

**I Corinthians
Chapter 10:16-33**

VERSE 16:

"The cup of blessing which we bless" - is the cup over which we give thanks or we ask God's blessing upon it, as the Lord did when He instituted the Lord's Supper - **Matthew 26:27**. The wine in the cup represented the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ by which we receive the forgiveness of sins. This Divine Truth stirs the hearts of those who are saved. It causes them to - **"bless"** - praise or give thanks unto God for what the wine represents which is the shed blood of Jesus Christ His Son which - **"cleanseth us from all sin"** - **I John 1:7**

Notice the words **"which we bless"** in **verse 16**. This phrase indicates it was the entire church that gave praise and thanks for the cup and what it represented. If more members of New Testament churches realized this fact and would truly give thanks from the heart and praise God for the shed blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper would have much more meaning to them.

In **verse 16** the word **"communion"** is used twice which in the Greek language speaks of a participation in, a sharing in the recognition of the wonderful blessings because of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. These blessings and effects to the believer include, but are not limited to the following: the ransom paid for, or the redemption of the believer; the being freed from guilt and penalty of sin; therefore the forgiveness of sins; joy, peace and assurance.

Then, there is the symbol of the body of Christ, which is - **"The bread which we break."** Paul speaks of the bread as symbol of - **"the communion of the body of Christ."** As well, when we take of the Lord's Supper, the bread represents God becoming man and taking upon Himself a body of flesh. Paul tells us that God becoming man and dying on the cross and shedding His blood has brought us into fellowship with Christ.

The observance of the Lord's Supper is more than taking symbols. It is a celebration of a wonderful relationship we have with God through Jesus Christ. We have fellowship with God. In **I Corinthians 1:9** - Paul states that we have been - **"called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."** It is a fellowship we enjoy and experience because of what Jesus has done for us.

VERSES 17-18:

"For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." It is clear from this verse that the - **"one bread"**, one loaf not only represented the literal human body of Christ - **Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; I Corinthians 10:16**, but also represents the local church - the only kind of church mentioned in the New Testament as being the kind of church Jesus started and built during His earthly ministry.

Paul illustrates this point in - **verse 18. "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?"** He pointed back to the sacrifices offered in the Old Testament. When a sacrifice was brought it was shared. A portion of it was burnt on the altar, a portion was eaten by the priests, and a portion was eaten by those who offered it. There was a sharing, a fellowship, a communion involved.

VERSES 19-20a: Pagans with demons

Pagans are actually involved in fellowship with demons when they eat the sacrificial meat offered to their respective gods. Paul repeated what he had written earlier - **8:4-8**. Idols were nothing, non-personal beings, and the sacrifices made to them were nothing. They sacrifice to demons, not to the true God - **Deuteronomy 32:17**.

Although idols actually do not exist, demons use men's close relationship to worship idols to get worship for themselves. Unsaved men, totally deceived and blinded spiritually, are unaware that they are actually fellowshiping with the world of evil spirits. Consequently, idol worship is not morally neutral; it is sinful, evil and must be avoided completely - **Revelation 9:20; Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:16-17; Psalm 106:34-39**.

Apparently, there were those in the church that were once again worshipping idols and false gods. They were mixing a part of their old life with their new life. Paul wants them to know that such idols were nothing more than wood, stone, marble and the result of man's making.

VERSES 20b-21:

In **verses 21-22** we see God's response to - **verses 19-20**. If there is an improper fellowship it results in an impossible fellowship.

In **verse 21**- Paul uses the word "**cannot**" twice. The emphasis tells us there is something that is impossible. There cannot be fellowship with the Lord and fellowship with the demonic world.

In **Matthew 6:24** - Jesus said "**No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.**" In the case of the Corinthians, there were some that were worshipping the true and living God along with other gods. Paul tells them this is impossible. You cannot have fellowship with demons and God at the same time. Notice the word "**partakers**" in - **verse 21**. The word means, "to have something in common with another." If we are having anything in common with this world, the flesh, and the devil, then fellowship with God is impossible.

Based upon the preceding section, Paul's conclusions are clear. He did not want the Corinthians to have - "**fellowship with devils** (demons)" through participation in the pagan temple feasts. He pointed out that it was impossible for them to have joint fellowship with Christ and His people, and with demons and their worshipers. They are not able to drink from two cups simultaneously. Thus, Christians must be submissive only to Christ.

If there is to be fellowship with God, then He must be first and foremost in our life. If I may put it this way, you can't let other things be first in your life Monday through Saturday, and then expect to have fellowship with God on Sunday. There is no middle ground here. There is no gray area. We cannot have fellowship with God and devils at the same time.

VERSE 22:

The Bible often states that the Lord is a jealous God. The idea of the Lord being jealous is what a husband or wife would feel if their mate was being unfaithful. The Lord wants to be first in our life. He wants our complete devotion and does not want to share that devotion with any other "god." He wants us to be faithful to Him! **James 4:4** says, **"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."**

When we are saved we become a child of God and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It is God's desire that He becomes the master of our life. When Satan gets his foot in the door and we began to have affairs with this world, we commit spiritual adultery. We have been brought into a relationship with God, but are having a relationship with the world.

The question is asked in the latter part of **verse 22 - "are we stronger than he?"** Paul is telling us that to make God jealous is potentially a dangerous circumstance. If we think we can stand against God then we are foolish. Paul is warning us that God is not One that you want to provoke! Here is a serious question for us to think about. Are we making God jealous because we are being unfaithful to Him and trying to serve two masters?

When Israel fell into idolatry, God said - **"They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities..."** **Deuteronomy 32:21**. By their abuse of liberty, the older and more mature Christians were doing the same thing. Jealousy is wounded love. By unconsciously fellowshiping with demons, the believers committed spiritual adultery. In doing such they were about to bring God's jealous anger and chastisement upon themselves. God would never eat with Satan, thus they were doing what God, Himself, would not do. By their actions, they were manifesting that they were even stronger than God. Naturally, no believer is stronger than God.

In this day and time God's children have a tendency to think that idols and idolatry are something that only applied to Bible times. But, the simple truth is that idolatry is a big problem among believers. I doubt any so call Christians would have little statues or images in your home to bow down to each day. But, idolatry involves more than an image or statute.

God is to be first in our life and anything that is put before God is idolatry. **I John 5:21** says, **"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."** John knew children of God would often put things before God and he encouraged them to guard themselves lest we also be guilty of this sin.

Behind all idolatry in our life is the work of Satan to get us to put other things before God. If the devil can't get God's children to leave God, he will do his best to get them to put something before God. When God is moved to second place, we are entering into fellowship that is a partnership with demons. That's a sobering thought, but it is true when we put other things before God.

VERSE 23:

The believer should remember he is always linked with the Lord's table, that his behavior is to be in accordance with the **"communion"** and should be careful as to how far he participates in things that the world think nothing of. **"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not."**

Twice in **verse 23** Paul speaks of that which is - "**lawful**". This phrase is used by Paul earlier in **I Corinthians**. It is a phrase he uses to speak of our freedom and liberty in Christ. When the Bible does not give a specific answer to it being right or wrong then it must be judged on the basis of our influence on younger Christians. Our liberties under grace should never become a stumbling block to those who observe our behavior. It may be "**lawful**" for us to do, but not "**expedient**".

The believer is not put under rules and regulations; he is free and is at liberty to do the things that he believes is right and which are not morally wrong. "**Expedient**" - means, "to bear together." It speaks of bringing something to a wholesome conclusion. When something is not "**expedient**", it means that it does not produce spiritual benefits in the life. It is not profitable spiritually.

Let the child of God stop and ask the question in regard to a matter, "Will it edify, bless, and help to make Christ more precious to me? Is there a possibility it may cause anyone else to stumble?" If it would not edify then it is something from which I must turn. I am not bound by these things; I am here to seek the blessing of others, not to do my own will.

When it comes to the gray areas of life the things in which the Bible does not give a clear yes or no to, it is possible that it would not be wrong for a Christian. When Paul said - "**all things are lawful for me**" that is what he was saying. He was acknowledging when a matter is not clearly defined as right or wrong, a Christian could possibly do such a thing and it would not be sin. But, the gauge that Paul applied to such things was whether or not it would bring a good conclusion in a believer's life. Would it bring about spiritual benefits?

The truth of the matter is that often times our life is built around things that are not wrong, yet have no spiritual value in our life. We ought to ask ourselves, "How does this help me spiritually? Is what I am doing beneficial to me in a way that helps me as a Christian?" A life that seeks to glorify God will apply such a test.

In the latter part of - **verse 23** Paul says, "**but all things edify not.**" The word "**edify**" - is a word that means "to build a house." It is a word used in the New Testament to describe spiritual growth, the building up of the Christian life. For the other side of the gauge, Paul applied what he did as to whether or not it lent to spiritual growth and the development of spiritual maturity.

Remember, we must not judge our actions simply by the standard of what is lawful. We must consider whether an action is "**expedient**" that is, does it bring profit? We must determine whether it "**edifies**" builds up spiritually. So, the Christian must not test doubtful things solely by whether it is "**lawful,**" but must also decide whether it is profitable and edifying. He must not consider merely his own personal interest, but must be concerned as to what effect his life will have on others.

VERSE 24:

Notice **verse 24** - "**Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.**" A wife said to a friend, "My husband and I have managed to be happy together for 20 years. I guess that is because we're both in love with the same man." That sounds like many in the family of God. They are self-centered and all they do is for them.

Paul tells us that one of the characteristics of a life that glorifies God that it is not self-centered or selfish. The word - **"wealth"** which is used in **verse 24**, means the well being or welfare of another. We are commanded of God to seek to do all we can to promote the spiritual well-being of all with to whom we come into contact. A life that glorifies God seeks to lift, help, and profit others. It is not marked by selfishness, but selflessness.

Paul gives the same principle in - **Philippians 2:4** - **"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."** Some people serve for what they get out of it while others serve for what others will get out of it. Some people do what they do for their own benefit. Those who seek to glorify God do what they do so others will profit.

VERSE 25-28:

At last, Paul is ready to give a direct answer to the Corinthians' problem. The reference in **verse 25** to - **"shambles"** means a "meat market." A Christian can buy meat at such a place without asking about each piece. He receives it as a provision from the Lord who owns - **"the cattle upon the thousand hills," Psalm 50:10**. He recognizes the true God is the source of all food, both animal and vegetable - **Psalm 24:1**.

The pagan may think that the food comes from his idolatrous god, but the Christian knows it has really come from the God of creation. He can follow Paul's counsel - **"For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer," - I Timothy 4:4-5**.

After the flood, God, Himself said to the human race through Noah - **"Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things," - Genesis 9:3**. In like manner, a Christian who is invited to dine at the home of an unsaved friend is free to accept if he so wishes, and does not need to make special inquiry about each portion of food he is offered. But it is clearly stipulated that if at such a place someone specifically informs him that the meat has been used in idol worship, then the Christian should refuse to eat it, for the sake of the one who showed it, the latter being evidently troubled about the matter. This should be done lest the conscience of the informer be damaged and defiled.

A warning must be given here, for there are many who argue from this verse that a believer may do whatever he pleases with anything because we are under grace and not the law. But the command of God is - **"do all for the glory of God" - verse 31**.

VERSE 29:

Notice **verse 29** - **"Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other."** Paul was saying, it may not bother you to eat, but it would bother the weaker brother, therefore, don't eat lest you injure your testimony and hurt the other brother. Paul adds in **verse 29** - **"for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?"** Paul was saying that he had the right to eat the meat even if there other felt it was wrong, but since it could hurt the other, one was to seek the well-being of the other rather than their own.

VERSE 30:

This verse speaks to those who would criticize and condemn those who did eat such meat. He says - **"For If I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?"** It is like he is saying those who do not feel it is wrong to eat such meat should not be condemned by those who do. But the point Paul makes is that in a life that glorifies God, a believer puts others before themselves and seeks to do nothing that would hinder or hurt others.

When you think of someone living their life in light of others, the Lord Jesus is the supreme example. When we practice the kind of selflessness Paul describes, we are showing the life of Christ in our life. The life that glorifies God is one in which a guide is adopted, a guide that says I will seek the well-being of others and not seek my own.

Verse 31-33:

The word - **"offence"** means "to hit or smite." Paul is talking about doing nothing that is a blow to his testimony and witness. He speaks of three classes of people: Jew, Gentile, and Church of God. The **"church of God"** refers to those who are saved and members of the church at Corinth, while his reference to Jews and Gentiles refers to those who are unsaved.

Why is Paul concerned about what others think about him and what he does? It is because the true Christian should want everything he does to be done to the glory of God. Notice what Paul says in - **verse 31, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."** The word **"whatsoever"** includes both words and deeds - **Colossians 3:17**. This is to be the ruling motive in the believer's life; he is not to seek to just have his own way according to his whims and preferences. The words of this verse when put into practice will solve every church problem which has ever or will ever exist; and furnish the believer with the happiest, most fruitful life possible in the service of the Lord.

The word **"glory"** speaks of something or someone that is worthy of praise or exaltation. Giving glory to God is to acknowledge Him as the One worthy of praise and exaltation and ascribing Him praise and exaltation.

In **Psalm 29:1-2 - "Give unto the Lord, O ye might, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."**

Our Lord deserves glory, He desires glory, and as the Psalmist declares, He is due glory. As a child of God we can give God glory with both our lips and life. He talks about what we do and not necessarily what we say.

A child of God should desire to never "give offense", which means to put a **"stumbling block"** before another person, whether that person be a Jew, a Gentile, or a Christian. In accordance with this principle, Paul does not live to please himself, or to seek merely his own selfish profit. He lives to please others, to bring profit to others, and by this he means to lead others to Christ.

Paul's goal in life was to win people to Christ. A life that glorifies God seeks to win others to Christ and see people saved. Winning people to Christ should be a goal of every believer. I realize we can't win every person, but we should try to win everyone we can. It will make an eternal difference for each one we win to Christ.

I Corinthians 10:16-33
Study Guide

1. What does the wine in the cup represent?
2. In **verse 16** who is giving praise and thanks for what the cup represented?
3. Give at least three blessings given unto the children of God by what the cup represents.
4. What does the **"bread"** represent?
5. To who are sacrifices made when they are offered to idols?
6. **Verse 21** uses the word **"cannot"** twice. What did he refer to in this statement? Give a Bible verse to go with your answer.
7. If a person has anything in common with this world, the flesh, and the devil, then fellowship with God is _____.
8. If there is to be fellowship with God, then He must be _____ and _____.
9. What does our _____ devotion and _____ not want to _____ that devotion with any other "god."
10. Anything that is put before God in our life is _____?
11. Give the definition of "lawful" as used in **verse 23**.
12. Our liberties under grace do not permit us to become a _____?
13. When something is not **"_____"**, it means that it does not produce
14. Since we are under grace and not the law, can we do anything we want and not worry about it? What should be our attitude on doing and not doing things the Bible does not give a direct answer for?
15. When we practice the kind of selflessness Paul describes, we are showing the life of _____ in our _____.
16. Why is Paul concerned about what others think about him and what he does?
17. A child of God should desire to never be a **"_____"** to anyone. How can a child of God prevent becoming a **"_____"**?