

Status Update: Developing a New View of You in Christ 1 Corinthians

10:1-33 Status Update: The secure in Christ should never take God's grace or others for granted

The following commentary is designed to cause us to learn through unpacking truths from each verse of this book. Questions are listed after each section to help us process the verses. Answers should be easy to find in each section. Keep your study simple (about 15mins/day for most-especially families). "(FAM)" questions may be more helpful for parents to use in training their children.

"1 MOREOVER, BROTHERS, I WOULD NOT THAT YOU SHOULD BE IGNORANT, HOW THAT ALL OUR FATHERS WERE UNDER THE CLOUD, AND ALL PASSED THROUGH THE SEA; 2 AND WERE ALL BAPTIZED TO MOSES IN THE CLOUD AND IN THE SEA; 3 AND DID ALL EAT THE SAME SPIRITUAL MEAT; 4 AND DID ALL DRINK THE SAME SPIRITUAL DRINK: FOR THEY DRANK OF THAT SPIRITUAL ROCK THAT FOLLOWED THEM: AND THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST. 5 BUT WITH MANY OF THEM GOD WAS NOT WELL PLEASSED: FOR THEY WERE OVERTHROWN IN THE WILDERNESS.

➤ **Believers should not presume upon God's grace**

Let's begin with a comment from Anthony Thiselton...“Paul is not one of those pastors who are content to base everything on personal anecdotes. He points out that the Christians in Corinth stand in continuity with a long history of God's dealings with his people. Recurring patterns or formative models emerge (v. 6) that offer parallels from the past with the present situation in Corinth. Rather than letting everything hinge on the experiences, persons, and communities of the present moment, Paul provides a sense of historical perspective as well as of scriptural authority. In our own day, the tendency of "postmodern" attitudes is to make the present moment the arbiter of everything, rather than to permit the "grand narrative" of the people of God from the past through the present to the purposive future goal to mold thought and practice. The Old Testament witness to the experiences of ancient Israel tells Christians about our spiritual ancestors.” (Thiselton, 149)

Paul continued where he left off in chapters 8-9 while elaborating on “obtaining the prize”. This chapter will answer questions regarding why those who are free in Christ should maintain self-control, live

intentionally and have self-discipline. The Christian life is not some “if it feels good, do it” experience but one which requires great diligence and care. The opening words in 10:1-4 state, **Moreover, brothers, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.**

In a typical Paul fashion, he began by telling them **not to be ignorant** which is an expression used in Scripture when something especially important is being addressed. He spoke to the Corinthians of **all our fathers** (referring to the Old Testament Jews) who **were under the cloud** which is simply a reference to being under the direction of God. The story can be read in Exodus 13:21 of how the Israelites (young, old, male, female, faithful and unregenerate) were lead through the wilderness every day by a cloud pillar (by a fire pillar at night) which we're told was the Lord (see also Numbers 9:15, 23; 14:14; Deuteronomy 1:33; Psalms 78:14). There could not have been more evidence of God's divine blessing upon any people group and as we are about to learn, the Jews very much took that for granted. In some ways we might liken this to the blessings and favor America receives from God and how greatly we tend to consume the blessings and take them for granted.

We should keep in mind as we read here that Paul applied New Testament terms to the Old Testament examples which can only be pressed so far. Thus, Moses was a type of “savior” who lead the children of Israel out of Egypt who prefigured Jesus as the ultimate, true Savior. Israel's **baptism to Moses in the cloud and in the sea** signifies the beginning of their formal relationship as disciples of Moses just as New Testament believers are baptized spiritually into Christ at the beginning of our discipleship relationship (see Roman 6:1-10; Galatians 3:27). By referencing **the cloud** (Grk. Nephelē - Exodus 13:21; 14:19-20 tell us God was in the cloud), Paul merged the idea of Moses as leader and Christ as Savior.

We have before us an amazing group of verses giving us one of Paul's clearest explanations of the relationship between God's Old and New Testament congregations. Paul referred to the Jews (Old testament Israel, according to the flesh), **all our fathers** (Grk. Pater) meaning they were forefathers or ancestors of the believing church. Church history is full of various convoluted ideas as to the exact relationship or

lack of relationship between the Old Testament Jews and the New Testament church. This section affirms the plain reading of the Scriptures that God's plan has always been about one, true Israel of God in Christ (see also Romans 2:26-29, 11:17-24; Galatians 3:6-9, 29, 6:16; Philippians 3:3).

In 10:3-4 Paul wrote, they **did all eat the same spiritual meat and did all drink the same spiritual drink**. In both cases the term “spiritual” simply means related to the Spirit or rather it was given by God's Spirit. It certainly does not mean the food eaten by the Jews was “non physical”. It helps to know the manna and water was the regular meal of the Jews as they traveled through the wilderness (Nehemiah 9:15; John 6:49) yet it was the meal which identified them as God's people and as a united group of people. **The Rock** (Grk. Petra) of believers of both Old and New Testaments was and **is Christ** (see Deuteronomy 32:4, 15, 18, 30-31) who was tempted and rejected by members of both groups. Notice how “**all**” our fathers passed but we are told only 2 from that generation (Caleb and Joshua) entered the promised land (see Numbers 14:22-30; 26:63-65; 32:11-13). Not even Moses was allowed to enter the promised land (Numbers 20:11). Some suggest the idea here may connect with Paul's previous comment which stated, “all run, but one obtains the prize”.

Richard Pratt elaborated for us on the usage of the word, “rock” in the Old Testament when he wrote, “In the Old Testament “rock” frequently appeared as a metaphor closely associated with God (Gen. 49:24; Deut. 32:4,15,18,30,31; 2 Sam. 22:2-3,32,47; 23:3; Pss. 18:2,31,46; 19:14; 28:1; 31:2-3; 42:9; 62:2,6,7; 71:3; 78:35; 89:26; 92:15; 94:22; 95:1; 144:1; Isa. 17:10; 26:4; 30:29; 44:8; Hab. 1:12). It specifically focused on his life-giving role as a victorious warrior-king who saved his people from their enemies. Water flowing to refresh the earth and its inhabitants is a figure also closely associated with God as King. For example, in Ezekiel 47:1-12, water flowing from the temple (God's earthly throne) gives life to every creature near it (compare Pss. 36:8-9; 46:4; 65:9; Isa. 8:6; 44:1-8; Jer. 2:13; 17:13). It was in this sense that Paul spoke of the water-giving rocks in the wilderness as types of Christ. Christ poured forth the life-giving water of salvation on his people (compare John 4:10,13-14; 6:35; 7:37-38; Rev. 7:17; 22:1-2,17).” (Pratt, 306)

The warning comes in 10:5 where Paul wrote, **But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness** (see also Numbers 11; Psalm 78:27-31; 105:14, 15). Let us carefully consider what is being said here. Paul just used an illusion to

Israel having their own type of baptism and communion which in a sense, prefigured the Christian ordinances we celebrate today (baptism and the Lord's Supper). Based on 10:12 it seems there were some in Corinth who believed their participation in church ordinances somehow magically protected them from any dangers associated with attending meals at the idol temples. This may give us some insight into what the "strong" were thinking. Nevertheless, we learn later in 1 Corinthians 11:30 God had already killed some of the Corinthians for such things.

The point here is that the Corinthian attitude was similar to those who participated in the crossing of the Red sea (Exodus 14:19-22), the eating of heavenly manna (Exodus 16:4-30) and the drinking of water from the rock (Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:2-13) who in the end did not prove to be genuine followers of God. They arrived on the other side of the Red Sea and believed there was no more need for effort because all was secured for them. They took for granted the difficulties which lied ahead of them in their walk with God. What happened to them? The very God who lead them and blessed them with every necessary provision **overthrew** (Grk. katastronnumi), scattered or laid them out all over **the wilderness**.

Paul warned the New Testament Corinthian believers not to fall into the same category as their Old Testament ancestors. If God did not tolerate the idolatry of the Jews, he would also not tolerate that of the Corinthians. This is a sober warning for all of us! Those who are NOT genuine believers should never think for one moment God will tolerate the misuse of His creation. We should not confuse God's blessings and provision with His desires and plans.

THINKING ABOUT GOD'S WORD

- What did Israel's baptism to Moses in the cloud signify?
- In what ways are the Jewish people ancestors to the New Testament church? Why is this important?
- What was Paul's overall point in bringing up the Old Testament and New Testament congregations?
- Explain the relationship between all Jews, Gentiles and the Church because of Christ.
- Who did Paul identify as the Rock which followed Israel of the Old Testament? What does this mean?
- What happened to many of God's Old Testament church even though they had been blessed and provided for by God? Why?

•What can the New Testament church learn from the example of the Old Testament church?

•What did God do to the Jewish people who would not bring glory to him? Why might this be so shocking to us?

(FAM) In what ways did God's people in the Bible take for granted all God did for them and gave to them?

(FAM) What are some specific ways you find yourself taking for granted the blessings of God?

(FAM) If we are free because of Jesus' work, why do we still need to exercise diligence and care in our lives?

(FAM) Draw pictures of God's people being lead by a cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire at night.

(FAM) Draw a picture of God's people being lead by Moses to cross the Red Sea.

"6 NOW THESE THINGS WERE OUR EXAMPLES, TO THE INTENT WE SHOULD NOT LUST AFTER EVIL THINGS, AS THEY ALSO LUSTED. 7 NEITHER BE YOU IDOLATERS, AS WERE SOME OF THEM; AS IT IS WRITTEN, THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND ROSE UP TO PLAY. 8 NEITHER LET US COMMIT FORNICATION, AS SOME OF THEM COMMITTED, AND FELL IN ONE DAY THREE AND TWENTY THOUSAND. 9 NEITHER LET US TEMPT CHRIST, AS SOME OF THEM ALSO TEMPTED, AND WERE DESTROYED OF SERPENTS. 10 NEITHER MURMUR YOU, AS SOME OF THEM ALSO MURMURED, AND WERE DESTROYED OF THE DESTROYER. 11 NOW ALL THESE THINGS HAPPENED TO THEM FOR ENSAMPLES: AND THEY ARE WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION, ON WHOM THE ENDS OF THE WORLD ARE COME. 12 WHEREFORE LET HIM THAT THINKS HE STANDS TAKE HEED LEST HE FALL. 13 THERE HAS NO TEMPTATION TAKEN YOU BUT SUCH AS IS COMMON TO MAN: BUT GOD IS FAITHFUL, WHO WILL NOT SUFFER YOU TO BE TEMPTED ABOVE THAT YOU ARE ABLE; BUT WILL WITH THE TEMPTATION ALSO MAKE A WAY TO ESCAPE, THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO BEAR IT. 14 WHEREFORE, MY DEARLY BELOVED, FLEE FROM IDOLATRY."

➤ **While we should never presume upon God's grace we can be certain God will help us through trials**

Paul elaborated on his Old & New Testament connections and clarified his intent in 10:6-7 when he wrote, **Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as**

they also lusted. Neither be you idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play (see Numbers 25:1-9). What was it that caused God's displeasure? The lust or craving of those who were not satisfied with what God had provided. Believers who were “weak” and “strong” should equally realize the dangers of cravings which can begin to take hold of our sin nature when we step into areas which are “permissible”. This section will help us understand how lust and craving are forms of misdirected desire. God's people are not to set our hearts on evil things. Sin is when we replace God with self at the center of everything and make self rather than God the end of all things. The following verses explain how our misdirected desires lead to such things as idolatry, immorality, doubt that puts God to the test, despair, complaining or murmuring. Now we can begin to see why Paul has taken this issue of participating in idol meals so seriously. These verses will reveal what lies at the root of these false idols and their feasts.

Clearly Paul's argument which began in 8:1 is still being elaborated upon here and Paul's focus was more than the mere eating food purchased in the marketplace. By quoting Exodus 32:5-8, where the Jews actually ate idol sacrifices in the presence of the golden calf statue, it seems Paul's concern was believers going to actual pagan temples (see also 8:10; 10:14-22). The Israelites somehow figured they could ignore God's command about making graven images and worship Him through making a golden calf or any other way they desired. Truth and the nature of things do not change based solely on how we view them. In other words, stealing is still stealing and even a “white” lie is still a lie.

In 10:6 we read, God's people are **not to lust after evil things, as they also lusted** (Grk. Epithumeo) which simply means not to desire or set our hearts on that which is wicked and harmful. We are **not to be idolaters** (Grk. Eidololatres) which means the worshiper of false gods or graven images and includes those who eat meat sacrificed to idols in the very temple of sacrifice. The reference to **rising up to play** (Grk. Paizo) connects to Exodus 32:17-19 where after eating sacrificed meat in the idol temple, the Jews participated in the idolatrous worship which included shouting, singing and dancing. We learn in Numbers 25:1-3 sexual sin was also involved in these ceremonies which helps us understand why Paul made the connection in the next verse.

We read in 10:8, **Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day twenty three thousand. Fornication** (Grk. Porneuo) or sexual sin was definitely a problem in

Corinth as we see in 5:1-5, 10-11; 6:-10, 12-20. It is also interesting to consider all New Testament references to “idol food” (Acts 15:29; Revelation 2:14, 20) are connected to sexual sin. Referring to events which occurred in Numbers 25-26, Paul reminded the Corinthians of how God slew around 23,000 people who traveled alongside God's people in the wilderness who participated in these idolatrous worship activities. Clearly this is good reason not to presume upon God's grace by thinking we are too “strong” to fall.

In 10:9 Paul wrote, **Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. To tempt Christ** (Grk. Ekpeirazo) means to put Christ's power and character to the test. The word itself can have a good or evil intent. Charles Hodge helps us understand the various shades of “tempting” in the Bible when he writes, “God is said to tempt his people, when he puts their faith and patience to the test for the sake of exercising and strengthening those graces (Hebrews 11:17). Satan and evil men are said to tempt others, when they put their virtue to the test with the design of seducing them into sin (Galatians 6:1; James 1:3; Matthew 4:1). Men are said to tempt God when they put His patience, fidelity or power to the test (Acts 5:9; Matthew 4:7; Hebrews 3:9)” (Hodge, 196-197).

Paul's reference in 10:9 is to the events of Numbers 21:4-7 where the people spoke against God and Moses because they wanted to eat something other than the manna God had been graciously providing them and God sent fiery serpents to bite the people. It is good for us to see how Paul adapted this incident to the current situation in Corinth where the people were petitioning for their right to attend meals at the pagan temple. In Psalm 78:8 we read, “And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God”. So why is it wrong to **tempt God or Christ**? Clearly because He has all authority over us in all areas of life. As Job discovered in Job 38-39, man is in no position to question God's authority.

It is impossible to miss the fact in 10:9 that the person **some of them** (the Jews) **also tempted** was none other than **Christ** which again places Jesus smack in the center of God's Old Testament people. When we compare this with 10:4, it is more than clear Jesus was the leader of Israel, the Old Testament people of God. Again, this chapter is one of the Bible's most straight-forward explanations of the continuity between the Old and New Testaments. It is hard to deny (though many have especially in the 1900s) God's people, whether Jew, Gentile, Old

Testament, New Testament or the church are one, true body called the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16).

Paul went on in 10:10 to write, **Neither murmur you, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.** Based on Paul's statement in 10:21-22 we gather that **murmuring** (Grk. Gogguzo) means a rebellious spirit which is full of constant grumbling, griping, groaning, whispering and complaining to express discontent with God's provision. Presumably the "strong" in Corinth murmured over their right to participate in pagan meals and ceremonies and certainly over Paul's prohibition of it. This **murmuring** was equal to **tempting** (Grk. Ekpeirazo) or testing **Christ's** patience and power.

Paul's reference to the **destroyer** (Grk. Olothreutes) or angel of death which was sent by the Lord (Exodus 12:23) and those **overthrown in the wilderness** (10:5) might be referencing one event (see Numbers 14 or 16) but more likely speaks of the killing off of those over 20-years-old during the entire wilderness experience. God had condemned that generation to die and forbade them from entering into the promised land because of their disbelief. Paul certainly also wanted the Corinthians to take note of how seriously God took murmuring against His chosen leaders since Paul was being murmured against in Corinth.

We get an interesting perspective on Scripture when we read 10:11 which states, **Now all these things happened to them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come.** Historical events (especially ones captured by the Bible) are not just random, isolated occurrences. Rather, they are part of God's story and ones which our Heavenly Writer & Director has inserted into His earliest writings to be used as points of reference by His New Testament writers. These stories serve as **ensamples** (Grk. Tupos) which means types, figures or patterns intended as historical pictures or models for our **admonition** (Grk. Nouthesia) which means exhortation, teaching or warning. God expects us to read them and to learn from them. We should also note these stories had other value as well, even for the Old Testament people (see Psalm 106:1-48).

By writing the statement, **on whom the ends of the world are come**, Paul was declaring the church (or the true spiritual Israel) who are God's people in Christ, are the people of the last age. The entire Old Testament finds its fulfillment in God's people because they are in Jesus who is the goal of all things (see Luke 24 and Romans 10:4). God insured many things were recorded in writing for us to learn as His people of the last age. This text also helps us see God has given this

world a definite start and end point. We also learn in Hebrews 10:26-30 that the responsibilities of those in this last age are even greater than those of the Old Testament age.

Paul went on to warn those who think they are strong and cannot be harmed by sinful activities in 10:12 by stating, **Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall** (note the connection to 9:24-27). Those who think they can coast alongside God's church and get away with activities which are inconsistent with Christianity and somehow be protected because they were baptized, took communion or performed other religious activities are fooling themselves like those seen in Matthew 7:21-23. We might also infer based on our context there are still very real and present dangers for believers as they travel through this old, broken world. It is likely Paul directed this warning toward the "strong" who ate in idol temples and possibly toward the "weak" who were convinced to do the same by the "strong".

Charles Hodge made some interesting observations on this verse when he wrote, "No degree of progress we may have already made, no amount of privileges which we may have enjoyed, can justify the want of caution. Let him that thinketh he standeth, that is, let him who thinks himself secure. This may refer either to security of salvation, or against the power of temptation. The two are very different, and rest generally on different grounds. False security of salvation commonly rests on the ground of our belonging to a privileged body (the church), or to a privileged class (the elect). Both are equally fallacious. Neither the members of the church nor the elect can be saved unless they persevere in holiness; and they cannot persevere in holiness without continual watchfulness and effort. False security as to our power to resist temptation rests on an overweening self-confidence in our own strength. None are so liable to fall as they who, thinking themselves strong, heedlessly run into temptation. This probably is the kind of false security against which the apostle warns the Corinthians, as he exhorts them immediately after to avoid temptation." (Hodge, 199)

Now let's say you are a true Christ follower who genuinely struggles with life's trials and temptations. Could our temptations ever separate us from Christ? No (see Romans 8:38-39). Had others ever successfully resisted the temptations of idolatry? Yes! Paul went on to give a direct word of comfort to folks like you in 10:13 by writing, **There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.** It should refresh our hearts to

know the problems believers encounter in life are simply a result of this fallen world and still being human. The comfort is that God who is faithful is very much active in our suffering and always provides the resources we need for it. Therefore, we conclude the Christian life is not the absence of suffering but rather a new perspective and power for handling problems. Yes, God will provide believers a way out of genuine trials and definite preservation. However, believers who run headlong after idolatrous activities should not feel so secure. They may prove to not have been truly converted at all. Take note how Paul skillfully used tender language alongside a strong exhortation.

Christ alone saves and keeps people and He expects those who belong to Him to live like they belong to Him (Ephesians 2:8-10). He will always help those whose faith is tried or **tempted** (Grk. Peirazo) by **making a way of escape** (Grk. Ekbasis) which is a means of egress or a way out of danger. The statement, **that ye may be able to bear it** (Grk. Hupophero), qualifies **the way of escape** and means God may not always lead you out of a trial or temptation but will always provide the character and power necessary to “bear up” under it or endure faithfully through it. God's goal for us is never destruction but rather growth in Christian maturity. The key thing to remember is that if anyone is to persevere in salvation it is solely because **God is faithful**.

In 10:14 Paul stated very plainly, **Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry**. First notice how Paul used words of tenderness in the midst of some serious admonitions. Then he said to **flee** (Grk. Pheugo) which implies running away with haste and speed verses standing around debating the finer points of the issue (as the Greek Corinthians did). So we learn that those who profess to be part of the church, the people of God, should avoid such activities as idolatry and fornication and those who are not genuine should not expect to be protected from Hell simply because of religious claims or activities. Also, believers never need to fear being overtaken by common, everyday trials.

As we face the trials and temptations God has clearly warned us about, **the way of escape** is for us to **flee** whatever it is rather than pursue it and think, “everything will be fine because we are saved”. We should find great comfort in the fact all of our **temptations and trials are common to humans** which means no trial is unique or beyond the abilities God has given mankind. Let's also not miss the comforting fact we will never face such a unique trial that hasn't already been faced by believers of every generation. Even more comforting is to realize our Savior has faced every type of trial we have

ever faced, without committing sin and completely understands what we need as humans to faithfully face life's difficulties (see Hebrews 4:15-16).

There are TWO THINGS WHICH SHOULD BE CLEAR in this section. Believers should not fall into presumption (relates to the strong in our context) and believers should not fall into fear & despair (relates to the weak in our context). Anthony Thiselton summarized this when he wrote, “The practical point, therefore, is twofold: (i) because Christians still live within the continuing world order, they must guard against presumption and heed moral exhortation; but (2) because they belong to the new age, they have access to a definitive disclosure of God's will and access to divine grace in Christ. Their relation to the old underlines the need to take warnings seriously (v. iib); their relation to the new addresses doubt and anxiety on the journey of pilgrimage, self-discipline, and growth.” (Thiselton, 153)

THINKING ABOUT GOD'S WORD

- How do broader biblical, historical viewpoints help give us proper perspective on our situations and temptations?
 - In what ways do the Scriptures exercise formative power over life, thought, and character?
 - Explain the various forms of “tempting” used in the Bible.
 - When we read 10:4 and 10:9, who do we discover was the true leader of the Old Testament Jewish congregation?
 - Why did God make a written record of the Old Testament stories for His New Testament people?
 - How can being overconfident lead us to failure in our Christian life?
 - Why do misdirected desires often lead to seeking idolatrous substitutes for God rather than desiring God himself?
 - Explain how we tend to blame God or others when we give in to trials and temptations while rejecting the help of both.
 - Why must genuine believers continue to endure trials and temptations?
- (FAM) Will God always make our path in life easy by removing all our problems? Explain
- (FAM) Will we ever face a trial that is unique to humans which Jesus cannot help us with?
- (FAM) What are some of your greatest fears? What does 1 Corinthians 10:13 tell us about our fears?

(FAM) If we believe something we face is too tough for us, what are we saying about God's faithfulness? Discuss God's help in our trials.

“15 I SPEAK AS TO WISE MEN; JUDGE YOU WHAT I SAY. 16 THE CUP OF BLESSING WHICH WE BLESS, IS IT NOT THE COMMUNION OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST? THE BREAD WHICH WE BREAK, IS IT NOT THE COMMUNION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST? 17 FOR WE BEING MANY ARE ONE BREAD, AND ONE BODY: FOR WE ARE ALL PARTAKERS OF THAT ONE BREAD. 18 BEHOLD ISRAEL AFTER THE FLESH: ARE NOT THEY WHICH EAT OF THE SACRIFICES PARTAKERS OF THE ALTAR? 19 WHAT SAY I THEN? THAT THE IDOL IS ANY THING, OR THAT WHICH IS OFFERED IN SACRIFICE TO IDOLS IS ANY THING? 20 BUT I SAY, THAT THE THINGS WHICH THE GENTILES SACRIFICE, THEY SACRIFICE TO DEVILS, AND NOT TO GOD: AND I WOULD NOT THAT YOU SHOULD HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH DEVILS. 21 YOU CANNOT DRINK THE CUP OF THE LORD, AND THE CUP OF DEVILS: YOU CANNOT BE PARTAKERS OF THE LORD’S TABLE, AND OF THE TABLE OF DEVILS. 22 DO WE PROVOKE THE LORD TO JEALOUSY? ARE WE STRONGER THAN HE?”

➤ **There are just some things which are incompatible with those joined to Christ**

Paul now brings to conclusion his argument which he began in 8:1 regarding eating sacrificed meat in an idol's temple. He began in 10:15 with the statement, **I speak as to wise men: Judge you what I say**. It is true that in 4:10 Paul used some cutting sarcasm when referring to the Corinthians as “wise”. Perhaps he meant that here as well, however, it seems this statement might have been more genuine. By asking them to **judge** (Grk. *Krino*), he was not asking them to determine if he were right or wrong but rather to resolve in their own minds he was right.

Paul could teach them all the correct things but ultimately knew the Spirit had to help them make their own decisions. He was redefining what the Corinthians thought they “knew” and Paul truly wanted them to comprehend what he was saying. The Corinthians figured the extent of what they needed to know was simply that idols were nothing and they were free to do whatever they wanted. Paul opened their eyes and challenged them to use their spiritual common sense to realize the old and new lifestyles were incompatible and that their decisions must also include what is best for all members of God's covenant people in Christ.

Paul continued in 10:16 by bringing up the Lord's supper which he will also discuss in 11:17-34. We should realize one cannot learn everything there is to know about the Lord's Table in this text since Paul only brings up points of comparison between the two drastically different suppers. It seems we learn more in this chapter about the idolatrous supper than the Lord's supper. Here Paul simply used the Lord's Supper to appeal to what we might call "common sense". He wanted the Corinthians to acknowledge that participating in both suppers did not make sense and that their relationship with Christ was not merely an inner, private affair. When you think about it, this is Paul's same argument from 6:12-20, namely that engaging in activities which are inconsistent with the gospel is like tearing apart the limbs of Christ or taking parts of Jesus where they do not belong.

So what was Paul saying did not make sense? Something about the nature of the Lord's Supper creates incompatibility with the idol supper. In 10:16 Paul hinged his argument on the word **communion** (Grk. Koinonia) which has to do with worship and means fellowship, sharing, partnership and joint-participation. Believers share in at least two types of communion. On the one hand, believers have fellowship with Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 John 1:3, 6). Christians are united together in one body by God's Spirit who creates their spiritual union or communion. On the other hand, believers have fellowship with one another (Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:7).

Therefore, believers have joint-participation in Christ, meaning we are alive in Jesus and have that life in common with one another (see Galatians 2:20). To take part in the sacred supper of devils would be to indicate you have joint-participation with devils and their followers. During these pagan feasts the participants believed their god was present as if he were "hosting" the event (written invitations have supposedly been found verifying this). Similarly, when we partake of the Lord's Supper, believers do so with the understanding God is present with them. Jesus hosted the very first supper with his disciples and as the church gathers today, we understand Him to be present with us (see 5:3-5; Matthew 18:20).

As to the exact nature of the participation, Charles Hodge explains..."It is here assumed that partaking of the Lord's Supper brings us into communion with Christ. If this be so, partaking of the table of demons must bring us into communion with demons. This is the apostle's argument. It is founded on the assumption, that a participation of the cup is a participation of the blood of Christ; and that a participation of the bread is a participation of the body of Christ.

So far Romanists, Lutherans, and Reformed agree in their interpretation of this important passage. They all agree that a participation of the cup is a participation of the blood of Christ; and that a participation of the bread, is a participation of the body of Christ. But when it is asked, what is the nature of this participation, the answers given are radically different. All that the passage asserts is the fact of a participation, the nature of that participation must be determined from other sources.” (Hodge, 205)

The cup

The cup and the bread are symbols of our union with Christ and His body. We do not view them as some sort of cannibalistic elements where we actually eat His flesh and drink His blood. Also, we don't reenact what Jesus did but rather the Lord's Supper is about sharing in the benefits of what Jesus did. The elements are “served” to us to remind us what has “been done” for us...we simply receive them. These expressions match the Scriptural language used elsewhere of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

So in 10:16 Paul wrote, **the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?** This symbolizes the vertical dimension of our union. That is, our relationship with Christ. Paul called it, the cup of blessing (Grk. Eulogia) which points us to all the benefits we share because of the work **of the blood of Christ**. **The cup of blessing** is “blessed” (Grk. Eulogeo), praised or eulogized because **we bless it** though prayer. Some think the cup and bread naturally convey blessings upon people from God. That is not what we read here. As in 1 Timothy 4:5, ordinary food is “sanctified or set apart for a holy purpose by the word of God and prayer”. By giving thanks for it, we set the cup apart from a common, everyday use to a sacred use. Much like we ask God to bless our food so it might nourish our body, we ask God to bless the cup it would represent the communion of Jesus' blood or remind us of the benefits of Christ's death (see Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 9:16). So as we give thanks we request God use the cup in a special way in our lives.

Paul asked the question in 10:16, **is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?** In other words, are we not jointly participating in the blood of Christ? There's an important thing to consider here. Paul is not saying lost pagans could partake of the Lord's supper and gain salvation. His point is that by participating in the supper, believers are acknowledging they are already participants in the blood of Christ by

faith. This is a key distinction between the way we and other religions understand this church ordinance. We only have true participation because we are united with Christ by faith.

Charles Hodge explains, “Of course the nature of this participation depends on the nature of its object. Participation of Christ is sharing in his Spirit, character, sufferings and glory; participation of the gospel is participation of its benefits; and thus participation of the blood of Christ is partaking of its benefits. We participate in all of these only by our union with Christ by faith. When in 1:9 it is said, “We are called into the fellowship or participation of his Son,” it is not of the substance of the Godhead that we partake. And when the Apostle John says, “We have fellowship one with another,” (i.e. we are partners one of another, 1 John 1:7, he does not mean that we partake of each other’s corporeal substance. To share in a sacrifice offered in our behalf is to share in its efficacy; and as Christ’s blood means his sacrificial blood, to partake of his blood no more means to partake of his literal blood, than when it is said his blood cleanses from all sin, it is meant that his literal corporeal blood has this cleansing efficacy. When we are said to receive the sprinkling of his blood, 1 Peter 1:1, it does not mean his literal blood.” (Hodge, 208-209)

The bread

Paul went on in 10:16 to write, **the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?** This symbolizes the horizontal dimension of our union, that is, our relationship with other believers who are called the body of Christ. Paul stated that when we all jointly partake in the one bread we show we are joint participants in the one body. We display and remind ourselves of our union with each other that results from our union by faith with Christ. So our communion or fellowship is a celebration of our new, united life together and once again, it should be clear why participating in another ceremony which symbolized union with demons and their followers would be completely incompatible with who we are in Christ.

At this point Paul went on to do something that is not done anywhere else in the Bible. In 10:17, he interpreted the bread as the church or body of Christ when he wrote, **for we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.** Gordon Fee explained this well when he wrote, “This explanation is what indicates most strongly that koinonia refers to the common sharing in the Lord's Supper that binds them together as a unique, eschatological community. Their singular existence as the people of

God, bound together to their Lord through the benefits of the cross and experienced regularly at his Table, makes all other such meals idolatry” (Fee, 469).

Paul wrote **for we are all partakers** (Grk. *Metecho*) **of that one bread** which means by regular, shared participation in the bread, we affirm we are all part of the same body and in a sense, it serves as a constant reminder not to join any part of Christ's body to demons or any such thing (see Chapter 6). It also serves as a constant reminder not to forget Jesus intends us to do life together as His body. We serve Him together and support one another as one, united body. Again, we do not “become the body” by partaking of this bread but rather through the spiritual baptism into Christ by the One Holy Spirit (12:13). Jesus identified the bread as His body which Paul now clarifies means the church, the body of believers who are in Christ. To participate in any other such meals is a direct attack against our solidarity as one body.

In 10:18 Paul deepened his explanation by writing, **Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?** Notice Paul referred to **Israel after the flesh** which supports the distinction we have made from spiritual Israel which is the true church united in Christ including all Jewish and Gentile believers of all time (see Galatians 6:16). We learn in such passages as Leviticus 7:15, 8:31 and Deuteronomy 12:18 that only a portion of many sacrifices were consumed by fire on the altar and the rest was divided between the priest and the one who brought the offering. Paul might also be referring here to the meals prescribed in Deuteronomy 14:22-27.

Nevertheless, his point was that **to eat of the sacrifices** made a person a **partaker** (Grk. *Koinonos*) **of the altar** meaning one who is communion or joint-participation with it. They become worshipers of whichever God to whom that particular altar is dedicated. We should make a distinction at this point that in the case of Israel and the idolaters in Corinth, there was a literal sacrifice involved at their altar yet when we partake of the Lord's supper it is a memorial of Christ's sacrifice which took place once for all (see Hebrews 8-10). Again, we are not sacrificing Jesus afresh each time we take the Supper but rather participating in a memorial of His saving work to which we are already united by faith.

A false idol represents real demons

Now Paul gets to the heart of his point. In 10:19 he wrote, **What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?** He already answered this question with a great big “NO” in 8:4-6. In no way was Paul trying to give “life” to something which really did not exist. So Paul continued in 10:20 to clarify his point by writing, **But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that you should have fellowship with devils.** Paul agreed with the Corinthians that an idol is nothing and it is certainly not a god of any kind. However, what they failed to realize is that an idol represents something quite real...Satan and his demons. This puts things in perspective for us...to worship an idol is to worship a created thing and the net result is really Satanic worship.

On the subject of Paul's view of demons Anthony Thiselton explains, “Paul uses the word demons only here (10:20-21; Greek daimonion, used four times) in all of his epistles together. Collins observes, "Only in i Cor. 10:20-21 does Paul speak about demons.... All reality belongs to the one God who has entrusted sovereignty over all things to the one Lord" (8:6; 15:27; First Corinthians, pp. 380-81). The victory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ has supervened between the ministry of Jesus and the epistles of Paul, which accounts for some difference of emphasis. Paul refrains from characterizing demons explicitly as "personal" agents. Yet he acknowledges that the world, especially the world of Gentile religion and culture, embodies pockets of evil power that serve as foci for evil forces in relation to God and to God's people. This power is in process of crumbling, but still retains the impact and effect of devilish powers that operate more forcefully in their corporate, structural, or institutional effects than any evil generated by any individual human person as such. Evil systems have such power. Sometimes the net effect of corporate or structural evil is greater than the sum of the individuals who promote it. (Thiselton, 160)

Paul continued in 10:21, **You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: you cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.** To paraphrase Paul's language here, the Lord presides over His table and Satan presides over his table. Paul used the same language and meaning from Deuteronomy 32:17 and Psalm 95:5 to help us see that while on one hand an idol is nothing, in effect it is in actuality the worship of something very real...devils, fallen angels who follow Satan! A false idol is really just a trick of

Satan to distract us from God and covertly steal worship which really belongs to God. Our sin nature makes us susceptible to this.

So by hinging things upon the concept of “koinonia” or “partaking” Paul's main message is participation in Christian ordinances involves communion with Christ and thus participation in heathen ordinances involves communion with devils. Neither makes you a Christian or makes you a pagan. This again brings us back to Paul's point in 6:12-20 where he taught the absolute incompatibility of participating in something of which you are not. Keep in mind that like Paul's fornication illustration in 6:15-17, it is impossible for us to truly partake in both at the same time. However, one can certainly wield unnecessary influence over us and since believers are the body of Christ we should clearly not connect Jesus in any way to Satan.

Paul was not merely prohibiting participation in idol feasts but literally saying it is impossible to be a partner of both thus, not an event in which believers should participate. In Matthew 6:24 Jesus said, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon”. In our world of multitasking, we may entirely miss the point of what Jesus said. Notice He said you “cannot”, meaning you are not able to do it. You can truly only serve one master or the other with your whole heart. Thus “in Christ” are not free to retract their allegiance and to offer it elsewhere, any more than God will retract His promise of covenant blessing.

So Paul's commands here are yet another example where the gospel “indicative” (what has been done) under girds the imperative (what we are to do). We should always keep in mind that who we are (our Identity in Christ) determines what we do and not the other way around. This is the proper way to exhort believers to good works (see also Ephesians 2:8-10). Very simply, believers are not to have fellowship or joint-participation with devils. It is inconsistent with worship of the true and living God. We should not in any way pretend to have communion with those whom we do not truly share real community, mindset or eternal destiny.

We should also keep in mind...“Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39). Jesus Christ has purchased believers from the claims of any other master to belong to him alone (1 Cor. 6:20). Paul does not hold a “dualist” notion of the world order as dominated by two sets of powers, demonic and divine.” (Thiselton, 159)

We are not strong without God

In 10:22 Paul wrote, **Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?** God is still a jealous God (Exodus 20:5) and does not want our affection any more needlessly divided than it already tends to be. Since God is absolutely without equal, He cannot stand for devotion to Him to be divided...it is sin. Even though an idol is false, 1Corinthians 8:7 reveals they can be “real enough” in our minds. Therefore, it can be destructive to our minds and souls to entangle ourselves in any kind of worship of even things which don't exist. When you think about it, is it not harmful to believe a lie?

Paul continued in 10:22 to write, **are we stronger than he?** To provoke God to jealousy is to consider yourself so strong that you could actually challenge God (see Isaiah 45:9-10). Paul wanted the “strong” in Corinth to realize no believer is stronger than God and therefore should take all Satanic influence seriously. Even though Satan wields no power over believers (other than perhaps what power we yield) to entertain Satan or his demons is to **provoke God**. Certainly we must never forget the spiritual battle which lies beneath the surface of life. Yet the bottom line is that nothing is worth provoking the Lord who loves us and gave Himself for us.

Think about it, does the average pagan intend to worship Satan? Probably not! Generally, a pagan might claim to be atheist or agnostic. In reality, Satan is just using their blindness to gain worship for himself. It's sad and pathetic really how Satan deludes himself with this kind of false gratification. It is similar to a man thinking, “that woman must like me because she likes my cologne”. Again, Charles Hodge helps us see the point when he wrote, “The heathen certainly did not intend to worship evil spirits. Nevertheless they did it. Men of the world do not intend to serve Satan, when they break the laws of God in the pursuit of their objects of desire. Still in so doing they are really obeying the will of the great adversary, yielding to his impulses, and fulfilling his designs. He is therefore said to be the god of this world. To him all sin is an offering and an homage.” (Hodge, 213)

So we can see Paul's argument has come full circle. The “strong” Corinthians mistakenly believed they could do anything they wanted because Christ has paid it all. They were going around trying to encourage even the “weak” believers to follow in their foot steps. Paul helped both the strong and weak understand there are certain things they simply must not do because they are completely incompatible with who they have become in Christ. In essence Paul is ultimately forbidding any kind of relationship with the demonic. While in no way

returning us to law-based righteousness we must understand that our new birth (see John 3:1-8) is so radically transformational that it makes certain thoughts and actions absolute. These matters take aim at our core allegiance.

THINKING ABOUT GOD'S WORD

- Why did Paul ask the Corinthians to judge what he said?
- What are some areas of your life where you need to more strongly consider the Bible's perspective over what you think you know?
- What did Paul mean by using the word communion or fellowship and why did he hinge his entire argument on it in 10:16?
- Explain what the cup symbolizes in the Lord's supper.
- What did Paul mean by cup of blessing? Who blesses the communion cup and why?
- What does communion have to do with the ALL activities in which believers choose to participate?
- Explain why it is wrong to view the cup and the bread in some sort of cannibalistic way.
- If we are not reenacting Jesus' sacrifice, then what is the Lords' Supper about?
- In what way do believers participate in the blood and body of Christ when they take the Lord's Supper?
- Does participation in an idol sacrifice automatically make you a pagan? Does participation in the Lord's Supper automatically make you a Christian? Why is it impossible for the lost to participate in the blood and body of Christ if they were to take the Lord's Supper?
- What did Paul identify as the “one bread”?
- What does it mean that believers are all partakers of that one bread and how is the Lord's Supper intended to remind us of that?
- What does regular participation in the Lord's Supper remind us of?
- In terms of the actual sacrifice, what is one key difference between participating in idol sacrifices and taking the Lord's Supper?
- Explain why it is impossible to be in communion with God and devils at the same time. How does this knowledge help us make choices?
- Why did Paul refer to “Israel after the flesh” and what does that reveal to us about the church?
- What's the difference between the way Israel after the flesh partook in their sacrifice and the way the church partakes of the sacrifice in the Lord's Supper?

- Why is it important that any imperative commands (what to do) are based in gospel indicatives of what Christ has done and who we are?
- Is it possible for genuine believers to become Satan worshipers when they participate in something like an idol meal? Explain what happens.
- Explain how easy it is to go from participating in something which seems harmless to actually worshipping Satan. Why are humans so susceptible to this?
- Explain how a person claiming to be atheist (no god) or agnostic (skeptical a god exists) is actually falling right into Satan's trap.
- Explain how worshipping idols which do not even exist provokes God to jealousy.

(FAM) Are you a family which rules by law or grace? Do you more often just bark out orders and expectations or do you couch them in the gospel of grace and our identity in Christ? Explain.

(FAM) Did Paul think idols were real? What did they represent?

(FAM) What sorts of things might seem harmless but could lead us to give honor or even worship to Satan?

(FAM) If we don't take Satanic influence seriously, what does that say about our view of self? Explain how the Corinthians failed in this area.

(FAM) Does Satan wield any real power over those in Christ? Explain.

(FAM) Draw pictures of God's people taking the communion elements of the cup and the bread.

(FAM) Using the explanations above, help you family understand why we take communion on a regular basis. Be sure to discuss our union with Jesus and our union with one another.

“23 ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL FOR ME, BUT ALL THINGS ARE NOT EXPEDIENT: ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL FOR ME, BUT ALL THINGS EDIFY NOT. 24 LET NO MAN SEEK HIS OWN, BUT EVERY MAN ANOTHER’S WEALTH. 25 WHATEVER IS SOLD IN THE SHAMBLES, THAT EAT, ASKING NO QUESTION FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE: 26 FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S, AND THE FULLNESS THEREOF. 27 IF ANY OF THEM THAT BELIEVE NOT BID YOU TO A FEAST, AND YOU BE DISPOSED TO GO; WHATEVER IS SET BEFORE YOU, EAT, ASKING NO QUESTION FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE. 28 BUT IF ANY MAN SAY TO YOU, THIS IS OFFERED IN SACRIFICE TO IDOLS, EAT NOT FOR HIS SAKE THAT SHOWED IT, AND FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE: FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S, AND THE FULLNESS THEREOF: 29 CONSCIENCE, I SAY, NOT YOUR OWN, BUT OF THE OTHER: FOR WHY IS MY LIBERTY JUDGED OF ANOTHER MAN’S

CONSCIENCE? 30 FOR IF I BY GRACE BE A PARTAKER, WHY AM I EVIL SPOKEN OF FOR THAT FOR WHICH I GIVE THANKS? 31 WHETHER THEREFORE YOU EAT, OR DRINK, OR WHATEVER YOU DO, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD. 32 GIVE NONE OFFENSE, NEITHER TO THE JEWS, NOR TO THE GENTILES, NOR TO THE CHURCH OF GOD: 33 EVEN AS I PLEASE ALL MEN IN ALL THINGS, NOT SEEKING MY OWN PROFIT, BUT THE PROFIT OF MANY, THAT THEY MAY BE SAVED.”

➤ **Be sure whatever you do glorifies God by making way for the Gospel**

In this section Paul summarized his argument from 8:1-10:22 and introduced 2 new instances: buying meat at the market and being invited to a pagan's home for a dinner. 10:23 and 10:33 serve as bookends to this portion to help us see Paul's overarching concern...caring for others so they may be saved. What we get here is much better than any law or rule. We are given a very helpful guideline for Christian conduct which is based upon Christ's work in the Gospel.

There are more than just legalities to consider

Paul opened this section in 10:23 by writing, **All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.** This expresses the same point he made in 6:12 regarding a famous Corinthian slogan. It seems the Corinthians bought into the idea that since Jesus paid for sin, everything was now somehow legal for them to do. In other words, they could do whatever they selfishly desired without considering the impact to their relationship with Christ and others. While in a very limited sense, we can agree all genuine believers are completely free and secure in Christ, we cannot agree our new Master, Jesus, gives us liberty to do whatever we desire if that means returning to the bondage of our former sins. In 6:19-20, Paul reminded believers we are bought with a price and are to glorify God inside and outside of ourselves.

Notice how Paul's response here corresponds to what Paul wrote in 6:12. **All things are not expedient** (Grk. Sumphero) meaning beneficial or profitable in bringing people together. This links us back to Paul's previous idea of how certain activities simply are not helpful in reflecting or maintaining our unity in Christ with one another. Paul also stated, **All things edify not** (Grk. Oikodomeo) which means to be constructive or to build up a household. This can refer to the spiritual

growth of self or of others. Some suggest it is intended to correspond with Paul's statement in 6:12, "I will not be brought under the power of any". Certainly we should not desire to return ourselves or others to sin's bondage.

It is hard to escape our duty in Christ which Paul spelled out in 10:24 when he wrote, **Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth**. Interestingly the word **wealth** does not appear in some original manuscripts and thus cannot be adequately defined. It seems this word was supplied by interpreters to help clarify the point. Regardless, this is an example where we can easily understand the sentence with or without the word. Paul does not want our primary motive to be **seeking our own** interests but rather seeking what is best for others. This is a key takeaway from the passage.

Some understand Paul's attitude to be, "Whether or not I have liberties in all things, I will let nothing take liberties with me". This is the truly "Christian" attitude at which Paul has been driving and is seen most vividly in such passages as Philippians 2 and Romans 15:1-3. To hold to knowledge and rights leads us toward pride when instead we should be focused on using our freedoms not to do whatever we please, but rather for the benefit of others. Ultimately what rules is not law and freedom for selfish gain. Rather, it is freedom used for the benefit of others and the edification of the body of Christ. In 11:1 Paul will point out how his own teaching and example regarding use of his freedoms are patterned directly from Jesus.

Two final issues regarding idol meat

Paul brings up one of two final thoughts regarding idol meat in 10:25 by writing, **Whatever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake**. Since an idol is nothing and meat does not determine our relationship with God then we do not have to become overly worried about "accidentally" eating it. For example, when it **is sold in the shambles** (Grk. Makellon) or in some kind of market, Paul stated we can **eat, asking no question for conscience sake**. We do not have to be so extreme as to fully investigate the origin of meat before we buy it. Remember, Paul's issue was not with believers who "accidentally" ate idol meat but those who knowingly participated in some kind of ceremony or worship of idols and even lead others to do the same.

In 10:26 Paul wrote, **For the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof**. As we've already stated above, this is the identical point made in 1Timothy 4:4 where he wrote about some who were, "Forbidding to

marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving". Animals were given by God and primarily intended to be food for mankind. So Paul used this statement as his basis for reminding believers not to worry too much over which animals were in a sense "clean" and "unclean" to them. This is a matter of indifference to God because these Old Testament dietary restrictions find their end in Christ. Believers were generally free to eat whatever meat was set before them so long as eating the meat was not obviously and intentionally linked to some kind of idol worship.

What is extremely intriguing is the "shot" Paul took at his Jewish heritage in 10:26. He knew the Jewish Rabbis used the phrase, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof" as the basis for praying before every meal. It symbolized to the Jews that the Rabbis had thoroughly investigated the meal and it was "kosher" by the standards of their law. Ironically, Paul here used the very same phrase two times to support the eating of all foods including every food forbidden by Jewish law! Why? Because all food comes from God and is intended to nourish mankind. We simply should not forget to acknowledge God as the giver as we partake in whatever we eat.

While he already addressed the issue in 9:20-22, Paul brought up one more final thought regarding idol meat in 10:27 when he wrote, **If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and you be disposed to go; whatever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.** Believers were not generally forbidden from going to parties hosted by unbelievers. This too would have been forbidden by Jewish laws. Not only can believers attend the parties but they are not required to ask probing questions about the origin of the food set before them. We do not have to live in this kind of fear and anxiety. This further reinforces the manner in which we are truly and completely free in Christ. As we learned in 1Corinthians 7:32, 35 as well as Matthew 11:28-29, Jesus desires our hearts be free from anxieties so we might securely rest in Him.

On the other hand, Paul reminds us in 10:28, **But if any man say to you, This is offered in sacrifice to idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.** If our pagan host offers us meat and also tells us it was offered to idols, then we are to exercise restraint and thus not eat. Why? Paul said it was **for his sake** as well as **for conscience sake** of others looking on (likely weaker believers). We are to never give any

indication that participating in things offered to idols is a minor thing. As we have learned, it is Satan's way of covertly stealing worship from God. It is inconsistent with our profession as believers in Christ and is something we should help weaker believers avoid at all costs so they do not cause Christ to engage things completely against His nature. As Anthony Thiselton aptly points out, "The decision to eat rests not with "my" worries or "my" overconfidence, but with factors that relate entirely to the "other" person." (Thiselton, 165)

So who's **conscience** was Paul concerned with in this passage? In 10:29 Paul answers, **Conscience, I say, not your own, but of the other**. Paul was concerned about the conscience of others not necessarily our own conscience since in this passage "we" are not the ones questioning our allegiance to God. His next question in regards to why we must behave in this way also helps us see his focus. He wrote, **for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?** The answer to this rhetorical question is simple...the most knowledgeable believer is nothing without loving concern for his neighbor (see 1Corinthians 13:2).

Keep in mind, Paul was not advocating a "loss of freedom" or establishing a grounds for us to be "judged by others" but rather the "proper, God-intended use of freedom". Romans 14 is another passage which helps us see Paul will not allow such matters of indifference as food to be made a "christian concern". In fact, Paul allows people their differences on such matters. In Christ, believers are indeed and without question "FREE" just not free to return ourselves or others to the bondage and mastery of sin. We are free from sin's enslaving power to live in the joy-filled ways God intended and created us to live. Those of us who know best must also be those who are most humble and concerned for the welfare of others about the freedoms and rights of self.

To restate in 10:28 **the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof** (a quote from Psalm 24:1) is like saying, "everything belongs to God". It is a simple reminder to ourselves of who owns everything including us and realize God alone determines what is right and wrong for how His creation is to best function. God does not want our "good" (free right to do something) to be "evil spoken of". In 10:30 Paul wrote, **For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?** Paul was encouraging the Corinthians to follow his example in the very things for which they judged him. They were not to just live for self, nor were they to let the judgment of others determine their course. A similar statement is made in 1Peter 2:16.

A simple guide for Christian conduct

So Paul gives us a simple formula to gauge our behavior in 10:31-33. First, we should not do anything without considering God's glory. 10:31 states, **Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God** (see Colossians 3:17; 1Peter 4:11). Our context defines God's glory as the saving or bringing people to gospel understanding (see 9:20-22). Next, we are to be concerned our actions not cause anyone (saved or lost) to stumble into real sin. 10:32 states, **Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God**. Let's be clear, this is not referencing ideas such as "try not to be offensive" or "do not hurt someone's feelings". We simply should not behave in ways which would hinder the gospel from being given a proper hearing. Third, we are to concern ourselves with seeking the profit of others above what only benefits self so as many as possible might be brought to a clearer understanding of the gospel without any distraction. Thus, it is inconsistent to engage in what is sinful when attempting to exalt the pure Gospel of God. In this case, the end would certainly not justify the means. Sadly, many a religion has fallen into this sort of erroneous thinking and practice.

In 10:33 Paul wrote, **Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.**" By now we should see he was not talking about catering to the whims of every human. In Romans 15:1-3 Paul clearly defined "pleasing others" as "for their spiritual good" or "to build them up in a Godly way". God's glory should be the goal for every action in our lives. Even when we seek the good of others, we do so with the glory of God as the end result. This not only brings all things under the subjection of God but also connects all things to their life-giving source. **The profit of many** which we seek with our total existence is **that they may be saved**.

THINKING ABOUT GOD'S WORD

- Explain Christian freedom and rights in terms of Jesus being our new Master and how our liberties impact others.
- Besides whether something is lawful for us to do, what else should believers consider before acting?
- What are some things in your life which may be permissible under grace but are not profitable in bringing unity to Christ's body?
- Which things in your life may be permissible under grace but do not build the body & could possibly enslave you or others?

- Share examples of where you found it difficult to put the interests of others above your own.
 - What are some rights and privileges you may need to be willing to let go of for the greater sake of the gospel?
 - What did Paul mean by using the phrase, “The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof” in regards to eating meat?
 - Why did Paul mention “the earth is the Lord's” a second time?
 - How does our text define the phrase, “Glory of God”?
 - What did Paul mean by “Give none offense”? How does this apply?
 - Explain the difference between “catering to the whims of people” and “pleasing all men in all things that they may be saved”.
 - Do you tend to rank the well-being of others and the good of the whole higher than the desires of self? Share some examples.
 - At what point does a right sensitivity and moral integrity begin to become more of an obsession to be "right" in every detail of life? Could this actually be more of an obsession over self?
- (FAM) Should we pray before our meals? Why? What does this show when we do so?
- (FAM) Is it wrong for people to use animals as food? Explain.
- (FAM) Are believers generally allowed to go to parties hosted by unbelievers? What sorts of things might we consider before doing so? What might happen at these parties causing us to stand up for Christ?
- (FAM) Draw a picture of your family praying then spend time praying together.
- (FAM) How might family prayer be one way to hand on the gospel to the next generation?

What's your mission? The Mission of Landmark is Christ's mission... “To reach all nations and generations with the gospel and lead them on Christ's mission for God's glory.” (Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 1Co 10:31; Rev 5:9)

Note: As with any teaching, if you have any questions or concerns about this lesson, please direct them to the speaker in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1. (Years of learning and study of a variety of sources have gone into this guide for the benefit of the student and not to the glory or gain of the writer(s). As such, no claim could really be made to originality. Every effort to give proper credit will be made at the end of the series)