

1 Corinthians 10 - The Israelites as OT Examples; Partaking in Pagan Feasts Not Consistent with Communion; Don't Stumble a Weaker Brother

III. Questions asked of Paul (1 Cor 7:1–16:24)

- (2) Food sacrificed to the idols (1 Cor 8:1–11:1)
 - (C) Sinfulness of idolatry (10:1-22)
 - (a) Example of Israel (10:1-5)
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1 Corinthians 10

- (C) Sinfulness of idolatry (10:1-22)
 - (a) Example of Israel (10:1-5)

On the heels of talking about rewards (9:24-27), Paul now uses the Israelites in the OT as a negative example of what believers today should not do: fail in their relationship with the Lord and be "disqualified" from receiving rewards and instead suffer discipline.

1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers *and sisters*, that **ourfathers** were all **underthecloud** and they all **passed through the sea**;

1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea;

1 Now I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the fact that all of our ancestors who left Egypt were under the cloud. They all went through the sea,

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

- Paul did not want his readers to be unaware of the implications of God's dealings with the Israelites who wandered in the wilderness

- "For" - connects what Paul says here with 1 Cor 9 (esp v24-27)

- "...our fathers" - the Exodus Generation, the Israelites who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years

- "...under the cloud" - the *Shekinah* Glory, the visible manifestation of God's presence, which indicated His protection and guidance (Cf. Ex 14:24; Num 12:5; Deut 31:15; Ps 99:7)
- This gave Israel a great advantage (Rom 3:1-2; 9:4-5). The Church has a similar advantage: the Spirit's indwelling protection and guidance (Cf. 2:12-13).
- "...passed through the sea" - Israel experienced a supernatural deliverance when they crossed the Red Sea (Ex 14)

2 and they **all** were **baptized** into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

2 and they all were immersed into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

- "...all" - there were not some baptized and some not; all, every single Israelite, was baptized and identified with Moses
- "...baptized" - baptism is the outward expression of the believer's identification with the object of their faith. In this example, the Israelites were identified with Moses by following him and submitting to his authority
- Consequently, Paul could say that the Israelites were "baptized into Moses" even though they were not literally water baptized. By following Moses and submitting to his authority, they expressed their identification with him.
- Paul's reference links the past and present. He projects the meaning of baptism into Christ (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27), onto Moses and the exodus (Ex 14:31).
- Moses was the mediator of the first covenant, which became obsolete; Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb 7:22; 8:6; 9:15)
- The cloud and the sea both served to separate God's people from the hostile forces. This "baptism" took place when the cloud (*Shekinah* Glory) covered the Red Sea and they passed through.

There are a total of eight baptisms in Scripture. Three are wet baptisms; five are dry baptisms. Wet baptisms are called "wet" because the person gets wet; dry baptisms occur when the person stays dry. Wet baptisms are ritualistic in that they only depict a real identification. Dry baptisms are real baptisms in that a real identification takes place. The nation at this time experienced a real baptism.

3 and **they all** ate the same **spiritual food**,

3 and all ate the same spiritual food;

3 They all ate the same spiritual food

3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

- "...they all" - all the Israelites, not just some of them, ate the manna and drank the water from the rock: supernatural food and sustenance
- "...spiritual food" - manna (Ex 16:4,35); Paul called the manna and water "spiritual food" (v3) and "spiritual drink" (v4) because God provided them supernaturally and they had spiritual significance
- Both came from Christ and point to Christ as the real Sustainer of His people (Cf. John 6:35,48-51; 7:37-38)
- They ate manna throughout their entire time in the wilderness (Deut 8:2-4) and drank from the rock at the beginning (Ex 17:1-7) and end (Num 20:2-13)
- Manna means "what is it?" (Ex 16:15); it's interesting that God never called it manna, He called it "bread." There is plenty of symbolism linking it to God's Word.
- The Israelites thought of God as a "Rock" (Deut 32:4,15,18,30-31). Christ, as "a spiritual rock," accompanied them in the wilderness.

4 and all drank the same **spiritual drink**, for they were drinking from a **spiritual rock** which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

4 and drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual rock that went with them. That rock was the Messiah.

4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

- 5x in five consecutive clauses: "All"
- "all" under a cloud (v1)
- "all" passed through the sea (v1)
- "all" baptized into Moses (v2)
- "all" ate the same spiritual food (v3)
- "all" drank the same spiritual drink (v4)

— Paul could not have made it more clear: there are here no "pseudo-people of God"! They *all* had an authentic spiritual experience with God in the exodus.

- "...spiritual drink" - at Horeb (Ex 17:1-7); at Kadesh (Num 20:2-11). Also: Num 21:16; Neh 9:15; Ps 78:15-20; Is 48:21

- "...spiritual rock" - to leave no doubt in anyone's mind, Paul specifically defines the spiritual drink as being from the spiritual Rock of which they drank, which was Christ!

— Paul's point is that the Israelites were the chosen people of God then, just as Christians are now. God was with them then and faithfully provided for them everything they needed in the past, just as He faithfully provides everything needed for all Christians today.

5 **Nevertheless**, with **most of them** God was not pleased; for **their dead bodies were spread out in the wilderness**.

5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.

5 But God wasn't pleased with most of those people, and so they were struck down in the wilderness.

5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

- "Nevertheless" - even though God provided faithfully for them in the past, He was not pleased with most of them

— Why was God not pleased? The Israelites longed to return to Egypt (Luke 9:62), and they carried idols with them (Amos 5:25-26; Acts 7:42-43)

— How the majority displeased God and lost their privileges follows next...

- "...most of them" - a classic understatement: of all who came out of Egypt, all but two perished: Caleb and Joshua (not even Moses made it to the Promised Land, Num 20:12)

— The bodies of the rest of them were scattered (*katastronynmi*) over the desert (Num 14:16); thousands perished (Num 16:40; 25:9)

— Taking men over 20 yrs (603,550, Num 1:46) and adding an equal number of women, a total of 1,207,000, and dividing by 38 (the number of years spent in the wilderness after the curse) equals an average of about 90 deaths per day.

— Although recipients of God's daily provision, they still perished—because of unbelief! They rebelled against Him 10x (Cf. Num 14:22)

- "...*their dead bodies were spread out in the wilderness*" - Paul goes on to mention the idolatry, sexual immorality, and mass death that occurred ***among those who partook of the spiritual drink from the Rock which was Christ***.

— Paul first states unequivocally that "all" Israelites were baptized into Christ" then goes on to say that He was displeased with "most of them" (a classic understatement; He was disappointed with millions of them, everyone except Joshua and Caleb). Yet neither Moses, nor Jesus, nor Paul ever said that these people somehow "lost" their salvation, or worse, were never "genuinely" saved.

For Israel the Land corresponds to the prize that Paul spoke of in 9:24f, that all Christians should run to win. The lesson is that even though God gives us every spiritual blessing and guidance, it is not guaranteed that we will live lives that please Him and result in rewards. Believers can fail in their walk just like the wilderness generation.

(b) Application of Israel's example (10:6-13)

6 Now **thesethings** happened as **examples** for us, so that we would **not crave evil things** as they indeed craved *them*.

6 Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.

6 Now their experiences serve as examples for us so that we won't set our hearts on evil as they did.

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

- "...these things" - *houtos*, the events that took place during their 38-year wilderness wanderings

— Their baptism and partaking of spiritual food and drink did not protect them from God's discipline when they "craved...evil things"

— Participating in baptism and the Lord's Supper will not protect Christians either; we should never regard participation in these ordinances as protecting us from God's discipline if we sin against Him

— The Israelites, at times, felt immunized against God's judgment because they were His "chosen people"

- "...examples" - *tupos*, "types," "patterns," or "models" for us (the church). The experiences of the Israelites in the wilderness were situations that would recur later in history, which God designed for teaching His people lessons.

- Five historical examples: these are here for our learning!

- Coveting food (v6, Cf. Num 11:4-6)
- Engaging in idolatry (v7, Cf. Ex 32:6)
- Committing immorality (v8, Cf. Num 25:1-9)
- Testing the Lord (v9, Cf. Num 21:5ff)
- Grumbling (v10, Cf. Num 6:41ff)

— More than just history: the Corinthians should've recognized their own reflection in the mirror of these historical events

— Israel is not the Church and the Church is not Israel, but the lessons of Israel in the OT are for the church in the NT (Cf. Rom 15:4)

- "...not crave evil things" - Paul's purpose for citing Israel's wilderness wanderings as a negative example is so that we would not crave (long for, desire) evil things like they did

— This is the first of five failures recounted as a warning to the Corinthians:

1. Their first failure was that generation of Israel desired to go back to Egypt when they cried, "Give us meat to eat!" (Num 11:4-6). They were not satisfied with the manna God provided, which kindled His anger to send a plague amidst the quail (Num 11:31-34). Hence, the graves were named Kibroth-hattaavah (graves of greed).

7 **Do not be idolaters**, as some of them were; **as it is written**: "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND TO DRINK, AND ROSE UP **TOPLAY**."

7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play."

7 Let's stop being idolaters, as some of them were. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to play."

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

2. "Do not be idolaters" - their second failure serves as a warning: do not venture into idolatry

- "...as it is written" - a direct quote from Ex 32:6 [LXX]

— The Israelites participated in idolatry when they ate and "played" in the presence of the golden calf (v7; Ex 32:6; Cf. Gen 26:8; Num 25:1-3) while Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments

- "...TO PLAY" - *paizein*, sexual immorality associated with idolatry

8 Nor are we to **commit sexual immorality**, as some of them did, and **twenty-three thousand** fell in one day.

8 Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.

8 Let's stop sinning sexually, as some of them were doing, and on a single day 23,000 fell dead.

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

3. - "...[do not] commit sexual immorality" - *porneuo*, the Israelites engaged in sexual immorality when they participated in the Moabites' religious feasts (Num 25:1-9)

— At Shittim the Israelites joined with the daughters of Moab and worshipped other gods. A Jewish man even brought a Midianite woman into the public square and committed an act of sexual immorality.

— Clearly, this same sexual immorality was taking place in the Corinthian church (Cf. 5:1-5,10-11; 6:9-10,12-20)

- "...twenty-three thousand" - Paul quotes 23,000 "in one day"; Moses quotes a total death toll of 24,000 (Num 25:9); the LXX, Philo, and rabbinical sources also support 24,000.

— Paul said the 23,000 died *in one day*. Moses records the total death toll of the plague God sent to judge the people. Obviously another 1,000 died in subsequent days, after the initial 23,000 had died. Thus, there is no contradiction because the numbers describe obviously different groups.

9 Nor are we to **put the Lord to the test**, as some of them did, and were **killed by the snakes**.

9 Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.

9 Let's stop putting the Lord to the test, as some of them were doing, and were destroyed by snakes.

9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

4. "...[do not] put the Lord to the test" - to put the Lord to the test is to test His patience, which is what some of the Israelites did in Num 21:5ff when they complained against God and Moses asking why they had brought them out of Egypt just to die in the wilderness.

— Although God had faithfully provided for them up to this point, they were upset that they had no food or water, and the manna they had they greatly disliked. They continued to complain even though He faithfully provided for them (Num 21:4-9).

- "...killed by the snakes" - they displayed impatience and blasphemed God, denounced Moses, loathed manna, and clamored for water, so God sent a plague of poisonous snakes into the camp.

— The people repented, Moses prayed, and the brazen serpent was the result (Num 21; John 3:14-15). Of those deserving to die, only some did; others were spared.

- Christians today are in danger of failing to appreciate God's provisions for them in Christ. We can become dissatisfied with what He has provided, not believing it is His best, rather than being thankful and content.

— We can also "test" the Lord by demanding that He perform for us, in our timing and in the manner that we prefer, rather than waiting for Him to work in His own time and way.

10 Nor **grumble**, as some of them did, and were killed by the destroyer.

10 Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

10 You must stop complaining, as some of them were doing, and were annihilated by the destroyer.

10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

5. "...[do not] grumble" - the Israelites grumbled frequently against the Lord during the wilderness wanderings

— Moses recorded 10 separate incidents of the Israelites' grumbling and complaining in Exodus and Numbers (Ex 14:11-2; 15:24; 16:2-3,8; 17:3; Num 11:1; 14:2-4; 16:11,41; Deut 1:27; 9:28; Joshua 9:18; Ps 106:25), however the incident Paul had in mind here is Num 16:41ff when, after Korah's rebellion, the people blamed the death of Korah and his company on Moses and Aaron

- This infuriated the Lord, who wanted to consume them instantly. His anger was only checked when Aaron rushed into the midst of the assembly with a censer dipped in incense.
- A total of 14,700 people died by the plague in addition to those who died on account of Korah
- Complaining or grumbling is a sign of selfishness and discontent with what God has provided for us
- Instances of the Corinthians' dissatisfaction with God's provisions for them are addressed by Paul in this epistle:
 - Rejection of some of the Lord's servants, who came to minister to them because they preferred others (1:10–4:21)
 - They did not appreciate Paul's earlier instruction to break off company with idolaters and the sexually immoral (5:9–11)
 - The impatience of the "strong" in the church with the "weak" (8:1–3)

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The Corinthians were in danger of infuriating Him by dining in idol temples which could cause them to stumble into idolatry, sexual immorality, and hinder an unbeliever from being saved or a believer from spiritual growth.

11 Now **these things happened to them as an example**, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the **ends of the ages have come**.

11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

11 These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down as a warning for us in whom the culmination of the ages has been attained.

11 Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

- "...these things happened to them as an example" - after citing four specific examples of Israelites failure (v7-10), Paul restated his general principle

— God is a God of history. He includes these events as instructive lessons to warn His people today. The God of the OT is the God of the NT. He changes not. He hates sin, yet loves the sinner.

- "...ends of the ages have come" - the ends of the ages have come upon the church in the sense that we are living in the last days. Christ is risen. He is the first completed member of the new heaven and new earth. Now we are waiting for Him to return for us and then for the revealing of the sons of God in His kingdom (Rom 8:18ff).

12 **Therefore** let the one who thinks he stands watch out that he does not fall.

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.

12 Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing securely should watch out so he doesn't fall.

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

- "Therefore" - a preliminary conclusion

- This is a warning to those, in Corinth and today, who were overconfident that they were all right with God. Self-confidence could lead to a spiritual fall, as it had often in Israel's history.

— The "strong" who felt free to dine in the temple of an idol were in danger of falling into idolatry and the consequent divine discipline. Paul says it is unwise to think that we are strong enough to withstand temptation when we put ourselves so near to it.

— By voluntarily putting ourselves in that position, we are walking a thin line from which a fall is just a step away. The application here is clear: steer yourself far away from temptation.

13 No **temptation** has overtaken you except *something common to mankind*; and God is faithful, so **He will not allow** you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide **theway of escape** also, so that you will be able to endure it.

13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

13 No temptation has overtaken you that is unusual for human beings. But God is faithful, and he will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength. Instead, along with the temptation he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to endure it.

13 There hath 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 ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

- Verse 13 is a counter-balance to v12...Paul did not want his readers to overreact and become paranoid either, as they considered Israel's record. Failure was not inevitable. Just because the Corinthians (or us) are tempted, doesn't guarantee failure.

- "...temptation" - *peirasmos*, an enticement to sin, whether arising from desires or outward circumstances

— For verses dealing with God's part in temptation see: Ex 16:4; Deut 8:2; 1 Chr 21:1; Job 1:12; 2:6; Matt 6:13; James 1:13

— Temptations come from Satan; trials are from God. God does not tempt anyone (James 1:13; Cf. Matt 6:13. Also see Job 1; 2; 42).

- "...common to mankind" - the temptations the Israelites faced were not unique; same thing for the Corinthians...their temptations were not unique to them either

- The specific context of the temptations were those Paul just mentioned (v7-10): idolatry, immorality, testing the Lord, and complaining. However, v13 covers more temptations than just these four...it is a general promise of victory over any temptation.
- "...He will not allow" - God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what He sovereignly knows we can handle. God has put up "guard rails" on what we can be tempted with, and the extent of that temptation
- "...the" - *ho*, the definite article before *ekbasis* indicates God has in mind a definite way of escape: His enabling grace. With His enabling grace, we are able to endure the temptation without failing.
- "...way of escape" - *ekbasis*, an egress; a way out, exit.
- The definite article "the" is used for both "temptation" and "way of escape," which suggests a particular way of escape that is available in each temptation
- Paul did not mean that there is only one way of escape regardless of the temptation; there may be multiple means of escape from a temptation, starting with not putting yourself in the position in the first place
- If we deliberately put ourselves in the path of temptation, putting God to the test (v9), we are not taking advantage of the "way of escape" and thus may fall
- The Corinthians were putting themselves in danger by continuing to attend cultic meals. In this case, God had made a way of escape open to them, as He had with Israel: The Lord's Supper and the Christian fellowship connected with it (v16).
- The problem is that the Corinthians were not trying to find the way of escape, but a way to entertain the temptation. They were playing with fire by eating in idol temples and overestimating their ability to withstand the temptations that came with that. They were putting God to the test. Paul warned them where that path ends by the example of the wilderness generation.

(c) Incompatibility of Christianity and idolatry (10:14-22)

14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

14 And so, my dear friends, keep on running away from idolatry.

14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

- "...flee from idolatry" - Paul previously urged the Corinthians to flee fornication (6:18; 1 John 5:21)
- He commanded his readers to use the way of escape that God had provided. One of the main reasons we fall for temptation is because we entertain it (Cf. 15:33-34). This is what the Corinthians were doing by dining in the temples of idols.
- Many Christians think they are strong enough to put themselves in questionable situations and not fall, but they are foolishly ignoring the examples of the wilderness

generation, which were given for our instruction.

Partaking in Pagan Feasts Not Consistent with the Lord's Supper (v15-24)

15 I speak as to wise people; you *then*, judge what I say.

15 I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say.

15 I am talking to sensible people. Apply what I am saying to yourselves.

15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

- Paul believed that the Corinthians had the wisdom to understand the correctness of what he has already told them, and what he was about to tell them

— He believed they could make correct judgments about what they should do, but they would need to use their minds.

16 Is the **cup of blessing** which **we bless** not a **sharing** in the blood of Christ? Is the **bread** which we break not a **sharing** in the body of Christ?

16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?

16 The cup of blessing that we bless is our fellowship in the blood of the Messiah, isn't it? The bread that we break is our fellowship in the body of the Messiah, isn't it?

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?

- Paul now uses several rhetorical questions to make his point...

- "...cup of blessing" - technical term for the third of four cups of wine at the Passover meal. It was also known as the "cup of redemption," which Jesus said was "the new covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:20).

- "...we bless" - we give thanks to God for the cup because of what it symbolizes, our sharing in the benefits of Christ's shed blood, which paid our penalty for sin (11:25)

- "...sharing" [2x] - *koinonia*, participation, fellowship, communion. When we take this cup, it signifies a "sharing" in the blood of Christ. When we drink the cup, we are remembering that we participate in His new covenant blood through faith.

— This is what Jesus meant when He said, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink."** (John 6:53-55).

- "...bread" - *artos*, a single loaf from which each participant broke off a portion to signify our "sharing" in the body of Christ, which is by faith

— Presbyterians and Calvinists point to this verse for their belief in the "Spiritual Presence View" of Communion. They believe that the spiritual presence of Christ is "in, with, and

under" the elements, although they do not believe that the elements are miraculously transformed into Christ's actual flesh and blood, as Roman Catholicism does.

— See notes on 11:24 for a complete list of the various views of Communion.

Baptism speaks of my death with Christ; the Lord's Supper speaks of Christ's death for me as the only ground of approach to, and fellowship with, God.

17 Since there is one **loaf**, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one loaf.

17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.

17 Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, because all of us eat from the same loaf.

17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

— "...loaf" - *artos*, symbolic of the physical body of Christ, and eating from the same loaf symbolized the unity we share in Christ (Cf. 12:14-27)

— Paul's point is that our unity negates members of the body participating in pagan idol feasts

18 Look at the people of Israel; are those who eat the sacrifices not partners in the altar?

18 Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?

18 Look at the Israelis from a human point of view. Those who eat the sacrifices share in what is on the altar, don't they?

18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

- The same illustration held true for the nation of Israel: those who ate the sacrifices were sharers in the altar. They were in union with one another and with God to whom the sacrifices were made.

Paul's line of reasoning was proceeding as follows. Christians who eat the bread at the Lord's Supper thereby express their solidarity with one another and with Christ. Likewise, Jews who ate the meat of animals offered in the sacrifices of Judaism, expressed their solidarity with one another and with God. Therefore, Christians who eat the meat offered to pagan gods, as part of pagan worship, express their solidarity with pagans and with the pagan deities.

19 What do I mean then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?

19 What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?

19 Am I suggesting that an offering made to idols means anything, or that an idol itself means anything?

19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?

- The "wise" man in Corinth (v15) could have replied to Paul's conclusion with: "Yes, Paul, but you said earlier that idols have no real existence and there is only one true God."

— Paul's point was that there was nothing wrong with animal meat. God made the animal and gave us the right to eat it when properly treated.

20 No, but I say that things which *the Gentiles* sacrifice, they sacrifice to **demons** and not to God; and I do not want you to become partners with **demons**.

20 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.

20 Hardly! What they offer, they offer to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to become partners with demons.

20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

- "...demons" [2x] - 2x in this verse and 2x in v21. There were demons behind these idols, and it is through these idol feasts that the demons receive worship.

— Therefore, the Gentiles who were sacrificing were doing so to demons and not to God. For the Corinthians to share in the meal sacrificed to demons meant sharing in demons. Thus, they should not attend these feasts.

— If they did, they would be acting inconsistently: on one hand they would be sharing in God during the Lord's Supper, but on the other hand they would be sharing in demons during the pagan supper.

21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the **table of the Lord** and the table of demons.

21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot dine with the Lord and dine with demons,

21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

- It is inconsistent for a Christian to participate in the Lord's Supper and also take part in pagan religious feasts. God will not share His glory with another.
- Because Christians have a unique relationship with the Lord and fellow believers, symbolized by the Lord's Supper, it is inappropriate for us to have similar associations with demons and unbelievers (v20-21), which participation in the pagan cultic events involved
- In the former, they eat and drink in union with Christ; in the latter, they are in union with demons who direct the devotees to worship idols. This inconsistency should be obvious to "wise men" (v15).
- "...table of the Lord" - this is where we get the phrase "the Lord's Table" to describe Communion today

- 22 Or **do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?** We are not stronger than He, are we?
- 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?
- 22 or you'll provoke the Lord to jealousy, won't you? Are we stronger than he is?
- 22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?
- "...do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?" - participating in both tables would provoke the Lord to jealousy. God is a Jealous God (Ex 20:5; Deut 5:9; Cf. Deut 32:16).
- The Israelites did exactly this (provoked the Lord to jealousy) at the foot of Mount Sinai (v7) and when they joined Moabite worship (v8, Num 25; Cf. Deut 32:17,21-22). The consequences on both occasions were disastrous (Ex 32:7-14,25-28; Num 25:4-9).
- We should learn from others' experiences...it would be crazy to provoke the Lord unless we are stronger than He is

The Corinthians were arguing for the right to attend pagan religious meals. They even viewed pagan temple attendance as a way of building their "weaker" brethren. Paul responded that attending pagan meals was wrong on two counts: it was unloving, and it was incompatible with life in Christ, which their participation at the Lord's Table symbolized. He forbade any relationship with the demonic.

(D) Marketplace food (10:23—11:1)

23 All things are permitted, but not all things are of benefit. All things are permitted, but not all things build people up.

23 All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.

23 Everything is permissible, but not everything is helpful. Everything is permissible, but not everything builds up.

23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

- Paul now changes topic slightly, from the forbidden participation in temple idol meals, to the permissible practice of eating food from the marketplace that was previously offered to idols
- "All things are permitted" [2x] - this was a popular slogan among the Corinthians. Paul repeats the phrase 2x here, and also 2x in 6:12.
- In 6:12, Paul addressed the issue of Christian liberty, saying that "all things" were lawful for him, but not all things were "profitable" (beneficial). Here, he expands the scope of that question to mean that "profitable" means beneficial for others, not just yourself.
- The Corinthians had tried to make the issue of dining in an idol's temple a matter of Christian liberty, but Paul saw it as absolutely wrong because it was the worship of demons
- "...not all things are of benefit" - Paul's first test: Is it helpful, to both myself and others?
- "...not all things build *people* up" - Paul's second test: Is it edifying, to both myself and others?
- In the case of dining in an idol's temple, it was neither of benefit nor edifying, but instead it was making weaker conscience brothers stumble

A Christian must learn how to evaluate freedoms by asking a series of questions related to profitability. Then he can successfully navigate the decision to exercise the freedom or abstain. He must also make sure not to turn an absolute into a non-absolute simply for one's self-pleasure.

- 24 No one is to seek his own *advantage***, but rather that of his neighbor.
- 24 Let no one seek his own *good*, but that of his neighbor.
- 24 No one should seek his own *welfare*, but rather his neighbor's.
- 24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth*.
- "No one is to seek his own *advantage*" - a Christian should not only look out for his own self-interest, but also the interest of others (Cf. Phil 2:4)
- Christian liberty is not the pleasing of oneself but the building up and benefit of others (Cf. Rom 15:2; Phil 2:4; Matt 22:39; Rom 13:10)
- The Corinthians viewed their freedom as an opportunity to pursue their own interests; Paul viewed it as an opportunity to benefit ("seek the good") and build up ("edify") someone else

Let's be honest. The exercise of your Christian freedom can be all about your own 'good.' It is something you want to do. And if you know there are no biblical prohibitions against it, why not enjoy?

Answer: it's not all about you. You have other believers around you. Will the exercise of your liberty build them up? Will they be edified? Think about that before you make a

decision.

25 Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions, for the sake of conscience;

25 Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake;

25 Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without raising any question about it on the grounds of conscience,

25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:

- Paul now shifts his focus slightly from eating meat (dining) in an idol's temple to eating the meat possibly sacrificed to idols from the meat market

— Paul states that there was no need to even ask the butcher where the meat they're selling came from, just buy it and eat it without asking questions

— If they didn't ask any questions about the meat, it would prohibit the conscience from judging and you will be free to enjoy the meat

26 FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS.

26 for the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains.

26 for "the earth and everything in it belong to the Lord."

26 For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

- Quoted from Ps 24:1...

- As he often did, Paul appealed to Scripture to support his statement. If everything belongs to the Lord, there is no reason to not eat the meat and give thanks for it (1 Tim 4:4).

27 If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions, for the sake of conscience.

27 If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake.

27 If an unbeliever invites you to his house and you wish to go, eat whatever is set before you, raising no question on the grounds of conscience.

27 If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

- If an unbeliever invites you into their home for a meal, and you want to go, eat any food set before you. Do not ask questions about where the meat came from.

— Not asking would dismiss the possibility of an unnecessary guilty conscience that would arise in the mind of a scrupulous believer

28 But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat *it*, for the sake of that one who informed **you and** for the sake of conscience;

28 But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat *it*, for the sake of the one who informed *you*, and for conscience' sake;

28 However, if someone says to you, "This was offered as a sacrifice," don't eat it, both out of consideration for the one who told you and also for the sake of conscience.

28 But if any man say unto you, this is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:

- If someone at the table, while you're dining in an unbeliever's home, tells you that the meat served was sacrificed to idols, do not eat it

— The reason you are not to eat it is for the sake of the one who told you that the meat was sacrificed to idols. They obviously have a problem with the meat, or thought that you as a Christian should know because he thought it was wrong for a Christian to eat meat sacrificed to idols

- "...and" - *kai*, ascensive, thus better translated "even" to clarify that the reference is to the conscience of the person who informed that the meat was sacrificed to idols

29 Now by "**conscience**" I do not mean your own, but the other person's; for **why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?**

29 I mean not your own conscience, but the other *man's*; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?

29 I mean, of course, his conscience, not yours. For why should my freedom be determined by someone else's conscience?

29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?

— "...conscience" - not a reference to his convictions about right and wrong, but his moral/spiritual conscience. He does not want his Christian guest to be unaware that he is being served food that the Christian may object to, and might choose to abstain from partaking.

— We might think that in such a situation, Paul would have advocated exercising Christian liberty to eat the meat, but he did not. He advocated abstaining, not because such meat was out of bounds for believers (because it was not out of bounds). He advocated abstaining for the sake of *the pagan's* moral conscience. Specifically, if the Christian ate the meat, the pagan might conclude that his guest was doing something Christians should not do. He would be wrong, of course, yet Paul advocated not violating the pagan's understanding of what Christians should or should not do, rather than have the Christian instruct the pagan about Christian freedom at the table.

- Paul says in Rom 14 that some believers are convinced one way, others another, but let each man be convinced in his own mind. But, of course, if a weaker conscience believer (or unbeliever) has a problem with eating meat sacrificed to idols and it comes to attention, then the stronger conscience believer should abstain for their conscience' sake.
- "...why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?" - another (believer or pagan) man's conscience should affect you, because his spiritual welfare is more important than your Christian liberty

30 If I **partake with thankfulness**, why am I slandered about that for which I give thanks?

30 If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?

30 If I eat with thankfulness, why should I be denounced because of what I am thankful for?

30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?

- "...partake with thankfulness" - eat with a clear conscience, and am not offending anyone else's conscience

— Since the meat itself was not the problem, no one should judge another Christian who can eat meat sacrificed to idols, as long as they don't violate their own conscience or someone else's.

- Paul had eaten non-kosher food with Gentiles, but he just advocated abstaining from such food when eating with pagans. The difference, of course, is that sacrificial meat was only off limits for Paul when it offended the moral consciousness of the pagans he was eating with, not all the time.

— Christians can give thanks to God for whatever they eat, but should limit one's own liberty out of consideration for what other people may think is proper

— We do not need to alter our *convictions* for the sake of others (even if they speak evil of us, Cf. 9:19-23), but we should be willing to change our *behavior* for the sake of unbelievers to those weaker in the faith

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God.

31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.

31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

- What glorifies God? Consideration for the consciences of other people and promotion of their well-being. This is in contrast with the observance of distinctions between foods, our personal preferences, and insistence on one's own rights.

- What glorifies God is anything that puts His preferences, plans and program first (Col 3:17; Cf. 1 Peter 4:11). Underneath this is not so much *what* you do, but *why* you do it. It is our motives that Christ will judge at the *Bema* Seat.
- Paul advocated asking "Is this amoral activity edifying?" (v23-30; 6:12), but also "Will it glorify God?" God's own glory is the ultimate foundation of ethics.

32 Do not **offend****Jews** or **Greeks**, or the **church of God**;

32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;

32 Don't become a stumbling block to Jews or Greeks or to the church of God,

32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

- "...offend" - don't do something that either hinders an unbeliever from coming to Christ, or hinders a believer from growing in Christ
- Christians are supposed to act in a way that puts the gospel, and the glory of God, ahead of all other personal interests, freedoms, and preferences whether he is a Jew (9:20) or Gentile (9:21), so that he might come to faith in Christ
- The following distinctions are not ethnic distinctions, but rather religious distinctions
- "...Jews" - an unbelieving Jew, who practices Judaism
- If a Jew becomes a Christian, he doesn't become something else ethnically; he is still an ethnic Jew. By believing, he has become a "true Jew" or a Jew who has completed his Jewishness by believing in the Jewish Messiah (Rom 2:28; 9:6; Gal 6:16).
- "...Greeks" - an unbelieving Greek, who practices paganism
- If a Greek becomes a Christian, he is still an ethnic Greek; it does not change his ethnic identity or render it totally irrelevant, it just makes him a Christian
- "...church of God" - composed of ethnic Jews and Greeks who are co-equals with Christ (Cf. Rom 9:3; Gal 3:28; Eph 3:6). It is the co-equality of both Jew and Gentile believers that distinguishes the NT church from OT Israel.

33 just as I **also please everyone in all things**, not seeking my own benefit but the **benefit** of the many, so that they may be **saved**.

33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the *profit* of the many, so that they may be saved.

33 just as I myself try to please everybody in every way. I don't look out for my own benefit, but rather for the benefit of many people, so that they might be saved.

33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

- "...I also please everyone in all things" - out of context, we could interpret this verse as Paul was a "man pleaser" (Cf. Gal 1:10). However, in context, he meant that he did not allow

his own attitudes or activities in non-moral areas to create barriers between himself and those he sought to reach spiritually.

- "...saved" – *sōzō*, aorist tense, referring to justification (first tense salvation)
- More often than we think, low conduct in Christian living is connected to little regard for the lost
- Paul never sought his own profit, but that all may be saved

If you're seeking to engage the unbelieving world, you want to avoid offending them. Could the exercise of your Christian freedom offend an unbeliever? Possibly. Don't immediately assume they will embrace all you plan to do. Some may be unsaved but still have very conservative values. Would your actions offend them? If so, you've not moved them closer to Christ. You've nudged them further away. [Nyquist]

Christian freedom is not given to us for our own sake but for the sake of others. [Barclay]