

# Day 33: Chameleons or Missionaries?

*Today's Reading*

*1 Corinthians 9:19-23*

## **Devotion**

*"I have become all things to all people so that...I might save some...for the sake of the gospel"*

**1 Corinthians 9:22-23**

How can you be "all things to all people" in your life today? Consider the approach of the apostle Paul. His sermon to the Greeks at the Areopagus in Athens (see Acts 17:16-31) was vastly different from his message to the Jews of Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:13-47).

The good news of Jesus is unchanging. However, the way we share and express that message through our lives, music, art, and worship must change, must be adapted to the persons and people groups where God places us. Our commitment – like that of Paul – is to make the great and timeless truth of the gospel understandable in every cultural context.

This is what makes the gospel of Christ so exciting, beautiful and inviting. It translates into every language, culture, time period, and musical form. Therefore, for the sake of the Gospel we must also become students of local cultures and people.

## **Prayer**

*Lord, remove our blind spots and fears that prevent us from translating the gospel into the cultures around us. Help us remember that you came for all people. Amen.*

# Day 34: Transformation - Discipline

*Today's Reading*

*1 Corinthians 9:24-27*

## Devotion

*"[We go] into strict training...to get a crown that will last forever."*

1 Corinthians 9:25

The mere thought of discipline is not very popular today. We are impulsive pleasure seekers, living for the moment, looking for instant gratification without any restraints. Discipline has become a dirty word.

However, as Harry Emerson Fosdick maintained, "No horse gets anywhere until it is harnessed...no Niagara is ever turned into light and power until it is tunneled; no life ever grows great until it is focused, dedicated, and disciplined."

The alternative to discipline is disaster. Living without discipline is like living without exercise. In fact, from the Greek word for discipline, we derive our English word "gymnasium" – the place where exercise happens. Just as we need physical exercise to maintain our physical bodies, so we need spiritual exercises such as prayer, study, solitude and simplicity to keep in shape spiritually.

Discipline and training stretch us to overcome obstacles. What would a violin sound like if its strings were not stretched tight and exercised? Discipline and training produce results that will last (see John 15:16).

What spiritual exercise program do you need to join? What entangling sin do you need to throw off? Only disciplined training in God's gymnasium will prepare us for the challenges ahead.

## Prayer

*Lord Jesus, show us the spiritual exercises we need to develop to be fit for your service. Help us to train faithfully so that we are in tune with your design for our lives. Amen!*

# Day 35: Rock

*Today's Reading*

*1 Corinthians 10:1-5*

## Devotion

*"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."*

1 Corinthians 10:3-4

In calling Jesus not just a rock of dependability but specifically a "spiritual rock," Paul reminds believers that just as God provided water from the rock for his people in the wilderness (see Exodus 17), God continues to provide for his people today. Just as the sustenance in the wilderness came through Jesus – the spiritual rock – so Jesus sustains us today.

Jesus as our spiritual rock is a great comfort indeed. There's also a challenge in this image of the spiritual rock. Despite the food and drink provided in the wilderness, the Israelites failed to trust and obey God. Paul uses their failure as a warning and a challenge to the Corinthians and to us. God provides, but we must trust and obey.

Today, as you go about your life, keep your mind and heart focused on the spiritual food and drink that Jesus provides, and then – step by step – trust and obey.

## Prayer

*Lord Jesus, our spiritual rock, help us to trust you as our only source of strength and to follow you in loving service today and always. Amen.*

# Day 36: The Lessons of Scripture

*Today's Reading*

*1 Corinthians 10:6-10*

## Devotion

*“Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.”*

1 Corinthians 10:6

The phrase “these things” (v 6) refers to the events described in the preceding verses, but verse 6 – which begins a new series of observations about the wilderness generation – links the divine blessings with the subsequent punishments for their disobedience. In the verses that follow, Paul outlines four of Israel’s transgressions that resulted from their sin of “craving” and that broke their relationship with God:

1. Idolatry (v 7)
2. Sexual immorality (v 8)
3. Putting Christ to the test (v 9)
4. Grumbling (v 10)

Paul’s assertion that “these things occurred as examples” is based on his understanding of one of the key functions of Scripture – namely, that “everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

Indeed, the Scriptures do not only offer hope – they also contain warnings. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to take heed of the destruction of the Israelites in the wilderness as a testimony. We, too, should read scripture not just as a source of encouragement and inspiration, but to learn from the mistakes of others who have gone before us so as not to make the same mistakes again.

## Prayer

*Lord, thank you for not leaving us without guidance as to how to live a life of obedience to you. Thank you for the gift of your Word, which amongst other things instructs us for holy living by warning us of the errors of our forefathers. May the truth of your scriptures make us wise for salvation!*

*Amen.*

# Day 37: Check Yourself Before You Wreck Yourself

*Today's Reading*

*1 Corinthians 10:11-13*

## Devotion

*"If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"*

1 Corinthians 10:12

Today's reading serves as a wake-up call to all those who call themselves followers of Christ. In this passage, Paul is not addressing the questions of the security of the believer, but rather calling attention to the pitfall of being careless due to overconfidence. Rather than singling out a particular group or indicting the whole Corinthian community with a broad brush, he is instead imploring each recipient of this letter to examine his/her own life. If Paul thinks that he himself could fall (9:27), how much more so could any Corinthian Christian fall!

The assurance that Paul attacks is not the assurance of faith that rests on the promises of God, but rather the assurance that is seemingly reckless, disinterested and nonchalant. It is the assurance of self-deluded persons with overinflated egos who are guilty of a misplaced confidence in their own knowledge.

The longer we have been following Jesus and the more we "know", the more susceptible we are to falling into the trap that Paul cautions us against here. May we never grow complacent in working out our salvation with fear and trembling, remaining humble, teachable and dependent through it all!

## Prayer

*Lord, we repent from pride in thinking that somehow we are immune from falling into temptation, falling away from the narrow path of following You, or falling out of love with You. Thank you that even though we can be faithless, You remain faithful. May we cling to You more and more as we continue to follow You. Amen.*