing in stark contrast to Israel's own fickleness and faithlessness at the time. It was Christ, Paul is saying, who accompanied Israel through the wilderness,<sup>14</sup> and it was, therefore, 'Christ' who they 'tempted' there.<sup>15</sup> It was, Paul is saying, Christ who constantly provided them with water to drink—it was Christ who was their true source of refreshment for forty years. This passage certainly speaks volumes about Paul's convictions concerning the deity of the Lord Jesus.

I don't suppose we can altogether rule out that Paul has in mind some kind of parallel between Israel's 'baptism' and Christian baptism and some kind of parallel between Israel's 'table in the wilderness' (Psa. 78. 19) and 'the Lord's table' (1 Cor. 10. 19). If this is so, I suspect that Paul was warning the Corinthians (by means of the way in which these topics link the one to the other) that neither their baptism nor their observance of the Lord's Supper would afford them any magical protection if they chose to dabble with idol worship, any more than the corresponding experiences of Israel had saved them from spiritual disaster.

Whether this is so or not, it seems clear that Paul chose the instances of Israel's failures very carefully, with an eye to the particular issues currently facing the Christians of Corinth. I regard it as no coincidence that each of Israel's falls resulted from temptations very similar to those then assailing the Corinthian church.

### (ii) Israel's sins, vv. 5-10.

In verses 1-4, Paul had listed five of Israel's initial blessings; now, in verses 5-10, he lists five of their subsequent failures and sins. Everything went wrong for Israel because, although God met their needs, they didn't meet His requirements—not by a long way. And, as noted already, it is likely that the apostle deliberately chose the five instances of Israel's failures and falls which resulted from temptations very similar to those now facing the Corinthian church.

### Verse 5.

Paul introduces this second sub-section with the statement, 'But with most of them'<sup>16</sup> God was not well pleased'. Even his word 'most' is a vast—and deliberate—understatement. The fact is that, when Israel was numbered in the second year after it came out of Egypt, there were well over 600,000 men aged 20 and upwards<sup>17</sup>—and this number excludes the priests and Levites.<sup>18</sup> Of these 600,000 plus, only two men made it through to the land of Canaan.<sup>19</sup> And that is not a good success rate in anyone's book!

Indeed, if we assume that the number of women roughly matched the number of men, Israel's population at the time must have numbered around one million two hundred thousand people aged 20 and older.

The Bible makes no direct comment about what happened to the women of Israel during Israel's wanderings, but it seems that none of the women who had been aged twenty or above when they came out of Egypt reached the end of the wilderness. In which case the survival rate was only two out of over one million two hundred thousand!

And what happened to all the others? Oh, Paul says, the rest were 'scattered in the wilderness', the word translated 'scattered' carrying the meaning 'to spread over, to strew, to lay low, to overthrow'.<sup>20</sup> Hundreds of thousands of corpses, once fed full with supernatural nourishment, littered the wilderness like so many fallen leaves.

Paul draws his evidence from five case studies. Ignoring their chronological sequence, he rushes us from Num. 11—through Exod. 32, Num. 25, and Num. 21—to Num. 16. Without speculating as to the reason for it, we will follow Paul's order.

#### Verse 6.

'These things became our examples'; literally, 'these things were types of us'. We note, in passing, how that, both here and in verse 11, Paul includes himself among those who need to pay heed to the lessons being taught. I hardly need to say it, but, if Paul needed these lessons, we certainly do!

'They also lusted', that is, 'they also craved', 'they also longed with great longing'. This particular word occurs in the Greek Old Testament in connection with only one wilderness episode, that recorded in Num. 11, where the word is found several times: 'the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense *craving*; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic"<sup>21</sup> ... he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah [*Graves of Craving*] because there they buried the people who had yielded to *craving*'.<sup>22</sup>

I pause to observe that Israel retained an appetite for the kind of food they had enjoyed before they had been redeemed—for the kind of food which they had once left behind them, and for which they now certainly had no need. Perhaps, just perhaps, O Corinthians, a hint that eating idol food is by no means essential—which is the very point Paul had made back in verse 8 of chapter 8.

#### Verse 7.

This is a direct quotation from Exodus: 'the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play'.<sup>23</sup> Note the direct connection which Paul makes between: (i) idolatry and (ii) eating and drinking. But it is likely that the Israelites indulged themselves without restraint in more ways than one. In other words, that the 'play' mentioned by Moses and Paul wasn't as innocent as it sounds—that the people weren't playing *Monopoly* or 'Ring a Ring o' Roses'<sup>24</sup> but were engaged in licentious acts of immoral sexual behaviour.<sup>25</sup> Idolatry linked with eating—and worse. Are you listening, O Corinthians?

#### Verse 8.

Then, Mr Corinthian, you might like to note that Israel's great sin at Baal-Peor, recorded in Num. 25,<sup>26</sup> forges an even stronger link between idolatry and immoral behaviour and, yet again, eating! I quote; 'the people began to *commit harlotry* with the women of Moab. They (the women of Moab, adopting the 'counsel of Balaam'<sup>27</sup>) invited the people *to the sacrifices of their gods*, and the people *ate and bowed down to their gods*'.<sup>28</sup> Immorality, idol sacrifices, idol worship and eating—surely you can't miss the connection, O Corinthians?<sup>29</sup>

#### Verse 9.

'Some of them also tempted', sorely trying the Lord's patience. We are now in Num. 21, where '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 our soul loathes this worthless bread"<sup>30</sup> Oh, they had food

enough for their needs, of course, but they fancied something different to satisfy their appetites. As the psalmist expresses it, 'they tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy',<sup>31</sup> not, we note, food to meet their need. And the result was the fiery serpents! Again, as in Num. 11, the specific cause of Israel's grumbling was the menu. Still tuned in, O Corinthians?

#### Verse 10.

And 'some of them also murmured'. This they did on many occasions, but, in particular, on the occasion of the rebellion of Korah, when, as a result of their murmuring, God was angry and sent a plague which destroyed 14,700 of them.<sup>32</sup>

But what, we may wonder, has this to say to the Corinthian situation?

This time there is no mention either of idolatry or of which kind of food one should or should not eat. Yes, this is true but given the challenge which some at Corinth were already posing to Paul's authority and apostleship, is it not relevant that Num. 16 was the occasion when the authority of God's accredited servants (Moses and Aaron) was challenged and set aside by others, with the most disastrous consequences? Hopefully, O Corinthians, you won't miss the point.

### (iii) Conclusions, vv. 11-14.

#### Verse 11.

##### Conclusion 1: Don't ignore!

'All these things happened to them'—better rendered 'these things befell them'. It's not that these things just 'happened' to Israel by chance. They weren't random historical events. First, they were allowed by God 'for examples' ('as types'). And then, second, they were recorded by God, Paul says, to provide instruction to us—to flash red lights of warning in our faces, which we ignore at our peril.

By using the expression 'the ends of the ages', it is possible that Paul intends to stress that, whereas Israel's experiences at the Exodus and in the wilderness are to be found in a relatively early chapter of God's great plan and purpose for men, we (in effect, the church) live in an 'age' when the events of the last chapter have already begun to unfold.

#### Verse 12.

##### Conclusion 2: Don't presume!

Now comes the punch-line! This, Paul says, is the one central lesson which these events teach; 'Therefore [*So that*] let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall'.<sup>33</sup>

Don't fool yourselves, Paul is saying, for no one can afford to be complacent and cocksure; the experiences of ancient Israel shout too loud and clear a warning.

'The Corinthians were very sure of themselves. But then, so had the Israelites been. They had dallied with idolatry and reaped nothing but disaster. Let the self-confident take heed lest they also fall'.<sup>34</sup>

'We are most likely to fall when we are most confident of our own strength, and thereupon most apt to be secure, and off our guard. Distrust of himself, putting him at once upon vigilance and dependence on God, is the Christian's best security against all sin'.<sup>35</sup>

Only two out of possibly one million two hundred thousand people actually finished their course!

We must learn from their mistakes. Ah, but will we? One German philosopher of the nineteenth century wrote, 'What experience and history teach is this—that nations and governments have never learned anything from history, or acted upon any lessons they might have drawn from it'.<sup>36</sup> Clearly, Paul is hopeful that the Corinthians will perform better!

In **chapter 8**, Paul had taught them that a believer's *attitude to idol meat* should be determined by his concern for his brother because *his brother* is 'weak', but, in **chapter 10**, he teaches them that a believer's *attitude to idolatry itself* should be determined by his concern for himself because *he* is considerably weaker than he thinks, and idolatry is far more dangerous than he has ever imagined. It is necessary, the apostle is saying, for you, Mr Corinthian, to avoid idolatry not only for the sake of others but for your own sake too! For *it is not only that the supposedly 'weak' brother may be caused to 'stumble'*<sup>37</sup> *but that you, the supposedly 'strong' brother, are in real danger of falling as well.*<sup>38</sup>

I have to say that, having been a Christian for very many years, I find it salutary in the extreme that the incident mentioned in verse 8 is found in Num. 25—at the end of Israel's forty years of wanderings, when the people who fell had previously surmounted many obstacles and had previously overcome many temptations. They were on what should have been their last lap. But—salutary lesson—they never finished that lap!<sup>39</sup>

The Lord wants us to know—and never to forget—that we are most vulnerable when we least realise it.

### Verse 13.

#### Conclusion 3: Don't despair!

But, if in verses 1-12 we are admonished by Israel's failures, in verse 13 we are encouraged by God's faithfulness.<sup>40</sup>

The temptations in view in this verse are obviously temptations to sin and failure. We are specifically told that these are temptations which God 'allows'; they are not trials or testings which He sends.

These are temptations from which He makes a way out for us and not trials and testings which He leads us through. We have good authority for saying that God Himself never tempts anyone in that way; 'Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone'.<sup>41</sup> Temptations to sin stem either from within<sup>42</sup> or from our arch foe the devil—the 'tempter' as Paul describes him.<sup>43</sup>

But every one of these temptations, Paul says, is 'common to man'—is 'part and parcel of being human'.<sup>44</sup>

Rest assured, no temptation is unique to you or me. And for that reason (apart from any other considerations) we have no excuse for our failure and sin, because others have grappled with exactly the same temptations and have overcome them. And how did they do that? By availing themselves of the provision—the 'way of escape'—which God has pledged to make always available. For Paul vouches for the fact that the faithful God will never permit any of His people to be tempted beyond what he or she is able to handle.

'Our temptations ... are resistible ... God proportions the burden to the back. If temptations came outstripping our capabilities of resistance, our yielding to them might be a calamity, but would not be a crime'.<sup>45</sup>

It has been well said that 'the very gates of hell cannot make us stumble unless we choose to remove ourselves from (God's) protection and power'.<sup>46</sup> So, when we fail and when we fall, it certainly isn't because God's provision isn't vast enough or because He doesn't make sufficient of that provision available to us.

Paul assures us that no-one needs to despair in the face of the very fiercest enemy attack.

'God is not simply a spectator of the affairs of life; He is concerned and active. Believers can count on His help. He will always make "a way of escape". This word (ἔκβασις) may denote a mountain defile. The imagery is that of an army trapped in rugged country, which manages to escape from an impossible situation through a mountain pass. The assurance of this verse is a permanent comfort and strength to believers. Our trust is in the faithfulness of God'.<sup>47</sup>

'That God does not allow us to be exposed to irresistible temptations is a reflection of His faithfulness to His commitments to us as His people. In some cases, God may remove us from the situation of seemingly unbearable temptation, while in other cases He may provide strength or other resources within the situation to strengthen us, so that we may endure the temptation and remain faithful to Him'.<sup>48</sup>

We can all take heart today, knowing that, when our faithful God allows one of us, His children, to pass through the fire and furnace of temptation, He 'keeps His hand on the thermostat and His eye on the thermometer'.<sup>49</sup>

But do I, therefore, have no responsibility as far as the 'way of escape' is concerned? Oh, yes indeed, I do.<sup>50</sup> And very often, as was once the case with godly young Joseph, the 'way of escape' is quite literally a clear road and two good legs!<sup>51</sup>

### Verse 14.

#### Conclusion 4: Don't dabble!

'Flee<sup>52</sup> from idolatry'.<sup>53</sup> In every case and always, Paul is saying, give idolatry the widest possible berth; shun it completely.

'Flight is the sure 'way of escape' in all such temptations, and they have it in their own power ... They must not deliberately go into temptation and then expect deliverance. They must not try how near they can go, but how far they can fly'.<sup>54</sup>

As I understand it, verse 14 isn't only the conclusion of the opening section of the chapter. It also forms the bridge between the first section (verse 1-13) and the second section (verses 15-22). For, in verses 15-22, Paul reinforces the conclusion reached in verse 14, showing that any contact with idolatry is not only downright dangerous for the Christian, but is altogether irreconcilable with Christianity. The Christian not only should avoid it—he must avoid it.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> 'When Oliver Cromwell was planning the education of his son Richard, he said, "I would have him learn a little history". And it is to history that Paul goes to show what can happen to people who have been blessed with the greatest privileges ... The history of Israel shows that people who enjoyed the greatest privileges of God were far from being safe from temptation; special privilege, Paul reminds the Corinthians, is no guarantee whatever of security', William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians: The Daily Study Bible*, pages 88-89.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 9. 24-27.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. 10. 19-21.

'Some of the Corinthians, at least, clearly thought of themselves as possessing an unassailable spiritual security based on their knowledge and spiritual experiences', R. E. Ciampa and B. S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, comment on 1 Cor. 10. 12.

'Presumption is the greatest of all dangers. He who realizes his danger will be on his guard. See the case of Peter's fall, for an illustration (Mark 14. 29, 66-72)', B. J. Johnson, *The People's New Testament*, page 572.

<sup>4</sup> 'The prize is won by the athlete by discipline. It is lost by the Israelites through indulgence', J. J. Lias, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: Cambridge Greek Testament*, page 111.

<sup>5</sup> The imperfect tense.

<sup>6</sup> The aorist tense.

<sup>7</sup> 'The Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land', Exod. 14. 21; 'He turned the sea into dry land', Psa. 66. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Heb. 11. 29.

<sup>9</sup> The middle voice.

<sup>10</sup> 'The same spiritual food ... the same spiritual drink, allude to the manna (Exod. 16. 4, 14-18) and to the miraculous water which flowed from the rock struck by Moses (Exod. 17. 6; Num. 20. 7-13)', A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The International Greek New Testament Commentary*, page 726.

<sup>11</sup> Exod. 17. 1-7; Num. 20. 1-13.

<sup>12</sup> I note that, by giving the word a capital letter, the translators of the KJV, NKJV and ESV thought so too..

<sup>13</sup> Historically, the book of Deuteronomy follows immediately after the period covered by 1 Cor. 10. 1-11.

Paul makes several interesting quotations from (or allusions to) Deut. 32 in 1 Cor. 10:

(i) Verse 4 speaks of 'the Rock'—which is a divine title, occurring no less than five times in Deut. 32 (verses 4, 15, 18, 30 and 31). No other section of the Old Testament boasts so many references to the title in such a small space.

(ii) Verse 15 refers to 'wise men'—a possible allusion to the words, 'O that they were wise', Deut. 32. 29. (Paul uses the same word as in the Greek Old Testament rendering of Deut. 32. 29.)

(iii) Verse 20 is a direct quotation from Deut. 32. 17—and follows very closely the wording of the Greek Old Testament.

(iv) Verse 21 refers to the 'cup' and 'table' associated with idolatry—and may provide a parallel to Deut. 32. 37-38, 'Where are their gods . . . who ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offering?'

(v) Verse 22 asks, 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?', that is, in having fellowship with 'demons', for, as Paul had earlier pointed out, the idol itself is nothing—it is *not* a god, 1 Cor. 10. 19-20. It is quite possible, therefore, that Paul is alluding to Deut. 32. 21: 'They have provoked me to jealousy by what is not God'. (Paul uses the very word meaning 'to provoke to jealousy' which appears in the Greek Old Testament of Deut. 32. 21.)

I cannot help wondering whether the apostle was reading through (or studying) Deut. 32 when he dictated 1 Cor. 10—I say, 'dictated', with my eye on 1 Cor. 16. 21.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Cor. 10. 4.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Cor. 10. 9.

<sup>16</sup> 'The far greater part of their number; *τοῖς πλείοσιν αὐτῶν*', A. C. Thiselton, *ibid.*, page 730.

<sup>17</sup> Num. 2. 32.

<sup>18</sup> Num. 2. 33 with Num. 3-4.

<sup>19</sup> Num. 26. 63-65 ('There was not left a man of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun'.)

<sup>20</sup> The expression translated 'scattered/overthrown in the wilderness' matches the very words of the Greek Old Testament in Num. 14. 16.

<sup>21</sup> In his song, '*So You Wanna Go Back to Egypt*' (1980), Keith Green comments, 'Eating leaks and onions by the Nile. Ooh, what breath!'

<sup>22</sup> Num. 11. 4-5, 34.

<sup>23</sup> Exod. 32. 6.

<sup>24</sup> A '*ring of roses*' possibly refers to the red rash that was often one of the first signs of plague. The rhyme is known to some as '*Ring around the Rosie*'.

<sup>25</sup> 'The verb translated "to play" suggests *illicit and immoral sexual activity* which normally accompanied fertility rights found among the Canaanites who worshipped the god Ba'al', Thomas Constable, '*Expository Notes*', comment on Exod. 32. 1-6.

'A word of ominous import, which seems to imply here *fornicating and adulterous intercourse*', Adam Clarke, '*Commentary on the Bible*', comment on Exod. 32. 6.

'Although the verb in the Greek Old Testament often refers to cultic dancing, and in the Exodus narrative the revelry is further expressed in terms of "shouting" (verse 17), "singing" (verse 18), and "dancing" (verse 19), nonetheless in this case (both in the Greek Old Testament and in Paul) it almost certainly carries *overtones of sexual play*', Gordon D. Fee, '*The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament*', page 454. (Cf. the use of the same Hebrew and Greek words in Gen. 26. 8.)

<sup>26</sup> It is well known that Num. 25. 9 quotes the number who fell at Baal-Peor as '24,000'—and not '23,000', as quoted by Paul. The most likely reconciliation lies in Paul's words 'in one day'—a phrase which doesn't feature in Num. 25. I take it that, although *the vast majority* of the 24,000 who died in the plague did so *on a single day*, a further 1,000 died on a different day, or, just possibly, on different days.

I am aware that, before the destructive plague broke out, God commanded the judges of Israel to 'take all the leaders of the people', who had condoned and encouraged the worship of Baal-Peor, 'and hang the offenders before the Lord', Num. 25. 4, and that Jewish tradition ascribed 1,000 deaths to the action of the judges described in Num. 25. 5. The explanation for the differing numbers does not lie there, however, because Num. 25. 9 explicitly says that 24,000 'died in the plague'.

<sup>27</sup> Num. 31. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Num. 25. 1-2.

<sup>29</sup> There was 'the influence of the cults of Aphrodite, Dionysus/Bacchus, Apollo, Isis and Serapis, and Poseidon at Corinth. Archaeological evidence not only establishes, but brings to life, the reality and impact of these cults, many with implications for sexual license for Corinth in its civic, cultural, and everyday life', A. C. Thiselton, *ibid.*, page 738.

<sup>30</sup> Num. 21. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Psa. 78. 18.

<sup>32</sup> Num. 16. 41-50.

<sup>33</sup> 'Notable examples recorded in Scripture prove the assertion made. Hazeal was indignant at the very supposition that he could be guilty of barbarities and cruelties such as the prophet foretold (2 Kings 8. 13); but when the temptation came, he fell into the snare. Peter was vehement in his protestations, "Though I die with thee, I will not deny thee!" Yet when he was tempted by cowardice, he denied his Lord (Matt. 26. 35, 69-74)', J. R. Thomson, '*1 Corinthians: The Pulpit Commentary*', Homiletics, page 340.

'David shows a remarkable insight of his own frailty when he prays, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me" (Psa. 19. 13), R. Tuck, '*1 Corinthians: The Pulpit Commentary*', Homiletics, page 357.

<sup>34</sup> Leon Morris, '*1 Corinthians: Tyndale New Testament Commentary*', comment on 1 Cor. 10. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Matthew Henry, '*Commentary on the Whole Bible*', comment on 1 Cor. 10. 12.

<sup>36</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, '*Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*', 1832, Volume 1. Compare, 'Those who forget history are bound to repeat it', George Santayana (philosopher, essayist, poet, and novelist).

<sup>37</sup> 1 Cor. 8. 9.

<sup>38</sup> 'The Corinthian "knowers" not only need to watch lest they cause others to stumble and fall (1 Cor. 8. 13); they also need to watch lest they fall themselves', D. E. Garland, '*1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary*', comment on 1 Cor. 10. 12.

<sup>39</sup> It is important to note, however, that Paul 'is not addressing the question of the security of the believer but calling attention to the pitfall of being careless because of overconfidence', D. E. Garland, *loc. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> God's faithfulness is a common theme in Paul's letters to Corinth; see 1 Cor. 1. 9; 10. 13; 2 Cor. 1. 18.

<sup>41</sup> James. 1. 13.

<sup>42</sup> 'Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed', James 1. 14.

<sup>43</sup> 1 Thess. 3. 5; cf. Matt. 4. 3.

'Since the world was, no man has ever been compelled to commit a single sin. Satan has no power of compulsion', E. Hurdall, '*1 Corinthians: The Pulpit Commentary*', Homiletics, page 348.

<sup>44</sup> A. C. Thiselton, *ibid.*, page 748.

<sup>45</sup> F. W. Farrar, '*1 Corinthians: The Pulpit Commentary*', Homiletics, page 327.

<sup>46</sup> A fax from Larry Libby, quoted by Steve Farrar, '*Finishing Strong*', page 29 (my emphasis). Compare the apostle Peter's assertion, 'His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness', 2 Pet. 1. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Leon Morris, *ibid.*, comment on 1 Cor. 10. 13. Cf. 'The word is vivid. It means a way out of a defile, a mountain pass. The idea is of an army apparently surrounded and then suddenly seeing an escape route to safety', William Barclay, *ibid.*, page 90; cf. T. C. Edwards, '*A Commentary on the First epistle to the Corinthians*', pages 251-252.

'The apostle affirms the faithfulness of God, though it is not a faithfulness which will preclude the possibility of the Corinthians sinning and falling. Rather the faithfulness of God is manifested in the fact that he will support them spiritually and prevent them from being overwhelmed by an unbearable temptation', R. E. Oster Jr, '*1 Corinthians: The College Press NIV Commentary*', comment on 1 Cor. 10. 13.

<sup>48</sup> R. E. Ciampa and B. S. Rosner, *ibid.*, comment on 1 Cor. 10. 13.

<sup>49</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, '*Be Encouraged*', page 16.

<sup>50</sup> 'The believer must respond, not by expecting all temptation to be removed, but by taking the exit path which God provides', A. C. Thiselton, *ibid.*, page 749.

<sup>51</sup> 'He left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out' (Gen. 39. 12).

<sup>52</sup> The present tense; 'keep on fleeing'.

<sup>53</sup> Compare: (i) 'Flee fornication' (1 Cor. 6. 18); (ii) 'Flee these things (principally, covetousness)' (1 Tim. 6. 11); (iii) 'Flee also youthful lusts' (2 Tim. 2. 22).

<sup>54</sup> A. Robertson and A. Plummer, '*The First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians: The International Critical Commentary*', page 211.

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