

## 1 Corinthians 10:13-33

### “For The Good Of Others & The Glory Of God”

Overconfidence creates weakness. That was the basic principle Paul put forth as we were ending our time together last week. The Corinthian Christians had experienced blessing after privilege after blessing from God. *Baptized into Christ, provisions & protection from Christ, yet not really living lives that expressed gratitude toward or love for Christ. Thinking that because they'd believed in Jesus, they'd been baptized, they partook of communion that they were safe from any real form of discipline or disqualification.*

Paul reminded them that Israel was blessed, Israel was privileged in their Exodus from Egypt. They were all baptized into Moses, all partook of the same spiritual food & spiritual drink being protected & provided for by Christ as well. But w/most of them God was not well pleased, they were disciplined & disqualified from the Promised Land due to their self-serving disposition & their bodies (all but 2 of that generation) were scattered in the wilderness.

*The warning to receive was this: just because I've experienced the deliverance of God, I've been blessed, privileged & protected by God... That doesn't mean I won't be disciplined by God & disqualified from my reward should I lead an inconsiderate life of unbridled self-indulgence rather than learn to crucify my flesh, exercise self-control & walk in love toward others rather than always exercising liberty toward myself.* The Corinthians (it seems) hadn't really stopped to consider the fact that being blessed & privileged of God doesn't grant some sort of immunity from moral responsibility... Family, I find myself on repeat w/a phrase along these lines that we all (myself included) do well to take *in* & think *through*... If we want God to honor our lives, then our lives need to honor God... So Paul writes

### Vs 12-13

We want to spend a little time right here... One of the main takeaways of Vs 13 that I want you to glean is this: As it pertains to temptation; the work/way of God in my life will *always* lead to *endurance*, it will *never* lead to *indulgence*. – You see, you may be fickle, I may be frail, but *God is faithful*...

*It seems that the way many of the Corinthian's sought to squelch temptation was the same way of so many today. By simply giving in to it! Listen, getting rid of temptation through gratification is not God's way!*

They wanted that porterhouse steak from Zeus' temple market & they didn't care who it offended they were gonna go get it! (Remember, we're in the last little section of this passage that deals w/eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols). Put simply, they refused to resist the temptation to be self-indulgent.

& Paul clearly anticipated the classic rationale, "But you don't understand *my* temptation!" How many times have you run across this guy? Or better yet, how many times have *you been* this guy? Truth be told, it's probably an every hand under this roof kind of response! You want to purport (& like to think) that *your* temptation is somehow unique unto yourself! That *no one else* has ever experienced a temptation so trying as yours! So we justify & rationalize giving in to it... Paul basically grabs us up by the lapels here, slaps us around a little bit & says, "C'mon man, really? You really believe that you're *the only one* who's ever gone through temptation like you face?"

& He throws a little cold-water splash of reality in our faces & says, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man..." Translation? There's no such thing as a "superhuman" or "supernatural" temptation. **Meaning: temptation is a common human experience, none of which are ever unique unto us... Now the enemy loves to whisper that thought in your ear. "No one understands what you're going through. No one else has ever faced this like you..." It's not true. – Millions of others, if not billions of others throughout history have experienced the exact temptations that you do.**

Of course, nuances in circumstance may vary. But the underlying urges that comprise the temptation are the same for everyone. Whether it's a temptation toward lust and where that leads, or drinking/drug abuse, even something as simple as complaining or entertaining a conversation that you know you shouldn't be a part of... being in a place you shouldn't be... being tempted to fly off the rails or whatever, it doesn't matter.

Others have been where you *are* & where I *stand*... & They've overcome, *not* because they're so fierce, but because God is so faithful. Underline the precious promise if you haven't already, "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but w/the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

& Let's not be confused. He's not talking about the strength that you & I have w/in *ourselves* to bear up under temptation. Under my own strength I can't even resist the urge to eat a snickerdoodle, much less something that would be (or could be) a sinful situation... He's speaking of the strength w/stand temptation as found in the Person & power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives...

But we find here that not only is the temptation that confronts us *common*, it's also *controlled*. God screens every temptation to ensure that you won't be tempted beyond your ability to endure! Be it through this world, your flesh, or the devil, God promises to limit your temptation w/in the confines of your ability to endure as you rely upon Him.

Often times we don't agree. But through testing, trials & temptations God is allowing us to be placed in a situation that we might grow through it. Like being at the gym... There you are, you're lifting, you're at the end of your ability... But your buddy is like, "One more set, you got this..." "No I don't", "It's all you..." & You do one more set, you didn't think you could, but your coach knew it was in you... You may think you don't have the strength, God knows it's in you (because it's the work of His Spirit through you).

If it were up to Satan, we'd all already be destroyed. Just like he wanted to do w/Job, he wants to do w/you. Jesus told Peter that Satan had asked for him... because he wanted to sift him as wheat... What terrifying words to be told! – Jesus said, *"But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail;"*<sup>1</sup> What a wonderful truth to be reminded of. – That the Lord intercedes on our behalf... God will keep you from what you can't handle.

*"... & w/the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." So, not only will God limit the scope of our temptation, but He will make a way of escape available as well. Now, He won't force you to take the way of escape, but He will make the way of escape.*

& As I mentioned a few minutes ago; gratification through giving into temptation will never be the way of escape that God makes for you & me. Many times, we face the same temptation over & over because we've not learned to take the way of escape...

Many of you know that I enjoy training Brazilian jiu-jitsu. When someone figures out a way to pass your guard, or submit you, you'll find that they put you in that same place of compromise over & over again. & You're like, "How many times are you going to do this to me!?" & The response is typically something along the lines of, "Until you figure out how to stop it." The idea being that until you take the way of escape, it's just going to happen again & again... Even so, until we learn to crucify the flesh, to take the way of escape, we'll often find ourselves facing that same temptation again & again.

& Notice that the way of escape isn't necessarily easy, nor does it alleviate all temptation (that place is called heaven).

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<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Lk 22:32). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The way of escape leads us to a place where we may be able to bear it, to endure it. Btw, I should also say that being tempted isn't sin. *Enduring* temptation isn't sin. *Entertaining* it (on the other hand) is... Don't flirt *with* it, flee *from* it. Notice.

#### Vs 14

You see? The key is to flee... For them it was, "Flee from the idolatry" (regarding pagan festivities in the local temples). For you & me, the application would be to flee from any person, any activity or any hobby that gets in the way, hinders, or threatens to take priority over our relationship w/the Lord.

But you recall last week, Paul reminded them that ancient Israel, by intermingling w/pagan practices fell away from God & into Idolatry... Essentially what he's leading to is that though certain *elements* aren't harmful (meaning meat is meat) the *environment* in which it's enjoyed can be (pagan temples & places where their rituals are regularly practiced).

It's true that an idol is nothing. It's wood, or stone, or gold/silver (whatever). But Satan can use those things, demonic entities are behind those things seeking to deceive people & to lead you into sin. So even though the idol is nothing, idolatry is demonic, are you following me? (You might write it down so you can read it later, Ps 106:35-39).

#### Vs 15-22

His point is that hanging out in the pagan temples, feasting & fellowshiping in that environment isn't as innocent as it may seem...

Now the Corinthians (like most Greeks in the ancient world) prided themselves on wisdom. So Paul appeals to them on that level. He knows it will cause them to perk up & consider carefully what he's about to say to them.

& Again, the point he's going to make is that it's not wise to hang out in environments where pagan festivities & rituals are taking place. It's interesting how when you begin to lay out standards that you don't want to compromise that people will quickly want to label you as being caught up in legalism. Paul would say, "It's not legalism, it's wisdom. It's not insisting on my liberty, it's choosing to walk in *love*, both for God & for others."

The question I would ask is, "Why do you want to be there in the 1<sup>st</sup> place?" A quick application might be a Christian who loves dancing. Paul would say, "Dancing is fine. David danced in worship before the Lord! *What* you're doing is no problem, but choosing *where* you do it can be." If you're out clubbing, it can be a problem.

Why? Not because of *what*, but because of *where*. You see, what does the environment lean toward? What does it glamorize & glorify? Same thing w/hanging out in a bar. You might go there, & even just enjoy a coke, no alcohol. But what's the overall emphasis of the environment? What does it point you toward, seek to tempt you with? Debauchery, fornication, drunkenness... Are those things godly or ungodly? So why marinate yourself in that kind of environment?

Paul is seeking to reinforce the critical doctrine of leading lives separate from sin. – Leave 1<sup>st</sup> Cor turn to **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6** (Vs 11-18)

& Listen, it may seem as though we've been kind of dragging this issue out over the last couple of chapters. But we've taken our time because limiting liberty w/in the spectrum of love (love for God & love for others) is worth marinating *in* & meditating *on*.

Back in our present passage, Paul says, "Look, when we drink of the cup of the vine, when we eat/partake of the broken bread... is it not the communion (the joining together as one) of the blood & of the body of Christ?"

In the ancient world when we shared a meal, we became one with one another. We didn't use utensils. There would be a soup kind of dish on the table, bread on the table, we'd all break from the same loaf, dip in the same dish (no double dipping wasn't a thing, we simply dipped together, ate together) our germs are mixing together, we're sharing the same meal & as such becoming one w/one another. & In the partaking of the elements of communion we're acknowledging that we're one w/Christ. It's *His broken* body that has made us *whole*, it's the pouring out of *His* life that's given *us* life. He in us & we in Him, there's a unity amongst us.

Even so (Paul is saying), when you're at a pagan banquet, given in honor of these idols (behind which are demons) you're consenting to unity w/these demons who are taking advantage of misdirected worship. – That's why he speaks of Israel (after the flesh). Meaning, when you would bring a peace offering to the tabernacle, the idea was that the priest would offer the fat upon the altar, that was God's portion. The priest would take a portion, your family would take a portion & the picture was one of fellowship w/God. God is receiving the same sacrifice that you're partaking of, there's a oneness a fellowship w/God...

& Here Paul is drawing that same connection when feasting at a pagan temple. So, it's not the meat you're eating (an idol is nothing) it's the place that you're *meeting*. There are specific connotations/implications behind it, & they're not godly.

Israel was disciplined radically for partaking in festivities revolving around idolatry. That's why he says, "You can't drink the cup of the Lord in the one hand & the cup of demons in the other..." Remember what we just read? "What fellowship has Christ w/Belial. What agreement has the temple of God w/idols?"

Do you really want to provoke the Lord to jealousy? Do you think you're going to win that fight? God has called us to holiness & we choose to hang out in a corrupt environment? That's skating on thin ice my friend... playing w/sin, tempting God... & It's not that God is jealous of some demonic entity... He's jealous for *you* & your spiritual well-being. You'll open yourself up to demonic influence even unwittingly.

Again, the meat itself is fine. It doesn't have some sort of magical contamination or demonic cooties attached to it. No need to beware of the meat, but beware of where you *meet*. Make sense? I'll trust that the Lord will lead you into application of that in your own life... The Corinthian Christians were probably thinking, "We didn't *intend* to give way to demonic worship @ these pagan feasts!" Listen, if you put your hand in a fire, it doesn't matter if you don't *intend* to get burned, you're getting burned...

#### Vs 23-24

We've touched on this principle in Vs 23 back in Ch 6 Vs 12. The nutshell of this Vs is this: Rather than seeking out things that won't *hurt* you, make it your aim to seek out things that will actually *help* you. Things that will lead to your growth, your dedication, your consecration & service to the Lord. Instead of considering, "What's the harm in it?" Perhaps consider, "Where's the help in it?"

Just because something is allowed under liberty, doesn't mean it's going to benefit you (or those around you) in any way. Be careful of adopting that mentality that seeks to find out how much you can get away w/& still be considered a Christian... You're already headed the wrong direction. The self-seeking direction.

Our heart *should be* not about self, but rather about others. Vs 24, "Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being." What you're considering being a part of *may* not harm you, but how will impact others around you? – & This is where we circle back to *love* being the primary guiding force in my life as opposed to *liberty*. I should be considerate of my influence upon those around me.

#### Vs 25-26

You see? It's not about the meat. That cow/lamb etc is *God's* creation. It's the Lord's on the hoof, it's the Lord's on the grill... it doesn't matter.



Just don't say, "Hey, why is this prime cut so much cheaper? Did it come from a temple sacrifice or something?" Don't ask questions, just buy it & eat it. Because it's not about the animal, it's about the atmosphere of idolatry.

### Vs 27-30

Again, the idea in play is consideration for others. If an unbeliever asks you to come over for dinner & you wanna go, just eat what they set before you. Don't say, "Hey, this wasn't offered to an idol was it?" Because again, it's not the meat, but the atmosphere of where you're meeting.

But if perhaps another believer leans over & says, "Hey, I saw them pick this up down at Aphrodite's select steak house..." Or perhaps the host tells you, "I'm sorry I wasn't even thinking about it, you Christians don't eat meat from these meat markets do you?" For whatever reason, someone makes it known. That's telling you they have a check in their conscience. So for their sake, politely & courteously decline & thank them for their hospitality. Don't violate someone else's conscience through your liberty, instead, walk in love.

If you're at your own home, & you want that cut of meat, then go for it. Be thankful between you & the Lord. Vs 31 is the key.

### Vs 31-33

Of course he's not talking about being a man pleaser in the sense of compromising his walk w/Christ. He's saying, "Be willing to meet people where they're at so that you might build a bridge that leads them to Christ."

If rather than thinking, "Can I get away w/this?" We'd think, "Can I glorify God through this?" It would solve a lot of otherwise weird dilemmas in our lives. Things would go so much easier if we just thought of the good of others & the glory of God... That's why we're here. To see people saved, sanctified & serving God... that our lives might bring *glory* to God.

So let it act as a barometer of sorts in your life... is it good for others, can it glorify God? & May we learn what it means, "... Not seeking my own profit, but the profit many... (why)... that they may be saved."

**Prayer Points:**

Thank You Father for the straightforward nature of Your Word. That You're willing to meet us where we're at & lead us in the way that we should go. May we take Your Word to heart. When confronted w/temptation that we take the way of escape. Fleeing it rather than flirting w/it. & May we honor You w/our lives... The things we do, the things we say, may it serve our brother's & sister's good & Your glory...

If you don't know the Lord, than let today be the day that *you* are saved. That's why we're here. That we might *know & grow* in J.C. who has loved us & given Himself for us upon the cross. His body broken, His blood shed so that we might find the forgiveness of sin in Him, everlasting life through faith in His work on our behalf.