

Do It All For The Glory Of God

1 Corinthians 10:1-11:1

Key Verse: 10:31

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

Chapters 8-10 of 1 Corinthians should be considered as one section that deals with Christian freedom in the context of food sacrificed to idols. In chapter 8 Paul taught us the principle that we have freedom in Christ, but this freedom must be limited by love. In chapter 9, Paul shared his own example. Although he was free, he made himself a slave to everyone in order to win as many as possible. In chapter 10, Paul shared lessons from Israel's history through which he gave us warnings. He encourages us to please God with our freedom. This is Memorial Day weekend in the United States. We remember the soldiers who have fallen in battle to gain and protect our freedom. Most of all, we remember Jesus Christ who shed his blood to set us free from sin. Let's learn today to please God with our freedom.

I. Lessons from history (1-13)

In verse 1a, Paul begins, "For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact...." The fact refers to actual events of Israel's history. What is history? E.H. Carr said, "History is the conversation between the past and the present." So we need to study history. In verses 1-4, Paul reminds the Corinthians of God's grace to Israel in the wilderness. Look at verses 1b-2. "...that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." This was just after God delivered Israel from bondage in

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Egypt, where they had spent 430 long years as slaves. They were miserable and without hope. All they could do was cry out to the Lord in helplessness and agony. Then the Lord had mercy on them and sent Moses to them as a deliverer. Through Moses, God broke Pharaoh's iron grip and set them free. They were no longer slaves of Pharaoh, but became children of God. God had a vision for them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

However, there was a problem. The Israelites still thought and acted like slaves. They needed training. So God led them to the shore of the Red Sea and allowed the Egyptian army to come up behind them. Caught between the two, the Israelites seemed destined to die. Then the Lord opened the Red Sea and gave them a way out. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as on dry ground (Heb 11:29). Then God led them through the desert. The heat of a desert is unbearable. The sun is direct and scorching hot. But God was with them in a cloud, like an umbrella or a natural air conditioner. God protected them from the dangers in the desert. Paul sees their experience as a mass baptism into God's family to enjoy a blessed life as God's children. It was time for them to give up their cravings for the sinful pleasures of Egypt, and to live for God's holy purpose.

Look at verses 3-4. "They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ." While living in the desert the Israelites needed food and drink. So God provided manna every day for forty years. When they needed meat, God provided quail for them. God nourished them and made them strong. God also provided water. Paul calls it "spiritual" food and drink. This means that God provided it, and it had a spiritual meaning. In Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses clearly tells

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them: "[God] humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." Through manna training, God taught them that man needs spiritual food as well as physical food. Man is not just an animal. Man cannot be satisfied with physical food alone. When we eat spiritual food, then we can be satisfied. So Jesus said in John 6:35, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." Also, they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Christ was with them, traveling together, even in the desert. When they were thirsty, Christ gave them water. Jesus said in John 7:37b, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

In verses 1-4, the word "all" appears five times in the original Greek. They "all" received God's grace in the desert without exception. So there was no reason for them to distrust God. Look at verse 5. "Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert." This refers to the event recorded in Numbers chapters 13-14. The Israelites were at the border of the promised land. According to God's instruction, Moses sent twelve leaders to spy out the land for forty days. When they returned, ten of them reported, "The land is flowing with milk and honey. But there are strong and powerful people living there. They live in fortified cities. They all look like Mike Tyson and we look like grasshoppers" (Num 13:27 ff.). These ten men forgot God's grace and God's mighty work among them. They only saw the situation and the biceps of their enemies, trembled in fear, and gave a bad report. Their bad report spread bad influence like a contagious disease.

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However, Caleb and Joshua were different from them. They remembered God's grace and power. They believed God would give them victory if God was pleased with them. But the people did not listen to them. They listened to the bad report. People have a tendency to accept bad news without examination. Then the whole Israelite community began to weep and wail in fear and distress. They grumbled against Moses and Aaron and decided to choose a new leader and go back to Egypt. They totally forgot God's abundant grace. They became stubborn, rebellious and devilish. So God was not pleased with them. God became angry with them and their bodies were scattered over the desert. Only Caleb and Joshua, the men who had faith in God, entered the promised land.

Here we learn that to please God or not please God makes a great difference. It is the difference between victory and defeat, success and failure, life and death. When we please God, God blesses us and everything goes well. When we don't please God, everything is difficult. Though we do our best, we face sudden accidents and unexpected diseases. One man earned a lot of money by working hard, even on Sunday. But one day he got sick and used all of his money to pay medical bills. We may try to do many things in this world, becoming great and famous through hard study. But if we do not please God, our lives will be miserable. Therefore, with the abundant grace that Christ has given us, we must strive to please God in all that we do (2 Cor 5:9).

How can we please God? The only way to please God is through faith. Hebrews 11:6a says, "...without faith it is impossible to please God." God was pleased with Joshua and Caleb when they had faith in God. They were men of courage and spirit

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who could see things from God's point of view. They were ready to challenge the impossible by faith. So God was pleased and blessed them with victory throughout their lifetimes. Caleb was strong and full of spirit, even at the age of 85. Joshua led Israel to conquer the promised land. Also, their descendants were blessed because of them. So many are named "Joshua" and "Caleb" in our time.

The man of unbelief and the man of faith may witness the same event, yet see it differently. The man of unbelief sees things negatively and says, "It is impossible." However, the man of faith sees everything in God and says, "It is possible." The man of unbelief complains about everything. However, the man of faith always thanks God in all circumstances. The man of unbelief makes excuses not to participate in God's work. But the man of faith builds up the work of God at every opportunity. The man of unbelief easily despairs and gives up. However, the man of faith never despairs and never gives up; he can do everything by faith in Christ who strengthens him (Php 4:13). As he struggles to bring God's sheep to Jesus through the Purdue Conference, the man of faith never despairs and never gives up. He experiences the power of faith and the power of prayer until he grows to be a spiritual giant. In our democratic way of living, we are used to following the majority. But the man of faith does not follow the majority. He follows God's truth. We can please God when we have faith in God. So let's be men and women of faith.

Look at verse 6. "Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did." Israel's history teaches us not to set our hearts on evil things. In verses 7-10, Paul warns against idolatry, sexual immorality, testing the Lord, and grumbling. Look at verse 7. "Do not be idolaters,

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as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." This refers to the event when the Israelites made a golden calf, bowed down to it, and said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt" (Ex 32:6). Nowadays in America, television has become a venue for idol worship. As one sociologist has pointed out, in many American homes, the television occupies the place where the family altar used to be. Even the most faithful churchgoers watch television at least five times as much as they read the Bible or pray. It is no wonder that evil images occupy our minds and hearts. Many Americans know that someone named David won American Idol. But they do not know the David of the Bible who is a shadow of Christ.

In verses 8-10, Paul warned them that we should not commit sexual immorality, and that we should not test the Lord, and we should not grumble. We don't usually think of grumbling as a serious matter. But here, the grumbling is against God and his servants. Moses told the Israelites, "You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord" (Ex 16:8; Nu 16:11). Grumbling in this way is the sin of rebellion and it spreads like a wildfire to contaminate communities and even nations. God deals with the sin of grumbling against him seriously.

Verse 12 warns those who have strong faith and are able to eat food sacrificed to idols. They think that they stand firm. But they must be careful that they don't fall. There is a danger that those with strong faith may not rely on God absolutely through prayer. They think, "I can handle it." In that moment they become vulnerable. We must be aware of Satan's work. We must depend on God and pray to God. We should not be proud, but humble before God. Look at verse 13. Even though we depend on God, Satan tempts us. So we face many difficulties. But God

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is faithful. So God provides a way out so that we can bear up under it. If we are not proud, but humbly depend on God, he will take care of us. He will help us not to fall into temptation. Then we can make glorious history as individuals, a community, and a nation.

II. For the glory of God (10:14-11:1)

After giving them history lessons, Paul gives direct advice in verse 14: "flee from idolatry." This means to run away like Joseph did. We need to flee from everything that stimulates our sinful nature and lustful desires, including evil friends who tempt us. Some Corinthians tried to participate in Christian fellowship and at the same time idol feasts. But idol feasts lead to demon worship. We cannot worship the holy God and evil demons at the same time. We cannot serve two masters (Mt 6:24). We must worship God alone. These days many people try to make their own god, by combining the things they like from all the different religions and philosophies. Then they say, "This is my god." The problem is that demons are real and they actively draw men to worship them. Some people seek spirituality through new age religion, and by going to rock concerts or movies. We must have spiritual discernment to recognize the work of demons and avoid it.

Verses 23-24 reiterate that we have freedom. But we must use this freedom for the good of others. Verses 25-30 are an example. We are free to eat everything. We can freely eat and drink with unbelievers. But if our dinner companion says, "This has been offered to an idol," it is better not to eat to make it clear that we don't condone idolatry and to protect the conscience of weaker brothers and sisters.

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Look at verse 31. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." This is the general principle of Christian life and our spiritual direction: "Do it all for the glory of God." Paul tells us to begin with eating and drinking. These are ordinary activities that most people don't think too much about. Many may say that generally they eat and drink in order to enjoy themselves and be healthy. But Paul explains that Christians do these things for the glory of God. If we can do these things for the glory of God, we can do everything for the glory of God. One young man was very selfish and self-centered. During meal time he did not speak to others in order to enjoy the taste of food by himself. Then his shepherd challenged him to speak a few words at meal time for the glory of God and to encourage others. It was not easy for this young man to change his eating habit. But through intensive struggle and the persistent encouragement of his shepherd he could do so by the grace of God. Changing his attitude toward eating changed his whole attitude toward life. He began to live for the glory of God in many ways and became a devoted servant of God's word. Nowadays, Ilya began to say a few words to others for the glory of God, especially after hearing that his wife received a U.S. visa.

Paul strongly encourages us that how we use our bodies is important. We must be good stewards of our bodies for the glory of God. Paul said in Romans 6:13: "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness...offer the parts of your body to God as instruments of righteousness." Yesterday NEIU coworkers had a car wash. It was for the purpose of raising money for airfare for the Latin American delegates attending the Purdue Conference. They had a car wash for the glory of God, using their hands and feet diligently. We must do whatever we do for the glory of God. When we have a clear purpose to live for the

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glory of God, we can have spiritual discernment. Sometimes we don't know if something is right or not, or what to do when several options arise that conflict with each other. But when we do everything for the glory of God, God gives us spiritual insight to know what we should do and what we should avoid. That is why Paul encourages us to "...find out what pleases the Lord" (Eph 5:10).

Why should we do everything for the glory of God? Man was created to glorify God. This is our purpose of life. When we live for the glory of God, our lives become absolutely meaningful and happy. If one does not live for the glory of God, his thinking becomes futile and his foolish heart is darkened (Ro 1:21). Eventually he becomes an idol worshiper. When Christ is at the center, God is pleased and we are happy. If we put ourselves at the center, we cannot please God even if we do many religious activities. We must think about our life goal. Is it for the glory of God, or for our own glory? Practically, living for the glory of God involves participating in saving souls to fulfill God's world salvation plan. This gives great glory to God (32-33). For this, Paul denied himself to please everyone in every way.

Look at 11:1. "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." Christ served others to save them. Jesus said in John 17:4, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." Jesus glorified God by completing his mission. Jesus' mission was to raise twelve disciples. Jesus' mission was to die on the cross for our sins. To carry out this mission Jesus had to deny himself through Gethsemane prayer. In this way Jesus glorified God. Paul followed Jesus' example, and so should we. Then we can please God and we can live a

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victorious life throughout our lifetime. Also, we can leave a good spiritual inheritance to our descendants.

Let's read 10:31. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."