Growing in Grace, Growing in Community -- Life Lessons on Maturity with the Corinthians

***The Christian and God: Worship vs. Idolatry*** 1 Corinthians 10:1-–11:1

When God says that He is a “jealous God,” He is not confessing a flaw or telling us how bad He feels when we ignore Him. He is reminding us that since He is the highest and greatest Good and Glory, anything or anyone who usurps Him as our greatest delight is an idol which devalues Him and makes us idolaters. God has revealed Himself in Creation, leaving us without excuse for not loving and worshiping Him (Romans 1). But the Bible reveals Him in greater detail to be loving and forgiving and righteous beyond compare, not only in Jesus and His death for sinners, but all that led up to Jesus. So what we call the Old Testament is the record written for us, to demonstrate the joys of loving Him and the dangers of loving other things or people more. Heaven and Hell are at stake. What or whom we worship matters, now and forever.

❖ “Remember,” Paul says, “that Israel’s privileges did not save them!” vv. 1-5

(Just as “sacraments” and rituals and church membership do not save us.)

❖ “In fact, Israel’s experiences are recorded for our benefit, so that we do not follow them in falling because of our pride.” vv. 6-13

(God has not changed. He still hates sin, but offers grace to repentant sinners.)

❖ “So keep yourself from anything that competes with God for your devotion.” vv. 14-22

(The Lord’s Table illustrates our exclusive oneness with Him and His People.)

❖ “Our daily lives should be governed by a Christ-like passion to see others come to know God for His glory.” vv. 10:23–11:1

(Even our minor decisions should echo God’s love and wisdom.)

**Growth Principle #12: The spiritually mature Christian lives wholeheartedly for the glory of God and His**

 **purpose to redeem sinners by His grace in Jesus.**

***1. We can’t afford to underestimate the relevance of the “Old Testament.”***

If we choose to ignore the Bible, which God has written and preserved for us, we will pay the price in stunted growth and missed opportunities to see how the life of faith works when it is applied. Hebrews 11 is a microcosm of how much we can learn, enjoy, and profit from the TANAKH.

***2. We can’t afford to overestimate our security based upon our privileges.***

 Our church background, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, Christian education, and other blessings can spark and support our faith in and love for God, but they do not replace it. Sacraments are signs and means of grace, but not grace itself, which is what saves us. In God Himself we trust. See Jeremiah 7:8-15.

***3. We can’t afford to separate faith from its fruit.***

 While we are justified by faith, those who are justified will demonstrate life change. Faith is not independent of “real life,” but rather nurtures and directs and gives meaning to it. James 2:14-17

***4. We can’t afford to forget God’s more-than-adequate help in temptation.***

 God’s promises are (1) never to give us more than we can handle, with His help, and (2) His help. There simply are no exceptions to these promises. None. Ever. God can not lie, and regardless of our circumstances and our feelings, He cares for His own, for His honor and glory are at stake. James 1:12-18

***Going Deeper--For Growth Groups:***

1. Since we are not surrounded by literal idols and temples, we may be in danger of missing our own idolatry and that of our culture. What are our idols? What constitutes an idol? Why does Paul say that covetousness is idolatry in Colossians 3:5?

2. With God’s unconditional promises to help us in our trials, why do we sometimes feel “overwhelmed”? Is this feeling the enemy of faith, or its friend? That is, how does feeling out of control help us put our trust in God?

3. What is the relationship between faith and works, according to Ephesians 2:8-10?