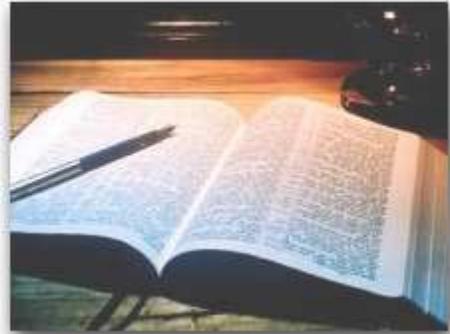


High Peaks Bible Fellowship

Guidelines for Christian Behavior 1 Corinthians 10:14-33

Introduction

- Throughout the first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul had given warnings about falling into various sins or causing a fellow-Christian to stumble.
- In chapter eight he showed that meat sacrificed to idols was not tainted, that an idol is not divine, and that there is no God but one. The bigger issue was not to offend a weaker brother, but to yield our rights out of love for others.
- In chapter nine Paul had illustrated this principle from his own life, using his right to the support of the churches, which he yielded in order not to hinder the gospel.
- In the first part of chapter ten, Paul provided illustrations from the life of his own people, the nation of Israel. They had been given wonderful privileges and blessings, but that was no guarantee of immunity from temptation and sin.
- In this section of chapter ten, Paul exhorts us to protect ourselves from sinful activities and ends by giving specific instructions for using or yielding Christian liberty.



Warnings About Idolatry

The Command (1 Cor 10:14)

- "Therefore" = in view of what Paul has just said. The near context is the statement in 1 Cor 10:13 about temptation, indicating that the way of escape is to "flee idolatry." This statement also occurs in the larger context about the Israelites' privileges and their fall into sin. Paul wants to apply the example of the Israelites to the Corinthians' situation regarding participation in feasts held in the pagan temples.
- "Flee from idolatry" = to seek safety by flight, to escape safely out of danger. Paul had used this same word in 1 Cor 6:18 when he commanded the Corinthians to flee immorality, and in 1 Timothy 6:11 Paul used this same word when he commanded Timothy to flee from the love of money.

The Reasoning Behind the Command (1 Cor 10:15-22)

- "To wise men" (phronimos) = ones who use the mind. Paul wanted them to make proper use of their minds to think through what he was about to say concerning their association with idolatry.
- "You yourselves judge" = you sit in the judge's seat!

Communion as a result of the Lord's Supper celebration (1 Cor 10:16-17)

- *Communion* is a word that describes a close fellowship or union with something or becoming a partaker of something or establishing a close attachment to something. Here Paul will use three different activities to show that there is a close association or communion that is developed as a result of participating in them.
- "The cup of blessing which we bless" *and* "The bread which we break" = This identifies Paul's first example as the Lord's Supper.

- "A sharing in the blood of Christ" and "A sharing in the body of Christ" = koinonia means fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, or intimacy. In the case of the Lord's Supper, believers have close communion and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ as members of His body.
- By participating in the ceremony of the Lord's Supper, believers identify themselves with His saving act on the cross and they are dedicating themselves to serving Him as Lord and Master.
- "We who are many are one body" = We are part of something organic, a body of which we form a vital part. Believers are many in terms of their diversity, but they are united together just as the various parts of the body are united to form a single unit.
- "We all partake of the one bread" = to share or partake of, to belong to. We show publicly that we are united and belong to the same loaf, or the same body, which is the body of Christ.

Communion as a result of the Jewish Temple Ceremony (1 Cor 10:18)

- "Look at the nation Israel" = Now Paul illustrates this principle from the life of his own people, the Nation of Israel.
- "Are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar" = Among the Jews those who participated in the temple rituals and sacrifices were regarded as being one people who worship one God. To partake of a Jewish sacrifice in a holy place, was an act of Jewish worship.

Communion as a result of the pagan temple feasts (1 Cor 10:19-20)

- "What do I mean then?" = literally, What then am I declaring? In other words, "What follows from all of these analogies?"
- "That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?" = One of Paul's audience might think he was saying that idols are on the same level as God, so Paul reminded them of what he said in 1 Cor 8:4, that there is no such thing as an idol and that there is no God but one. In that earlier passage, Paul denied the deity of their so-called gods. Here in this passage Paul gives additional explanation about the reality of those so-called gods.
- "Is a thing sacrificed to idols anything or is an idol anything? No! BUT... the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons" = It is true that the block of wood or stone is just a representation that has no life of its own, but behind all this there are demons in the spiritual realm that are connected with idol worship.
- "I do not want you to become sharers in demons" = The word for *sharers* is the same term used of sharing in the Lord's Supper and in the Jewish temple rituals. Paul is saying that there was no way to eat the sacrificial meat in the pagan feasts without having communion with demons. This was not because the meat or the eating process was defiling, but because of the place and the circumstances in which they were eating. Paul clearly stated that they were not to participate in this activity.

The incompatibility of mixing these activities (1 Cor 10:21)

- "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord" or "partake of the table of the Lord" and "drink the cup of demons" or "partake of the table of demons" = These two activities are completely incompatible. Paul had shown by several analogies that intimate communion is the result of participating in these activities, and once a believer is dedicated to the Lord he cannot also be dedicated to demons.
- This is very similar to Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 6:15-20 where he emphasized that our union with Christ should prevent us from being united with something that would damage our relationship with God. He had said, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!" (1 Cor 6:15) This same principle should be applied to participating in demonic idolatry.

The Lord's perspective on becoming partakers in demonically inspired things (1 Cor 10:22)

- "Provoke the Lord to jealousy" = In the last verse we saw that it is impossible to be the friend of God and the friend of demons at the same time. In this verse, we are told WHY: It is because the Lord Himself will not allow it ! The Corinthians should not attend these feasts unless they wanted to incur the displeasure

of God Himself !

Guidelines for Using Christian Liberty

Restating the Guiding Principles (1 Cor 10:23-24)

- "All things are lawful for me" = as in 1 Cor 6:12, this was apparently a specific quote from some of the believers in Corinth which they used in order to justify their immorality. This statement was not true unless it was restricted or limited by each clause which follows.
- "Not all things are profitable" = to bring together or contribute; to be expedient or worthwhile. This is almost a word-for-word restatement of Paul's earlier teaching.
- "Not all things edify" = to build up something or someone. This is the term used for building up others within the body of Christ toward maturity in their faith, and it brings in the fact that others are to be considered when you decide on your actions.
- "Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor" = Here Paul makes explicit what was implied in the previous statement that "not all things edify." We must take into account the edification of others before participating in some activities. There may be times when we will need to restrict or yield our freedom in order to ensure that others are edified or built up in their faith.
- In the context of this chapter, Paul obviously meant that the Corinthian Christians should not eat meat associated with idols if it would damage another believer's faith. In a broader sense, he meant that we should not focus on self-gratification or doing things that give us as much pleasure as possible in this life. We should have a focus on serving others and looking out for the needs of others.

Specific Instructions for Household Shopping (1 Cor 10:25-26)

- "Eat anything that is sold in the meat market" = meat is just meat, and it does not matter which market you buy it from. In the grocery store the meat is completely isolated from any context of idol worship and should be treated like any other product on the shelves.
- Paul had just stated a very important principle to guide our behavior, that we should do everything for the good of others. The good of others should be a very important factor, but it is not meant to be the rule for everything we do. In the case of buying food in the market for our own household use, Paul says "If it doesn't bother your conscience then buy it and eat it."
- "Without asking questions for conscience' sake" = We are not required to make a detailed investigation into the source of everything that we purchase or eat. This was quite different from how the apostle Paul was raised and lived his life as a Pharisaical Jew.
- "FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS" (Psalm 24:1) = Paul used this Scripture to justify why it was all right to eat the meat purchased in the market -- it all belongs to the Lord !

Specific Instructions for Dining with Unbelievers (1 Cor 10:27-30)

- "If one of the unbelievers" = This implies that the social contacts between believers and unbelievers may continue after one becomes a Christian. In fact, Jesus accepted such invitations during His earthly ministry (see Luke 5:29-30; 19:7)
- "If you want to go" = This leaves the decision up to the individual believer as to whether to go or not go. Paul did not command them to go or not go, but left it to their own discretion or desire. In the Christian life, many decisions like this are simply left up to the individual.
- "Eat anything that is set before you" = As in the situation where you are eating meat in your own home, you may eat meat in another person's home without requiring a detailed investigation into the origin of the food or how it had been prepared (see 1 Cor 10:25).
- "But if anyone says to you" = With this contrast word Paul introduced an exception to his rule about eating without asking questions for conscience' sake. When you are eating in the home of others, then the principle of "the good of others" must also be considered (1 Cor 10:24).
- "This is meat sacrificed to idols" = The word Paul had used for food sacrificed to idols (*eidolothuton*) was a term that the Jews and Christians used in a derogatory way to describe idol-food. Someone who did

not want to use this derogatory meaning would use a different word (*hierothuton*) and this is the word Paul used in this verse, possibly because the one speaking was someone who approved of idol worship or because the one speaking did not want to offend such a person.

- "Do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you" = This person had just taken the eating of this meat out of the context of a private meal around a dining table and put it into the context of eating idol-meal that had been consecrated in a temple (*hierothuton*). In this new context, a believer would be forbidden to eat of the meat -- it would be as if he were eating in a pagan feast.
- "For conscience sake" = This repeats what Paul had said in 1 Cor 8:10-12 where he explained that we should limit our liberty in order not to wound another person's conscience. Someone else's legalism should not make *us* legalistic, but we can graciously defer our rights when we are in a specific circumstance with that person.

"Why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?"

- One thing we notice is that Paul switched from the second person (you) to the first person (I) as a way of instructing them by putting himself in their place.
- A second thing we notice is that the Greek terms for "the other" (*heteros*) and "another" (*allos*) are different in this phrase. "The other" refers to the specific person who informed them that the meat was idol-meat (1 Cor 10:28), but the term "another" could refer to any other person. If another guest knew that the meat was idol-meat but the believer did not know it, then the believer should have the freedom to eat it without being condemned by someone else's conscience.
- Three possible meanings:
 1. The stronger Christian may be protesting against having to yield his rights every time his behavior might wound another person's conscience. But this seems contrary to Paul's admonition to a stronger Christian that he *should* yield his rights when another person's conscience may be wounded.
 2. Paul may be emphasizing what he had just said about not eating in cases when it might offend a weaker brother. This option views the phrase as support for eating without asking questions of conscience. If your own conscience is not bothered about eating, and if eating will not offend a weaker brother, then you can eat without fear of judgment.
 3. Paul may be saying that it is best for the stronger believer to refrain from eating so as not to expose his liberty to condemnation. It would be as if he were saying "Why should exercising my freedom become the cause of condemnation by a weaker believer who is more legalistic?" This places the emphasis on the term for *judgment* in this phrase, and seems to fit well with the words of the verse that follows.
- "If I partake with thankfulness" = This implies that your own conscience is not bothered by eating this meat. It is clearly not a matter of offending yourself, but of offending someone else's conscience.
- "Why am I slandered" = This presents the possibility that the use of one's legitimate Christian liberty could be spoken ill of or slandered by others. In other words, why should my liberty be reproached because of my careless use of it?

What about eating at a public feast in the pagan temple?

- This was the third case when a believer might come into contact with meat sacrificed to idols, and Paul had actually dealt with this case first (see 1 Cor 8:10 and 1 Cor 10:14-22). In this case, the believer was to completely avoid a situation where sacrificial meat was served in the direct context of a religious service focused on idols.

How can a Christian decide whether an activity is acceptable in today's world?

- There are some Christians who believe that the life of faith is a matter of Black and White. For them, everything falls into one of two categories: in any circumstance a thing is either RIGHT or it is WRONG, and there is no middle ground.
- There are other Christians who live by a different motto: "That which the Bible



does not explicitly prohibit is permitted." To them, everything not specifically identified as a sin in the Bible is allowable under any circumstances.

- But the biblical position presented by Paul in First Corinthians leaves a significant gray area in which each believer is called upon to make decisions for himself regarding his behavior in specific circumstances.
- There are some things which are definitely wrong for a Christian under any circumstances. There are other activities that are wrong for a Christian, but not because they are inherently sinful. Many of these types of activities are never specifically mentioned in the Bible, but it may be wrong for a Christian to be associated with them.



- From this chart we see that some things may be acceptable for a Christian in *some* circumstances or times or places, but these same things may not be acceptable in *other* circumstances or times or places.
- The issue of deciding whether our activities are appropriate really emphasizes that all believers should know what the Scriptures teach regarding things that are explicitly prohibited or allowed, and we must carefully follow the leading of the Lord through the promptings of the Holy Spirit. We need to be sensitive to the situations we find ourselves in and behave according to what would be most profitable in each circumstance.

The Purpose of Christian Liberty (1 Cor 10:31)

- Therefore, in the matter of eating and drinking (as well as in any other activity) the purpose that a believer should strive to achieve is the greater glory of God. If every believer kept this purpose clearly in mind all of the time, then our activities would surely change. We would do things differently if we understood that everything we do should contribute to glorifying God.

The Example of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 10:32 – 11:1)

- "Give no offense" = having nothing to strike against. Put nothing in the path which could cause another person to stumble.
- "Jews or to Greeks or the church of God" = This gives three categories of people that exist since the Day of Pentecost. There are unbelieving Jews and unbelieving Gentiles, as well as believers during the Church age. This verse reminds us of what Paul had said in 1 Cor 9:19-22 where he also mentioned these three categories of people. He became all things to all men in order to save some. Here Paul tied this in to the principle of limiting his own behavior and activities for the profit or benefit of others.

- In verse thirty-three notice that the subject of the sentence has changed from the second person (you) to the first person (I). Just as Paul did when he ended chapters eight (1 Cor 8:13) and nine (1 Cor 9:26-27), he now ends this entire section on a personal note by holding up his own example for them to follow.
- "Be imitators" (*mimetes*) = This is a command in the imperative mood. Just as Paul gave such a command in 1 Cor 4:16, here also he expected them to mimic him insofar as he was behaving in a Christ-like way.

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