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1 Corinthians 9:16 - 10:33



1 Corinthians - Steve Gregg

In 1 Corinthians 9:16-10:33, Paul discusses the importance of self-restraint and avoiding behaviors that may hinder the gospel's spread or cause offense to others. He emphasizes the need to focus on the ultimate goal of winning an imperishable crown and encourages Christians to become servants to all people to win them over and show love. Additionally, he warns against overconfidence and idle avoidance of temptation, and advises being careful and heedful to avoid falling. Ultimately, the passage stresses the importance of seeking the good of others, avoiding causing offense or stumbling, and imitating Christ in one's actions.

Transcript

We're picking up where we left off last time, 1 Corinthians 9 and verse 16. Because we got through verse 15 and stopped for two reasons. One was we were out of time, and another reason was that it's a reasonably good place to stop if you have to stop anywhere in the middle of a chapter.

Because we're picking up where we left off last time. Because although the discussion really continues up through verse 23, there is sort of the end of a segment of what Paul is saying there at verse 15, and he kind of turns the corner a little bit. In chapter 9, Paul is giving his own policies as an example for the Corinthians to imitate, particularly for those who are insisting upon their own rights and demanding that they be not criticized for doing whatever they want to do, even if it is stumbling to other people in the particular case that Paul is concerned about.

Some of the Corinthians apparently feeling a liberty to make sacrifice to idols, and even it would appear to go as far as to enter the feasts that were conducted in the temples of the idols, they didn't care that this bothered some other Christians, that it might stumble some other Christians, that it might lead other Christians to follow their example who didn't have the strength to do so without spiritual damage to their souls. So Paul is saying, you know, even if we allow that we do have this liberty to make sacrifice to idols, we're not to use our liberty as a means to do something unkind to our brother. And love is more important than eating, certainly, and even knowledge, because they were of

course apparently basing their liberty and practices on the claim that they knew more than others about the true nature of things, knowing as they did that idols were nothing, they were more free with this knowledge to go and flirt with idolatry without feeling that they had to necessarily participate in it.

And though they may have this knowledge, love was more important, Paul said in chapter 80, said knowledge puffs people up, love is concerned about edifying people. So he gives his own example beginning with chapter 9 verse 1, that he has a great number of privileges that he could claim for himself as an apostle, he could, as an apostle he could claim to be supported, he could require to be supported by those that he ministered to, he, just as a Christian, he has freedom to eat or drink, whatever he wants to, just like the people he's addressing claim for themselves. He has the right to be married, like other apostles obviously had the right and exercised it, Paul did not exercise these rights.

He decided against all these things because he felt like in one way or another to claim every right that he had would not be good for the progress of the gospel. For him to eat certain things that he had liberty to eat might not be beneficial for his witness, even though he could eat them it might hinder the witness and he'd just as soon not eat, it was going to stumble people and hinder the gospel. Likewise having a wife, perhaps there were times that he might think, he thought it would be nice to have a wife, but it would in some ways cramp his style as an itinerant creature.

Other men may do it, but he felt like a man with a wife has to be concerned about the things of his wife, whereas a single man can be concerned only about the things of the Lord and while there are some consolations in marriage that a man who is single does not have, nonetheless for the gospel's sake Paul felt that being single was a better deal for him. So he's saying that when a person is not putting themselves first, but some higher interest first, principally the fortunes of the kingdom of God, then they will have to at times put aside things that they have the right not to put aside. They do so voluntarily, they don't do it legalistically, they do it because of love for the brethren and because of concern for the progress of the gospel.

Now, through verse 15 of chapter 9, Paul has made a strong case, for example, for the fact that he could, if he wished, forbear working or abstain from working. Now as they knew, he did not abstain from working. He lived with them for 18 months, most of which he was living with Priscilla and Aquila and working as a tent maker, as we read in Acts chapter 18.

They knew him to be a laborer. Now Apollos probably and Peter, when they came to town, in all likelihood they didn't work for a living. One thing they probably couldn't, they didn't settle there like Paul did.

They were traveling through and therefore they allowed themselves to be supported by

the gifts of the people in the church, but Paul didn't allow that for himself. He worked instead. But he wants to make it clear that he did not take this approach because of any feeling he had of not being worthy of being supported.

He gives many reasons why he would be worthy of being supported. A laborer is worthy of his hire. Anyone who works at a job expects to be paid for the job.

Those who work in the temples, both in Jerusalem and in pagan temples, they survive off the things that are brought to the temple. The Lord himself has commanded and the law itself says that the person who labors should be able to eat. And so Paul says, this is what I could certainly lay claim to, but he says in verse 15, I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be so done to me now.

So what he's saying is, I don't want you to think that I'm making an issue of this now because I'm changing my policy. You know I didn't take money from you before, and after I make this strong case for the legitimacy of my taking money from you, I don't want you to think I'm making this case in order to say that I want you to give me money now because I don't. In fact, he says, it'd be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.

Now he's not yet said what his boasting is, and that's what he gets off into now. And that is really what the rest of the discussion through verse 23 is about, is what his particular boast was. He says, for if I preach the gospel, verse 16, I have nothing to boast of.

For necessity is laid upon me. That means it's mandatory for him. There's no boast.

You can't take any special credit for doing what you're required to do. For necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is me if I don't preach the gospel. For if I do this willingly, I have a reward, but if against my will I have been entrusted with a stewardship, what is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.

Now what he's essentially saying here is, if he wants to boast about anything, if he wants to put himself above ground level in terms of God being indebted to him for anything, if he hopes to get any special reward, he won't get it just by fulfilling his commission. He's been commissioned to preach the gospel. He's got a stewardship in that area.

A steward is expected to do what he's commissioned to do, and if he does it faithfully, he doesn't get any special rewards for it. He's just reached ground level. If he does less than he's expected to, then he's below snuff.

But you see, if Paul preaches the gospel, some people might say, well, he preaches the gospel, God should really reward him for that. Paul says, no, I'm commissioned to do that. I've got no choice in the matter.

Even if I do it unwillingly, I still have to do it because I have this commission. I have a stewardship to fulfill. Now, there's nothing to boast of simply in the fact that I do what I'm told.

Paul might be thinking specifically of something Jesus said about that very thing in Luke 17. Verses 7 through 10, because there Jesus said in Luke 17, 7 through 10, which of you having a servant plowing or tending sheep will say to him when he is coming from the field, come at once and sit down to eat. But will he not rather say to him, prepare something for my supper and gird yourself and serve me until I have eaten and drunken afterwards, you will eat and drink.

Verse nine, does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise, you, when you have done all those things which are commanded, say we are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.

You know, we've only done what was our duty and nothing more. So Jesus said a servant who works and works and works for his master diligently and faithfully and does everything he's supposed to do, even though he works hard, he doesn't expect any special congratulations. He doesn't expect a bonus.

He hasn't done anything above and beyond the call of duty. What he's doing is simply what his duty is. And you don't get special praise and special rewards and bonuses for doing what your duty is.

That's what servants are supposed to do. And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9, 16-18, that's what my duty is, is to preach the gospel. Now how then could I ever do more than is required? How could I ever bring any special boast or reward upon myself? I can't boast of just doing what I'm supposed to do.

Well, I can do more than I have to do. And I can do it in this respect. I do have to preach the gospel, that's what's required of me, but I don't have to do it for free.

I have a right to be paid. But by refusing to be paid and insisting that I work and support myself, I go beyond what is required of me to do and therefore I do something praiseworthy. Now he's not saying this in order to puff himself up or to get strokes from people.

He's just explaining to himself that for him to give up his rights is a thing he glories in. He doesn't gripe about it. To him, he glories in the fact that he can give up his rights.

Because what you have by right, by definition, is yours to claim. If you can't claim it, if you don't have a legitimate claim to it, then it's not yours by right. There are things that are not our rights.

It was not within Paul's rights to stop preaching the gospel. He didn't have the right to do

that. And therefore, for him to preach the gospel was not, in some sense, giving up his right to stop.

He didn't have any right to stop. That's not giving up any right. That's just doing what you're required to do.

But if you do more than you're required to do, if you give up some of the freedoms that you have a right to, then you're going above and beyond the call of duty and there is reward for that. And that's what he's essentially saying. By making the gospel free of charge, that's my boast, that's my reward, he says in verse 18, when I could I could require money.

Now, notice what he says at the end of verse 18. He makes the gospel free of charge that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel. Is this suggesting that by charging for the gospel, one is abusing their authority in the gospel? It's hard to say if he's implying that.

It sounds a little like it is. That if a person would preach the gospel only if there is remuneration, if he does it for charge, then he's abusing his rights in the gospel. It's almost like he does have the right to be paid, but if he charges, he's abusing that right.

Now, that's a strange thing, but that's one of the things that I get my understanding of that I've shared on other occasions, the difference between a salaried ministry and a supported ministry. There's a sense in which every person in ministry has the right to be supported to the extent that he provides a service. Those to whom he provides the service ought to reimburse, should support him.

And that is understood throughout this entire chapter and other places in scripture as well. But for him to demand it, I mean, even though it's his by right for him to say, OK, therefore I will minister if you pay me X amount, though he has the right to be paid, it's an abuse of that right if he insists upon it, if he makes it a requirement that people pay him. It seems like a fine line, because the man might receive pay in either case, whether he's salaried or not required to be salaried.

In fact, the person who's not required to be salaried might well make more money than the person who does get a salary. I've found this to be true. When I go and preach in churches, if they just say, come and preach at our church, and I do, and they'll very frequently give me some kind of honorarium.

It might be, you know, 25 bucks, 50 bucks, could even be a hundred dollars, in a few cases it's been even \$150. That's a reasonably good honorarium for preaching for usually they only give you about a half hour or 40 minutes to preach. I guess they pay you for your restraint.

But the thing here is, what seems to be there is they've got a deal. You preach, you get

paid. We'll pay you X amount.

And I'm sure they give the same amount of money no matter who does the preaching. It's sort of something the board has decided on, the board of the church, okay, we'll authorize an honorarium of X amount when we have a guest speaker. And in their mind, it's sort of like, you know, they don't agree in advance on the amount with us, with both of us who speak, but they know what it's going to be, and it's sort of like a fee.

It's like paying a fee for something. On other occasions, I've requested that the church not give me anything in particular, but just stick a basket in the back and just tell people there's one back there and if they want to put something in and let them. Not always, but usually that actually comes out a lot better than getting a fee.

Because while some churches will give maybe over \$100 as an honorarium, it'd be much more common for them to give something like \$50, whereas when there's a basket back there, it's not uncommon to get a few hundred bucks in it. Now I'm not telling you how to run your ministry, or how to finance your ministry, but I'm saying that by making it voluntary, a person might actually end up making more money than if there's a fee attached to his services, if he's charging a fee. The generosity of God's people when God touches their hearts can be greater than the generosity of someone who's setting your salary for you.

So in a sense, it's not necessarily more humble to not take a salary, or to not take a fee, to live by faith and to live off the generosity of saints. It may not be more humble or more modest, a person might even make more doing that than if they were making a salary. In fact, a friend of mine who runs a ministry back east, he founded it about the same time I founded the school, and we've had several different times we've had him preach here before.

He asked me once, when I travel and speak, he says, if they give a gift, is that for you or is that for your school? I said, well, I don't get anything from the school, so I usually live off the fees that I get when I speak outside. And he said, oh, with our organization, it's the opposite, he says, I get a salary from the organization, then any fees I get from speaking outside go to the ministry. Which actually makes sense, I mean, in a sense, that's being a little more, in some ways, probably a little more modest on his part.

Because although he probably gets a reasonable salary, when he goes and speaks at a large assembly of God church, and they take an offering, they probably bring a few thousand bucks in. And if he pocketed that, which is what I would do, that's my policy, they give it to me, I take it. But I don't speak in large groups that take big offerings like that very often, though.

And I don't let them take an offering for me in the sense of passing a plate, either. I'm just putting something in the back, it's fine. But the point is, for him to take a salary

probably limits him more than if he wouldn't.

It may be a way of keeping more accountable and more honest as far as his finances go, because anybody that comes in and offerings could be multiplied thousands of dollars in a big church. He doesn't get that, it goes to his organization, and then his check is drafted as a paycheck on a regular basis. So, I'm not trying to suggest that if a person lives by faith and does not charge, they are necessarily more modest or more humble or they're going to get less than if they did charge.

It's just a matter of principle, as, I mean, for me it is, that if I charge, it means that I'm saying, okay, I'll teach this much, you give me this much money for it. And it's sort of like a fee for services. And while there's a sense in which I would be, I'd have the right to ask for that, it's not why, I could see that as kind of an abuse of the authority of the gospel, because it's basically saying, if you don't pay me this, I'm not coming.

And I don't think that's a good policy at all. It's better, I think, just to offer your service for free, like Paul did. If people give gifts, that's fine.

In Paul's case, I don't know if he got many gifts, because he worked, he didn't need to live off gifts. But in any case, it's interesting that he seemed to think that if he charged for the gospel, he would be abusing his authority, or his right in the gospel. He had a right, but he would be abusing it if he insisted on being paid for it.

Now, verse 19, for though I am free from all men, I've made myself a servant to all, that I might win them all. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews. To those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law.

To those who are without law, as without law, not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. Now, this is a relatively familiar passage about becoming all things to all men. Actually, this expression is even known outside the church, although I'm not sure if non-Christians should know what the context is.

Now Paul is still talking about his own example as something to follow when he says in verse 19, I do this. This is what my policy is. The reason for bringing it up is to point out that they should do this too.

Namely, that he has freedom, just like the libertines in the church claim to have freedom. They have liberty to do a lot of things, but that liberty is something that is conditioned by love, and love impels me to be a servant of all people. So in a sense, I'm free from all men.

No one can make me do what I'm doing. No one can insist upon it, but love itself can constrain me to become a servant, and that's really what is a mark of spiritual leadership after all. As we know, Jesus said that very thing in Mark chapter 10.

Mark chapter 10 in verse 45, Jesus said, for even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to give his life, but to serve, and to give his life for ransom for many. And in the previous verse, he said in verse 44, whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all, or servant of all. Paul says, I've made myself servant of all, even though I'm free.

My servitude is voluntary. And Martin Luther wrote a book called *The Liberty of a Christian Man*, and his opening statement in that book was, a Christian man is a most free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

Those statements sound contradictory to each other, but they're both true in one sense. If when we mean subject to none, it means to no man. Certainly every Christian is subject to God.

But to say that a Christian man is a most free lord of all, subject to none, means that he's not answerable to men. He's not answerable even to laws as such. He is set free by Christ from bondage to men.

But he is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all. He makes himself subject to all. It's an enjoyable thing, really, to serve if you're doing it voluntarily.

If you are required to serve, sometimes that gets a bit galling. Sometimes there's things you'd rather do, and you're just under obligation, you have to show up and do the work, and a lot of times it's not a sweet deal, because you really want to be somewhere else. But if you serve someone because you love them, and voluntarily, even though they could not compel you to, there's a joy in that, which everyone here I'm sure knows from experience.

And therefore, although it is a bondage, it's a self-imposed bondage that's a delight. And so Paul says, I'm free from all men, but I've made myself a servant of all that I might win the more. Now he shows that his whole concern as an apostle and as an evangelist is to win souls.

Certainly every Christian should be concerned about winning souls, though not all do so in the manner Paul did. Not everyone's called to preach exactly like Paul was called to preach, just because not everyone has public speaking skills, nor is that everybody's calling. God gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, and of course some have other gifts besides those.

Not everyone's an evangelist, not everyone's an apostle. But all should be concerned about saving people. All should be concerned about souls being won.

And while not everyone goes out and preaches in the open air like Paul may have, or in synagogues or churches, everyone conducts themselves, every Christian should conduct themselves in such a way as to encourage the salvation of souls. Now those who are eating in the idle temples that Paul is concerned with here, are concerned only about their own liberty, their own unrestrained indulgence. They're not concerned about the souls of others, and that's the point that Paul's making, is that others can be stumbled, others can perish, for whom Christ died, by your behavior.

Every Christian should be as concerned about the saving of souls as Paul was, even if they're not an evangelist like he was. And as such, they should be willing to lay down certain rights and modify their behavior according to the sensitivities of the people that they're hoping to reach, or hoping to minister to. And Paul gives specific examples in verses 20 and 21, and 22, actually.

He goes all the way through verse 22 on this. He says, to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win the Jews. To those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law.

There's a sense in which both those categories are the same, the Jews and those under the law. He's saying that when he's with Jewish people, even though they are, you know, they're bound up in legalism, and he knows himself to be free from the law, yet his freedom doesn't mean he can't keep the law. Just because he doesn't have to keep it doesn't mean he's not allowed to.

And if it'll avoid offending the Jews who are, you know, concerned about such things, he can be concerned about those for the time being. We read, for example, of Paul going to Jerusalem in his final visit there in Acts chapter 21. James comes to him and says, you know, there's some Jewish brethren here who think that you're against the law, and they're zealous for the law.

Why don't you avoid stumbling them by doing a token of support for the law, like going and paying the Nazarite vows for these fees for these foreign Nazarites? Paul did it. It seems strange that he did it. It doesn't seem very much like him to do that in one respect, when you see how strongly he stood against Peter and so forth, when Peter compromised for the sake of the Jewish brethren.

But there is a difference. Peter was compromising the gospel itself. Paul was just there to deliver a financial gift and not to make waves.

And so he could conform to their, you know, their bondage, if necessary. He could put himself under the same bondage they were under. He probably was relieved when he left them, so he didn't have to live under that.

But when he was with them, he could restrict himself. He didn't mind if that would help

win them. Then he was for it.

He could live as under the law. But in verse 21 he says, to those who are without law, which means, of course, the Gentiles, as without law, that means he can live like a Gentile. When he's with those who are not restricted by the Jewish laws, he can live like one who's not restricted by Jewish law.

Now, of course, the principle ways in which that would be understood is he could eat food that was not kosher. He could eat in the home of somebody who served meat that wasn't properly drained of blood or that may have been meat sacrificed to idols. He didn't have to put himself under the restraints that the Jews would put themselves under.

He could, you know, if they wanted to do something on Sabbath that the Jews wouldn't do, that the Gentiles do a lot, he could do it with them. He was not constrained by the law. Now, that might be taken too far.

I mean, if he was with Gentiles, some things Gentiles did were really unacceptable to Christians. Drunkenness and lewdness and fornication and so forth were commonly practiced among Gentiles. And one could say, well, Paul, if you're with those, you know, who are without the law, you can live like them without the law.

Does that mean that you'll succumb to fornication and other moral misbehaviors? And so to clarify what he means by that, he says in parenthesis here in verse 21, not being without law toward God, but under the law toward Christ. What he means by that is although he is free from the law of Moses and therefore when he's with Gentiles, he can do things that would be against the law of Moses. If that's what they're doing and they wanted to do it with him, he can do that.

But not such things as would be against the law of Christ. He's not lawless in the sense of having no restrictions on his behavior. There is, of course, the code of Christ himself that he is not at liberty to throw off.

He is at liberty to throw off the code of Moses, though. But he makes it clear, but of course, Christ is still Lord. Even if he's among Gentiles, there are restrictions on his behavior that he must place himself under, but they're not dictated by the Jewish law.

They're dictated by Christ's commands. So that I might win those who are without the law, he says. Now that's a very important verse.

There are several verses that are useful for the same point, but this is a very good one where we can see that we are not under the law of Moses, we're under the law of Christ. And this is one of those things, of course, that comes up or is good to bring up on the issue of Sabbath, people trying to impose Sabbath law upon you. Paul said he's not under the Jewish law.

He's only under the law of Christ. If Christ didn't teach that we have to keep Sabbath, then we don't have to, even if the Jewish law commanded it. When Paul was with Gentiles, he could live like a Gentile with this one exception.

He couldn't violate the law of Christ. He couldn't violate the law of love. And it's not at all clear how doing something on Sabbath day would be a violation of the law of love.

In fact, love would demand that you do certain things on the Sabbath that Jesus himself showed. You'd pull a lamb out of a ditch. You'd loose your ox to take out in water.

You would heal a person, even if the Sabbath law forbade it, you'd do it because love demands it. The law of Christ is the only restrictor of my behavior. And the law of Moses is something I can ignore altogether when I'm with those who ignore it.

Now, when I'm with those who are under it, I live like I'm under it. Not to deceive them, but just to avoid bringing up unnecessary wedges in the relationship and stumbling them. Verse 22, to the weak I became as weak that I might become, that I might win the weak.

I become all things to all men that I might by all means save some. Now the weak, of course, is a group he's already identified earlier in chapter 8 and verse 7. He said, however, there is not in everyone that knowledge, for some with consciousness of an idol now eat it as a thing offered to an idol, and their conscience being weak is defiled. A person with a weak conscience is a person who has a tender conscience.

So Paul says in verse 22, to the weak, meaning a person who's got a tender conscience, I live like someone who's got a tender conscience too. I might feel the liberty to listen to secular rock and roll music. I might feel the liberty to drink alcohol or to go to certain forms of entertainment.

I feel like there's liberty in Christ. But if there are people whose consciences do not permit this of them, then I certainly won't either. I'll live like my conscience doesn't permit me to, even though it does.

I will become like a weak person in conscience, like a person with a tender conscience if I'm with people like that, so that I might not offend them and may leave the door open to reach them. And he says in verse 23, now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be a partaker of it with you. That is to say, it is my very willingness to yield to the cultural sensitivities of others that has allowed you to be saved, that has made it possible for me to reach you and for me to be a partaker of the gospel with you, rather than me just being a partaker of the gospel by myself.

Verse 24, do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate, which means self-controlled in all things. Now, they do it to obtain a

perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

Therefore I run thus, not with uncertainty, thus I fight, not as one who beats the air, but I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. Now Paul uses two analogies here of the Christian life, both of which suggest the need for self-discipline. One is running in a race.

The particular races in mind were of course the Greek games. We think of the Olympic games because they have survived to the present age and we know of the Olympics. Near Corinth there were regular games held that were called the Isthmian games, Isthmian being spelled I-S-T-H, like an isthmus.

Corinth was in an isthmus, like the Panama isthmus, that connects two land bodies. And in that region there were the Isthmian games. And Corinth, the city of Corinth, was honored to have the presidency over those games.

And so the Corinthians would be well aware of people running for a prize, because it was done all the time in that region. And in the days of Paul, the runners who won the races would be given a wreath made out of pine, although in some earlier ages the wreath was made out of parsley or wild celery, which are very perishable. Pine, of course, lasted a bit longer.

We had a Christmas tree one year that after Christmas we just stuck it out on the porch and it was still green for months afterwards, you know, it was dead. And then even after that for a long time it turned all orange or brown or something, but it still didn't go away. I mean, it lasted.

It was an enduring plant, even though it was dead. And that's no doubt why they changed the wreath to pine. Although it seems like that scratched the forehead a little bit to wear.

Prior to that they made them out of parsley and wild celery, which certainly couldn't have lasted very long. And Paul points out the fact that the wreath that the runners in those games win is a perishable one. And he says, we are like that.

We're running a race and we're also fighting a fight. These are two illustrations. He switches from those running in the race to those who are in a boxing match.

On the one hand, the Christian life is compared to an athletic event. On the other hand, it's more like a fight or a warfare. And just like anyone who is in competition and hopes to win must exercise self-restraint in areas that those who are not concerned about winning such prizes don't exercise self-restraint in.

Anyone here who played football in high school or something may know the phenomenon of being in training. You know, the season's coming on and your coach

doesn't let you eat too much. You have to get the right weight.

You can't go out drinking on weekends and things like that. You've got to put yourself under restraints that you wouldn't do if you weren't in training. I don't know if they still do that.

I'm not sure whether they... You know, with our libertarian society, if anyone restricts themselves anymore... And there's always the phenomenon of players who broke training. But the point that Paul's making is something serious about winning the game. They are willing to make certain sacrifices in order to fit themselves to win.

He says that they are temperate, in verse 25. Those who compete for the prize are self-controlled. That's what temperate means.

They exercise self-control in all things. They exercise a self-control. And they do this to get what? A crown that's going to vanish.

A crown that's going to wither up and disappear. And eventually just be a memory to them that they once won a game. Whereas we are in a game, as it were, in a competition for eternity.

And our crown is an eternal one. Which, of course, the argument is, how much more should we be self-controlled in all things? We're in training, as it were. Now, when he says in verse 24, Don't you know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives a prize? That's true in the Olympic Games, in the Isthmian Games, and so forth.

In a race, one person breaks the tape, not more than one. However, in this game we're in, we're all capable of winning. And he says in verse 24, So run in such a way that you may obtain it.

Now, you, there, at the end of verse 24, is plural. Which may not be significant, because he's speaking to them as a group. But it sounds like he's saying, run the race in such a way that all of you can win.

Not like the Greek Games, where only one person could win. But in this competition we can all win, and we should be concerned about all winning. We should run this race in such a way as to encourage others to break the tape with us.

So that we can also have them with us to win it. And that's, of course, what he was saying in verse 23. I put restraint on myself, I am temperate in all things, I govern my behavior according to other people's sensitivities, and thus lay down my rights in many things.

Why? So that I don't win this thing alone, but I can win it with you. So that I can be a partaker of the gospel with you. And that's how you have to be.

Even though in a Greek race only one person wins the prize, yet in this race we're in, we can all win, and we should run in such a way that we will all win it together. Now, why does he say that? Because a person who is only concerned about his own soul, he can get away with a lot of things. If he understands liberty.

If he understands that, you know, you can do a lot of things that aren't exactly sin, even though they're questionable, and still be saved. But just being saved isn't the whole goal. It's getting all of us saved together.

It's having us all win the prize. Not just me breaking the tape, not just making sure I finish the race, but make sure all my friends finish the race. I don't want to stumble them along the way.

Yeah, Aaron? If someone's into the occult, you mean if you participate with them? I would say that would be an area that would be very controversial. For instance, if I was witnessing to somebody who went to seances, and they were trying to persuade me to go to the seance. Well, on one hand, I could say, well, I'm not afraid of demons.

I believe the demons are there, and I can just go there, pray it up, and I'll plead the blood of Christ, and I'll be filled with the Spirit, and maybe my presence may even do some good there. On the other hand, the Scripture says, don't consult mediums. So even though I could argue on one hand, well, whatever dangers are there won't have to be dangerous to me, because I have Jesus, and I'm strong, and whatever.

Yet, some would say, but you're not supposed to go at all, and participation in the occult is forbidden. I guess some would say, well, I'm not really participating. I'm just there.

And I guess it would be a controversial area. I guess some would say, well, I may be here, but I'm not really partaking of the Spirit of this thing. I'm here remaining untainted.

I'm here remaining pure. And it'd probably be comparable to a Corinthian Christian going into the idol's feast and saying, well, I'm here, but I'm not worshipping an idol. Everyone else is, but I'm not.

I'm standing resolute and undefiled. And maybe they were. At least maybe it was possible to.

Paul didn't seem to be convinced that they were remaining as undefiled as they felt they were. But maybe it is possible for someone to do that. It would be maybe comparable to this, though.

It would be an area which is controversial. And it would be a matter of conscience for the individual, which means no one could justly judge someone else on it, perhaps. On the other hand, one could anticipate being judged by people if they did that, because they would know that that would really go against the grain of a lot of Christians.

So Paul says we need to run the race in such a way as to encourage all of us to win. And anyone who wants to run a race restricts himself, is what he's saying. He's self-controlled.

And they do this to win some meager, perishable crown. We're running for an imperishable crown. How much more should we be willing, for the sake of all of our brothers finishing the race with us, to avoid things that might be lawful for us, but which would assemble others along this race? He says in verse 26, and this is where he shifts the message, he shifts the metaphor from a runner to a fighter.

Therefore I run thus, not with uncertainty. Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air. I don't run aimlessly, and I don't fight sham enemies.

I'm not shadowboxing. There's a real race to be won, and a real enemy to overcome. This is not a game.

We're not in the playground, we're in the battleground. And therefore, self-discipline, self-restraint, is called for, more than if it was just a game. A runner in the Olympics, if he decides to run aimlessly and wildly, and run off the course and so forth, if that's his idea of having a good time, he can get away with it.

He won't win the race, but so what, it's just a race. If he doesn't win, a lot of people don't win. At least he had a good time not winning.

Weaving around the track, and breaking the rules, sure he's not going to get anything for it, but most people aren't going to get anything, even who kept the rules. Only one person is going to get something. But losing a race like that is no big tragedy.

But the race we're running, to lose it is an eternal tragedy. And the enemy we're fighting is not just a shadow, it's not just a sparring partner, it's someone who will kill us if we don't beat him. And who it is he's fighting is, interestingly in this context, not the devil.

We know we're at war against Prince V and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this age, but the war he's fighting here is against his flesh, against his body. He fights, but what he's fighting isn't just air. It's not just nothing.

He's fighting something, and he's fighting something that really has to be brought into subjection. He's got to pin this opponent, or knock it out. He says, I discipline my body.

You know the word discipline, my body, in the Greek here, literally, from what I've read, it literally means I give myself a black eye. Which, I don't know why he'd use that particular metaphor, but he's using the boxing metaphor. But the Greek word actually means to give a black eye to, rather than discipline.

Some translations say I buff it, or I pummel my body, which is like, you know, self-

flagellation, self-beating. Now Paul is not speaking literally, of either giving himself a black eye, or flagellating himself with a whip, or beating himself up with his fists. He is speaking figuratively.

He is speaking figuratively, that he is hard on himself. He's hard on his flesh. Deliberately so.

Not out of legalism, but because he understands what is at stake, that there are eternal things that he is willing to be hard on himself now for, in order to have less to regret later, and more to gain, as the winner of the contest. So he disciplines, or pummels his body, and I bring it into subjection. Lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

Now he indicates that if he does not exercise the kind of restraint that he needs to, and bring his body under subjection, though he has been a preacher to others, he may end up disqualifying himself. Now this disqualified is something that, you know, what does it mean? People have different opinions. I think, if I'm not mistaken, I wish I had looked this up before, I'm sorry, I looked it up before, and my memory is a little faint on it.

I believe the word in the Greek that's translated disqualified means disapproved. I think that's the literal meaning. I think it's reprobate.

I think it's the same word that's translated reprobate, but I want you to look that up before you write that in the notes in your Bible. But some people say, well, Paul is concerned about losing his salvation. Even though he's been a Christian preacher, he could lose his salvation, if he doesn't control himself.

Others say, no, you can't lose your salvation, and therefore he's just talking about losing his reward. He's not going to win the prize. He's going to lose his crown or his rewards.

Or he might be put on the shelf, God will disqualify him for further service, but he'll be saved, yet it's by fire and so forth. I mean, there are some who will do anything to prevent this from meaning that Paul sees himself as capable of losing his salvation. However, it seems to me that loss of his salvation is in fact what he is referring to.

And I say it because of how he illustrates it in chapter 10. Remember that chapter divisions are artificial. Paul didn't put this chapter division there.

Immediately after saying that he has to discipline himself and keep himself under subjection to avoid being disqualified, he gives examples from the Old Testament of people who were disqualified after having had a good start. Now Paul says, I preach to others, I've got, you know, a bit of a history of serving God, but I may yet, if I give up on my self-restraint, I mean my self-discipline and so forth, I could be disqualified yet. And he gives examples of others in the Old Testament who started out with a decent relationship with God, but fell away.

And that's what he's doing in the first 11 verses of chapter 10, which we will now read. Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud and passed through the sea. All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

All ate the same spiritual food, all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. Now, what he's saying is that all of our fathers, obviously the ones he has in mind here, are the Jews who escaped from Egypt with Moses passing through the sea and so forth. They all started out saved, they were all redeemed by God.

They drank spiritual food, I mean, ate spiritual food, drank spiritual drink, and were baptized, as it were. Now, of course, the things he's pointing out there are kind of non-literal. The manna that they ate wasn't actually spiritual in itself.

And the water they drank wasn't really spiritual drink. But Paul takes a little liberty there in seeing the type there. Jesus himself indicated that he was the bread of life and he did so in a context where manna was being discussed in John chapter 6. The Jews said, Moses gave us bread from heaven.

And Jesus said, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. The Father gives you bread from heaven and I'm the bread from heaven. Implying that what the manna was in the Old Testament, he was spiritually in the New.

What Paul is saying is that what the Jews went through in coming out of Egypt had many parallels to our own case. In fact, he says that in verse 6. Now, these things became our examples. The word examples there is types.

Greek word is typos, types. These things that happened to them were like types of our experience, is what he's saying. These were our types to the intent that we should not lust after evil things like they also lusted.

So, what he's saying is the experience of the Jews coming out of Egypt was a type of our own experience. And it's quite clear of what aspects of our experience he thinks it was type of. By the way, he words it in telling a story.

They were baptized into Moses as they passed through the sea. What he's saying is going through the Red Sea was like a type of baptism. What baptism is to us, that was to them.

They were redeemed by God from slavery and then they were baptized, as it were. And they ate miraculously supplied water and bread. And that's a type of the spiritual nourishment we have in eating Christ the bread of life and drinking of the Holy Spirit, the living water.

Now, he's using this way of speaking in order to draw an exact connection between their experience and ours. And to say this was a type of our experience. Now, what's he saying? They were saved like we are saved.

I mean, there were some differences before Christ came, but the point is they were saved people. They were delivered, baptized, spirit-filled, whatever. Now, not all of that is exactly true.

They didn't go through water baptism of the sort we did. They weren't filled with the Spirit in the sense we are. But what he's trying to say is here we have an example in the Old Testament of saved people with many parallels to our own salvation.

Now what? Verse 5. With most of them God was not well pleased for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. That is dead bodies. Now, these things became our examples to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

Now, they were examples or types of us in two respects. One is that they were saved and another is that many of them fell away and died under the judgment of God. Their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

I didn't comment on the end of verse 4 where it says the rock was Christ or even the previous phrase that says the rock that followed them. That's a difficult phrase. Actually, the rabbis taught that the rock from which the Jews drank shortly after they came out of Egypt was the same rock that they later drank out of drank from later in their journeys and that that rock actually had traveled with them, had followed them.

Now, it's unlikely that Paul is trying to confirm the rabbinic teaching on that as if the Jews wandered through the wilderness with a big rock rolling around behind them like a puppy in tow. Paul is somewhat spiritualizing and stylizing his retelling of this historical stuff for the very purpose of showing the parallels. Christ was with them is what he's saying just like Christ is with us.

Early in their wandering and late in their wandering both they encountered the rock and drank from it so also it's as if the rock followed them wherever they went. And that certainly is the case with Christ. He follows us or he's with us.

We follow him, actually. And we drink the Holy Spirit that he gives us, the living water. To press this too literally would be going beyond what Paul intends.

Obviously, he's not really saying that passing through the Red Sea was baptism. They didn't even get wet. Or that the manna was really spiritual food.

It was angel food, but it was physical. It wasn't spiritual. Likewise, the water they drank.

And therefore, though he says the rock followed them, he's speaking figuratively. He's

not speaking literally there. But the idea is to show the connection.

But not only in their being saved do they resemble us, but in their falling in the wilderness when they rebelled. And this is an expansion on what he said in verse 27 of chapter 9. Where he says, lest when I preach to others, I myself should be disqualified. For example, this happened to our fathers, some of them.

They were saved. They served God for a while. But many of them fell and were not saved, I think is what he's implying.

He goes on in verse 7. And do not become idolaters, as were some of them. As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. The quote actually has to do with when they made the golden calf in Exodus 32.

And they ate and drank and then they rose up to play. Play in that case seems to speak of immorality, in all likelihood. Fornication.

And he goes on in verse 8. Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did. And in one day 23,000 fell. This is a reference to Numbers chapter 25 when through the counsel of Balaam, Balaam sent women among the Jews to seduce them into idolatry and into fornication.

And it brought a plague on the Jews, which was only ended when the priest hurled a sphere through an offending couple and killed them. Although Numbers tells us 24,000 fell dead, Paul tells us 23,000 fell. Some have tried to explain it this way.

Well, Paul says in one day 23,000 fell. Numbers just gives us the total. Maybe 23,000 fell in one day and then the other thousand fell the next day, so 24,000 were slain.

But that's I think a little bit silly. Frankly, I mean, Paul would get his figures in the same place as we do from the book of Numbers. Paul wasn't there unless we wanted it.

God gave him divine inspiration as he was writing 1 Corinthians. The number was 23,000 that died in one day. The other thousand died the next day.

It's more likely Paul is speaking from memory and no doubt he got it right. You see, we don't have the original manuscripts of Numbers. Paul had earlier ones than we do and the ones that he had were closer to the originals and probably said 23,000.

Ours say 24,000 which may reflect a later textual corruption in Numbers. That is probably the case. It doesn't matter, of course, whether it's 23,000 or 24,000, but some people stumble over discrepancies like this.

In all likelihood, we're dealing with a case where there's a textual corruption there. No big deal, though. The point is a lot of people died because of immorality in that case.

Verse 9, Nor let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted and were destroyed by serpents. The story he's referring to there about them being destroyed by serpents was in Numbers 21. God sent to judge Israel fiery serpents among them and some of them were spared by Moses erecting a bronze snake on a pole which by the instruction of God, if they looked at it, they'd be healed of the snake bite, though many died.

And this too was a judgment from God upon people who had previously been saved by God out of Egypt, which is a type of Christians being saved out of sin. Verse 10, Do not murmur, complain under your breath and gripe as some of them also murmured and they were destroyed by the destroyer. It's hard to know exactly what it referred to here, probably Numbers 14 where when the spies brought back the negative report about the land, the people murmured against Moses and Aaron and complained and God struck a bunch of them dead because of it.

And that's no doubt the reference to the destroyer here. The point is Paul catalogs a few of the instances where the Jews, having once been saved, nonetheless behaved unworthily and inappropriately, rebelliously or sinfully and suffered for it. They died and they died under God's wrath and judgment.

Now, it does not specifically say they went to hell. And those who believe in eternal security could still say, well, Paul might be warning us that if we sin like them, we may die. It is possible for a Christian to physically die under the judgment of God and still go to heaven.

Such people often point to Ananias and Sapphira as a possible example of this. They say Ananias and Sapphira were in the church, they were saved people, but they lied to the Holy Spirit and God snuffed them. But they went to heaven.

The judgment they experienced was just temporal, just a shortening of their earthly life because God was so displeased with what they did. But that doesn't have anything to say about whether they went to heaven or not. So they would argue.

But the point here is that Paul is not trying to use these examples to threaten us that God is going to kill us physically if we sin. That is, of course, the way his judgment was seen on the people of Israel. So was his salvation.

His salvation then was a physical deliverance from physical slavery. And his judgment was a physical judgment of physical death. But the things that this refers to in type are spiritual realities.

A spiritual salvation from spiritual slavery. And no doubt the judgment implied, and that we're warning it, is a spiritual judgment of death, spiritual death. The only other way to understand it is that he's trying to tell the Corinthians that if they misbehave, God's going to send physical death to them as a judgment.

And that is not an impossibility. In chapter 11 he tells them that their abuse of the Lord's table has resulted in many of them being sick and weak and some of them even died under the judgment of God. So that God could, in fact, inflict them with physical death is a possibility.

However, Paul is giving these illustrations to illustrate his statement at the end of verse 9 that he fears that he might be, if he doesn't behave himself, disqualified in some sense. Or unapproved. Now, that's not the same thing as experiencing physical judgment of death.

Although, I mean, maybe he considered that was a possible thing, too. But that's not the same concern. To die is one thing.

To be disapproved by God is another. And I think that Paul is here using the illustration of the physical death of the Israelites under God's judgment as a type of our spiritual death or our loss of salvation. If we apostatize and if we don't behave, we can be sucked back into the world.

Look at 2 Peter 2 Peter 2 verse 19. It says, While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption, for by whom a person is overcome, by him he is also brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb, a dog returns to his own vomit and a sow having been washed to her wallowing in the mire. Now Peter says, 2 Peter 2 verses 19-22 Peter says that those who become entangled again in the world after having been set free by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ come into a state that is worse than the state they were in in the beginning.

And it doesn't sound like they're still saved if that's the case. In James chapter 5, the very closing statements in this book of James, verses 19-20 James says, Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns the sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. It doesn't just save him from physical death or physical chastening of the Lord, he saves his soul from death.

That means the person who has wandered from the truth his soul is in danger of death unless someone turns him back to the right way again. The person who does turn him back has saved that person's soul from death, although he's a brother who has wandered from the truth. So, it certainly sounds like Paul and James and Peter would teach that although a person is saved, if they rebel against God and are entangled again

in sin and wander from the truth, then they are in grave danger of spiritual death.

And of course, the physical death of the Israelites in this particular illustration is a type of that. And so, he says so in 1 Corinthians 10 11. Now, all these things happen to them as examples.

Once again, the word examples is types. As in verse 6, both verses in the Greek New Testament use the word types. They were types of the Christians' experience.

They were types in their salvation and they were types in their rejection. They correspond to what is true of us. All of them all these things happen to them as examples and are types and they are written for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages have come.

Now, this expression on whom the ends of the ages have come is an interesting one. And it's very much like some other expressions that are not exactly like it, but not too different from it. I mean, the last days, the final hour, that kind of expression is found not really infrequently in the Scripture.

In fact, in Hebrews chapter 9, almost the same expression is found. I'm pretty sure it is in Hebrews 9. 9.26, thanks. It says, He would then have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world, but now once at the end of the ages He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Now, notice, the writer of Hebrews says that Christ has appeared, meaning at His first coming, when He died, at the end of the ages. And in Hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 and 2, the same writer says, God, who at various times and in different ways, spoken times, passed to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, again referring to the time that Jesus came, marked the last days, or the end of the ages. Paul talked that way too, as we can see right here.

He says, those of us, meaning Himself and His contemporaries, on whom the end of the ages has come. John said in 1 John 4, Beloved, it is the final hour, and as you have heard that Antichrist shall come, I'm sorry, this is 1 John 2, even so many Antichrists have come, whereby we know it is the final hour. Peter said that Jesus was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

That's in 1 Peter chapter 1 in verse 20. So, Peter, the writer of Hebrews, Paul, John, all of these writers in the New Testament spoke of the time in which they lived, the time since the coming of Christ, as the final hour, the last days, the end of the ages. And how are we to understand this? It's clear that we can't use those expressions the way that naturally comes to mind in our own dispensationally influenced culture, because we would, when dispensationalists hear these terms, they just apply them to the very end of the world.

But that hardly seems to be right. Now, there's two possibilities. One is that the New Testament writers saw in the coming of Christ the beginning of the end.

But that end is a very, very long time. The last days are really thousands of years. The last days were the whole church age.

It's not entirely possible. But, to my mind, it seems a little unlikely that John would call this the final hour if what he meant is this hour last 2,000 years. Or last days, it would be more probably the last centuries, the last millennia, if he means 2,000 years duration.

In my understanding, of course, he's talking about the end of the Jewish age. And the bringing in of the new age of the Messiah. Jesus came to issue in a new order, a new covenant, a new creation.

An age that was different than the previous ages. And the previous age had been in force for 1,400 years, since the time of Moses, the age of the law. The age of Judaism.

But that age, though Paul was a Jew, he saw that in his lifetime, the end of the Jewish era had come. And, of course, it was marked finally when all the trappings of Judaism simply disappeared and vanished when Temple was destroyed in 7 AD. It brought an end to all the trappings of Judaism.

But Paul and his companions saw the time from Jesus coming to the time when the Temple was itself destroyed and Judaism abolished as the end of the Jewish age. They were living in the final generation of the age of the law and of Judaism. And it was also the first generation of a new age.

It was sort of overlapping. Interestingly, those Jews who came out of Egypt that Paul's just been talking about were living in an overlapping time frame, too. It was at the end of an age of slavery, but it was the beginning of an age of being a nation.

And yet, before they became a nation in the sense of having property and getting promised land, they wandered for 40 years, one generation. They were out of Egypt, but they weren't in the promised land yet. They were sort of a transitional generation.

When the first covenant came, it was established at Sinai, but there was another 40 years before the Jews were able to settle into the full benefits of being the nation of God, the holy nation, and so forth, and conquer the land. Likewise, when God made the new covenant, it seems like there was a transitional generation where the new covenant had come, but not all the trappings of the old were gone. And it wasn't until the old was gone that the age had come to a full end.

And Paul, I think, and Peter and John and others, the writer of Hebrews, saw themselves as living at the end of an age, or the end of all the ages previous. And the coming of the ultimate and eternal age of the Messiah was at hand, or had even broken in already. It's

an expression that we have to deal with.

We find it in Scripture from time to time, and it's obvious the apostles use it in a sense differently than it's popularly used today. Now, verse 12 says, Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you, except such as is common to man.

But God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond what you are able, but what the temptation will also make the way of escape that you may be able to bear it. Now, when he says God won't let you be tempted beyond what you're able to bear, that assumes that you don't go walking into special temptations. You certainly can be tempted beyond what you're able to bear if you're stupid enough to invite it.

What Paul is advocating here is not going into the idols' feasts. You're inviting trouble. You're inviting temptation.

You're putting yourself in the devil's path. God has given you a way of escape from that. Don't go in.

That's the way to escape it. If you think you stand, be careful. You could fall.

Now, notice that. Because on one hand, in verse 13, he seems to indicate you can't fall because God won't let you be tempted beyond what you're able to bear, yet he warns them they could fall if they're foolish and overconfident. God's way of escape from temptation is by not being overly self-confident, by avoiding temptation, and he says it very clearly in verse 14, therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

Now, what he's saying here is that no one can say, well, if I fall into idolatry, it's God's fault. God let me down. You know, I was just living as a Christian, but I had the liberty to go into this idol feast, but I ended up falling into idolatry.

That's not my fault. That's God's fault. He's supposed to protect me in situations like that.

No. God gives you ways of escape from that kind of temptation. And, obviously, the way of escape is to flee from it, to flee from idolatry.

Not try to get as cozy with it as you can, but get as far from it as you can, he says in verse 14. Now, I believe that if you are availing yourself of every opportunity God gives you to avoid temptation, that there will no temptation come to you that you cannot bear without God giving you a way of escape from it. But the assumption is that you are not courting temptation, that you are not flirting with temptation, that you are not overconfidently putting yourself unnecessarily in a position where temptation will be extreme.

If you are doing that unnecessarily, God is not making any promises. You can fall, and you better take heed, lest you do. But, if you are interested in staying holy, you can.

Because you are really not subject to temptations more than any other men are. All men are subject to essentially the same kind of temptations you are. But God does give you a way of escape, and that is, you know, you flee from temptation.

You don't just stand there and say, well, I'm going to stay right here in the midst of temptation, and God's going to give me a way of escape. Which means, I guess, although I'm not going anywhere, I'm going to remain unscathed by this thing. But the way of escape is to get out of there.

And that's what Paul is saying, it seems to me. Yes, sir? If you are witnessing to somebody, in what situation? In an idle temple? Okay, you've got a scenario where a woman, a girl, is practicing the occult, and if you want to witness to them, what, you've got to go practice the occult with them? I think those who practice the occult definitely need to be witnessed to. I don't know that going to seances, or going to idle temples, or whatever, is the only place to find them.

And if that is where we go, we may give the impression that we're participating, even if we're not. We may be construed as endorsing it as not a bad place to go. I mean, even though it isn't maybe hurting us to be there, our presence there advertises that we see nothing wrong with being there.

Now, what they may not see is there is something wrong with them being there because it's hurting them. But they don't always read between the lines. They just say, oh, he goes here, he must think it's okay.

There has been a desire, I don't know when this started, I suppose it probably started with my generation, I think it continues with this present generation now, of Christians, of radical Christians, a desire to not be stuffy, to not be prudish, to not be too separatist, and to show that we're really pretty free, and we're pretty hip, and we're, you know, sure we're saved, but Jesus doesn't make you unhip. I mean, you're saved, but you can still go to parties, you're saved, but you can still go into bars, to witness, of course. Maybe drink a little bit, but maybe even not drink, but just go in there and witness.

Or, we're saved and we can go right in there into the snake pit. And some might say, well, someone's got to go there. Not necessarily.

The people who are in the snake pit don't spend all their time there. You can find these people elsewhere. Sometimes people say, well, if you don't put your kids in public school, who's going to reach the kids who are in the public school? Well, there's other places that public school kids go, besides school, that they can be reached at.

Ideally at home, since their parents are supposed to reach them, but if my kids are the

ones who are supposed to reach them, they'll have to reach them somewhere else. Because I don't see an awful lot of reaching being done in the public schools. I was in public school as a Christian.

I witnessed, I preached. I didn't reach anyone. At least in most of the years of my public schooling.

Public schooling itself now has even become more restrictive, so you can't reach anyone because you're not allowed to even talk about the things of God there. So, I mean, a lot of people say, well, a lot of people are found in this place and they've got to be reached, so we've got to go into that place. Well, they don't spend all their time there.

If you can catch them when they're not in the bar, all the better. If you can catch them when they're not at the seance, all the better. You know, because for one thing, when people are drinking, although they need to be reached, I have some experience with this.

I did street ministry for many years and I've ministered to drunks on many occasions. A few times I've seen them blubbering repentant words and prayers and so forth in their drunken state. I thought, wow, praise God, this guy needed Christ badly and he's finally turned to Christ.

As soon as he sobered up, he didn't remember anything or if he did, he didn't have any heart for it. I mean, that's not the most opportune time to reach them. I'm not saying that if you find yourself necessarily in a situation which is less than ideal, that you shouldn't be aggressive with the gospel in that situation, but I think what Paul is saying is you don't have to go into idle temples to get these people.

They don't spend all their time there. If you want to reach these people, have them over to your house or go over to their house or do something that's not going to communicate to them some kind of endorsement on their behavior, which you do not, in fact, endorse. You don't endorse their occultic behavior, so why give them the wrong impression by making it sound, you know, by your actions that going to such a place is really okay.

I'm not saying that a Christian ends up sinning by going into a bar if he's going there to witness. I'm not saying he ends up sinning, but I am saying he might be communicating something that he doesn't really intend to be communicating by his very act of being there. I believe that we are eternally secure as long as we don't disregard God's warnings.

If a person says, well, God gave me all these strong warnings, but I'm going to ignore them and I'll still be secure, I think that's a bit presumptuous. If you observe God's warnings, those warnings serve as means of escape from temptation. You ignore the warnings, you pass up the escape doors and you find yourself down the hall where

there's no more escape doors left and you're just kind of barreling toward temptation without much options left.

As far as eternal security is concerned, eternal security means that I'm, you know, I don't have to be afraid that as I'm seeking to walk with the Lord, something is going to overpower me and rip me off from the Lord. You know, he that has given me to God, to Jesus, is greater than all and no one can pluck me out of his hand. And the Bible says, Jesus said that in John 10, that doesn't mean I can't escape if I'm foolish enough to do so.

If a person refuses to flee from idolatry, he can't blame God or say that God didn't keep him secure when God told him to flee from idolatry if he falls into idolatry and loses his soul over it. I think that's what Paul's saying. A person who thinks he stands has to be cautious.

He might not stand. He might not be as strong as he thinks. And standing would mean he goes into the idol's temple and he thinks he's going to not be compromised.

Well, be careful. You should rather be fleeing from idolatry, not trying to see how cozy you can get with it without falling. Verse 15 says, I speak to wise men, judge for yourselves what I say.

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? She's talking, of course, about the regular Lord's supper that they would take, probably on a weekly basis. For we being many are one bread and one body, for we all partake of that one bread. Observe Israel after the flesh, are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything? Or what is offered to idols is anything? 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 have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons.

Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he is? Now, what's he saying here? He illustrates from the common practice of Christian communion and also the common phenomenon of the priests in the temple eating the sacrifices from the altar. And he says, now there's something mystical that goes on here. When we break this bread and we bless it and when we drink this cup and bless it, isn't there something we're professing to happen mystically? Isn't there some communion taking place? Isn't there some fellowship and some joining together communion? Koinonia means sharing some you know, some communing, some sharing that's going on, some fellowshiping that's going on.

There's a fellowshiping with Christ and with each other. There's like a mystical union. We're all one bread, even though we're many.

We're all part of one body and that's what we're commemorating and there's just something happening there. I'm not saying that Paul is making this into some kind of a magical, mystical event. But he's saying the very act of eating at the Lord's table is a way of declaring something.

And that is that we're one with Christ and we're one with these people that we're eating with. We're many members, but we're one bread, one body. Now, if that's what we do when we take communion, and if the priest when they eat from the altar, it's quite clear that they are eating at the altar because they are separated unto the God whose altar that is.

That's why they're able to eat of his sacrifices. They're priests, they're holy unto him. Whether it's the God of the Bible or a pagan god, priests eat the food of the sacrifice because of their connection to the God to whom it is sacrificed.

Christians take communion, declaring their union with Christ. Now, what do you think the idolaters are doing when they eat at their feasts? It's not just nothing. They're sacrificing their stuff to demons, and I don't want you to have communion with demons.

You can't eat at the table of the Lord and the table of demons, he says. Now, he doesn't say it's impossible to because apparently some Christians were doing just that. They'd come to communion, eat at the Lord's table, then they'd go to an idol temple, eat at the demon's table.

But he says you can't get away with it, is what he means. That's what he means when he says, or do we provoke the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he? It's not an innocuous, meaningless thing when you eat at these temple feasts any more than it's a meaningless thing when Christians get together and have their holy meals. They're professing allegiance to Christ, they're professing union with Christ, with each other.

They're saying we're all one here and with Christ. What do you think's going on at the idol feasts? They're all claiming to be one in the worship of this idol. Now, what are you doing there? You're at the table of the devil.

And it's a table of the devil as surely as our table is the table of the Lord. How can you be at both? That's what he's saying. Now, verse 23.

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but all things do not edify. We've encountered this line of this statement of course before in 1 Corinthians 6 12 where he said all things are lawful to me, all things are helpful, all things are lawful to me, but I will not be brought into bondage to any.

He's apparently again quoting back to them their own motto, that everything is lawful to them. And while this may be true, some things are just plain stupid. Some behaviors, though you could maybe say there's no law for the Christian forbidding it, yet it's just plain dumb if what you're interested in is being edified and edifying others.

And you know, if you're interested in spiritual things, some behaviors are just counterproductive. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being. Paul said essentially the same thing in Philippians 2. Verse 4. Philippians 2.4. Paul says let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Philippians 2.4. If you're only concerned about what you have the right to do, you're thinking about only yourself. And Paul says that's not the way to be. Don't seek your own interests.

Don't seek your own well-being, but seek the well-being of the others. All things may be lawful for you to do, but not all things will edify other people. And that should be a concern to you even more than the question of whether all things are lawful.

Now, he gives some very practical instructions, which they must have been wondering about. Some of them must have been wondering about. Verse 25.

Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions, for conscience's sake. For the earth is the Lord's in all its fullness. Quoting Psalm 24.1. If any of those who do not believe invite you to dinner and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no questions for conscience's sake.

But if anyone says to you, this was offered to idols, do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you and for conscience's sake. For the earth is the Lord's and the fullness of it. Again, quoting the same verse, Psalm 24.1. Conscience, I say, not your own, but that of the other.

For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? If I'm partaking with thanks, why am I evil-spoken of for the food over which I give thanks? This is an objection he expects they'll raise. Why should my conscience be judged by someone else? If my heart's right before the Lord, what business does anyone have judging me? And Paul sort of answers in verse 31, Therefore, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.

Just as I also please all men and all things, as he pointed out in chapter 9, he became all things to all men. I do that, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved. Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ, he says.

Now, what I do is what Christ did. And what I do is what you should do. What's he saying? Now, when you go in the meat market or when you're invited over to someone's

house for a meal, you realize, of course, that some of the meat there could easily be the remnant of something sacrificed to idols.

You don't have to be all scrupulous about it, like the Jews would be. You don't have to wonder if you're defiling yourself if you eat some meat that happens to be such a remnant. There's no magic about that meat that will defile you.

However, in any such situation, if a person informs you that the meat is, in fact, offered to idols, then don't eat it. Why? Well, he's assuming that if you're ignorant of it, no one can hold you accountable even if they think it's wrong. You're doing something in ignorance, even if they know it and you don't.

But if they inform you that it's sacrificed to idols, it's obvious that they think that's important or should be important to you. Maybe it isn't, and maybe it doesn't have to be, but they think it should be, or else they wouldn't have mentioned it to you. If they invite you over and say, by the way, this meat has been sacrificed to idols, they're telling you that because they think that should matter to a Christian.

And therefore, he says, since it matters to them, don't eat it. And in both cases, first of all, when he says you can eat anything that's put before you, asking no questions for conscience's sake, he says, for the earth is the Lord's and the fullness of it. Quoting the psalm, meaning that it doesn't matter if it's been offered to an idol.

In the final analysis, everything is God's. People may offer it to an idol, but that doesn't change the fact that it's really God's. You can eat it as something devoted to God, if you want.

You eat with thanks, it's sanctified by the Word of God in prayer. It doesn't matter where the meat came from, it's God's and the whole world is God's and everything in it. And you can eat it as such.

But if they inform you that it's been sacrificed to idols, and you realize that this can be a stumbling block to them, just don't do it. He says in verse 28 again, for the earth is the Lord's and its fullness. And by this he means, because the food is the Lord's, you should eat it in such a way as to please the Lord.

On the one hand, because the earth is the Lord and the fullness of it, there's nothing that you can't eat for scrupulous reasons. Everything's the Lord's. On the other hand, because it's the Lord's, it's not yours.

It's His, and therefore you should eat it to His glory, if at all. And if the only way you can act toward His glory is by not eating it, then that's what you should do, because it's His, not yours. The same statement cuts both ways, both in permitting and forbidding.

Because the bottom line is in verse 31, therefore whether you eat or drink, or whatever

you do, do all to the glory of God. Anything you do, even such things as deciding what to eat or drink, how much to eat or drink, or any of those factors, things that are ordinary, daily, mundane stuff, even those things are to be rendered as a service for the glory of God. And to glorify God necessitates that you don't put stumbling blocks in front of people.

So He says in verse 32, give no offense, either to the Jews or the Greeks or the church of God. You stumble Christians, you could cause one to perish from whom Christ died. Stumble a Jew or a Greek, you might prevent them from coming to Christ.

Just restrain your behavior for the glory of God. Not for your own... Don't just indulge yourself for your own pleasure. And he says, this is what I do.

He's already made that plain. That's what chapter 9 was all about. How Paul himself restrains himself for the sake of the gospel.

He says in verse 33 here, just as I also please all men in all things. That doesn't mean he was a man pleaser. In another place in Galatians 1.10 he says, if I was still pleasing men, I would not be the servant of Christ.

But what he means there is tailoring his gospel, changing the gospel in such a way as to please men. If he did that, he couldn't serve Christ. There are some non-negotiables.

But in many things, like whether I'm going to eat something or not, whether I'm going to indulge a particular act or not, those areas I can submit to other people about for their sake, for their profit. Not seeking my own profit, but for the profit of many that they may be saved. And therefore he says in the only verse of chapter 11 is you got to do what I'm doing.

Imitate me. What I'm doing is what Jesus did, he says. And you should do it too.

Well, when did Jesus do it? Well, he brings that point out in Romans 15.1 when he's talking about the same thing. In Romans 15.1 actually through 3, we then who are strong, that have strong consciences, not tender ones, ought to bear with the scruples of those who are weak and not please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification, for even Christ did not please himself.

So that's the point he's making. Christ didn't please himself. He didn't come to please himself.

Therefore we should be followers of Christ. Paul himself was a follower of Christ, an imitator of Christ in this respect. And so were they to not please themselves, but to seek the edification of others.

And thus we come to the end of the material end of our time.