

First Corinthians 10

Introduction:

1. This is the last of three chapters dealing with matters of liberty, particularly eating meat offered to pagan idols at Corinth.
2. We are able to see three different levels of instruction here as well, just like we did when studying through chapter 9.
3. Therefore, our first goal is to think meat offered to idols, identify several supporting lessons, and then to look for jewels.
4. We will encounter some dividing of the word of truth to exercise our spiritual perception and faithfulness (II Tim 2:15).
5. Noble hearers receive the word with all readiness of mind and search it later with careful efforts (Acts 17:11), for until you have invested comparable hours studying a passage and its numerous implications, you should be a good listener!
6. For those of you who think I do not linger long enough on any given point, you may consult this detailed outline later.

Outline of Chapter 10:

1. History of church in the wilderness (1-5)
2. Israel's example is for our learning (6-12)
3. Rules for dealing with temptation (13)
4. Saints cannot commune with devils (14-22)
5. Rules for meat offered to idols (23-30)
6. General rule of avoiding offence (31-33).

10:1 Paul introduced the church in the wilderness for the examples they provide against sin.

- A. As we begin this chapter, remember Paul is still pursuing his subject of meat offered to idols.
- B. He will first review the history of the generation under Moses for God's judgment of them.
- C. "Moreover" indicates a new and additional argument beyond his personal example (9:1-27).
- D. There was a sense in which Paul did not want the Corinthians ignorant about that generation.
- E. Jude did not want his readers ignorant either, "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not" (Jude 1:5).
- F. The Israelite fathers in the wilderness are called the church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38).
- G. Paul called them "fathers," for spiritual fathers, though there were many Gentiles (12:2,13).
- H. Paul connected the saints at Corinth and the church in the wilderness by using "fathers."
- I. We sing, "Faith of our Fathers," for His saints in earlier generations are our spiritual fathers.
- J. Earlier generations of saints are our examples and our present witnesses (Heb 12:1-2,22-24).
- K. God's holy and personal presence in the cloud was always with them in their journeys in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22; 14:19-20; 16:10; 40:34-38; Numbers 9:15-22).
- L. God providentially led all of that generation through the Red Sea on dry ground with Moses.
- M. God mercifully delivered that generation from the bondage of Egypt by His mediator Moses.
- N. Jude specifically calls this event a salvation, which did not preclude chastening (Jude 1:5).
- O. Observe that "all our fathers" is constantly stressed to show generality of heavenly blessings.
- P. The church in the wilderness was blessed with many providential gifts, but God judged them.
- Q. Paul humbled the Corinthians from their haughty confidence in gifts and knowledge (10:12).
- R. He needed to warn the haughty Corinthians against relapsing back into idolatry (v7 cp v14).

10:2 The church in the wilderness was baptized unto Moses by the covering cloud and the Sea.

- A. Paul is connecting these Gentile converts to their Israelite fathers by intricate symbology.
- B. The wilderness church had at least as many spiritual and providential blessings as Corinth.
- C. Immersion under the cloud and in the Sea was a figurative baptism to Moses, their Christ.
- D. Paul is lining up various benefits Israel had to show them comparable to the Corinthians.
- E. Moses was a type of Jesus Christ, for he was the mediator of the old covenant (Gal 3:19).
- F. And the Israelites put their trust in him and the LORD by going down into the Red Sea.
- G. Let all those who contend for sprinkling or pouring consider the location of our "fathers."
- H. These saints, having been saved out of Egypt, went down under the water to enter their rest.

- 10:3 **The church in the wilderness ate manna from heaven, figurative of participating in Christ.**
- A. Israel murmured about food, so God sent bread from heaven and quail at night (Ex 16:1-12).
 - B. The Israelites ate manna every in the morning and quail in the evening (Exodus 16:13-15).
 - C. The church in the wilderness ate manna for forty years until in Canaan (Exodus 16:16-36).
 - D. Paul called the manna “spiritual meat,” for it was sent down from heaven and typified Christ.
 1. We must choose about “spiritual meat”: only Christ, only manna, or Christ typically.
 2. Remember Paul’s purpose – to show providential and spiritual similarities to Corinth.
 3. He had just mentioned a typical baptism, which is entirely a New Testament ordinance.
 4. It is Christ typically, for there was literal manna, and Paul is giving literal events (1-2).
 5. The bread came down from heaven by the Spirit of God to sustain them supernaturally.
 6. Moses and Israel knew the bread to have spiritual significance (Deuteronomy 8:3; Nehemiah 9:15,20-21; Psalm 78:23-25; 105:40; John 6:31-33).
 7. Living on manna required faith, for they did not plant or sow for forty years (Deut 8:3).
 8. And Jesus, the true bread of life, allowed manna a spiritual sense (John 6:31-33,49-51).
 9. It signified their spiritual provision of life by God, for they were fully the people of God.
 10. And it signified their participation in the true bread of life that was coming – Jesus Christ.
 11. To leap to a quick cross-reference with John 6:53-55 is too narrow and manipulative, for that eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood was belief on Jesus of Nazareth.
 12. It is leaping at the sound of words rather than investing study to identify their true sense.
 13. If it is only participating in Christ legally or vitally, why the use of meat, drink, and rock?
 14. To leave it only manna is too natural and ignores the “spiritual” adjective and context.
 15. All these fathers, as a church, ate the spiritual type of Christ, for they were in Christ.
 16. They were told of Christ, as the prophet God would raise up like Moses (Deut 18:15-18).
- 10:4 **The church in the wilderness participated figuratively in Christ as well as the Corinthians.**
- A. They all drank the spiritual drink – water from a rock by the mercy of God typifying Christ.
 - B. See the very same arguments above for “spiritual meat” for this “spiritual drink” of water.
 1. We must choose about “spiritual drink”: only Christ, only water, or Christ typically.
 2. It is Christ typically, for there was literal water provided, and Paul is giving literal events.
 3. God gave water from rocks to sustain their lives at least twice (Ex 17:1-7; Num 20:1-13).
 4. The Holy Spirit gave water to Israel (Neh 9:15; Psalm 78:15-20; 105:41; 114:8; Is 48:21).
 5. Jesus is the water of life of salvation (John 4:7-15; 7:37-39; Revelation 21:6; 22:1,17).
 6. Water in the desert signified their spiritual provision by God, for they were His people.
 7. To leap to a quick cross-reference with John 6:53-55 is too narrow and manipulative, for that drinking was of His blood, which never came from a rock in the wilderness; and the drinking of His blood was coming to and believing on Jesus of Nazareth.
 8. It is leaping based on the sound of words rather than on the sense of them by context.
 9. If it is only participating in Christ legally or vitally, why use the terms drink and rock?
 10. To leave it only water is too natural and ignores the “spiritual” adjective and context.
 11. All these fathers, as a church, drank the spiritual type of Christ, for they were in Christ.
 - C. They drank of the spiritual Rock following them, and that Rock following them was Christ.
 1. See the same arguments above for the “spiritual meat” and the “spiritual drink” of Israel.
 2. We must choose about “spiritual Rock”: only Christ, only rock, or rock typical of Christ.
 3. The literal rock only gave water as the spiritual Rock Christ Jesus spiritually provided it.
 4. Jesus Christ was the Rock of Israel, in His divine nature (Deuteronomy 32:4,15,18,30-31; I Samuel 2:2; II Samuel 23:3; Psalm 18:2,31,46).
 5. Jesus Christ is the Rock of our salvation (Psalm 118:22; Is 28:16; Zech 3:9; Matt 21:42).
 6. How did the rock follow? The rock moved? The streams followed? Or Christ followed?

7. Israel made 38 stops in their exodus from Egypt and roaming around for forty years.
 8. New Testament revelation of the rock moving would not be exceptional (II Tim 3:8).
 9. The language “that Rock was Christ” is no more literally binding than “This is my body,” or any of the other numerous symbolic and typical metaphors pertaining to Jesus Christ.
 10. All these fathers, as a church, drank from a rock typical of Christ, for they were in Christ.
- D. All the fathers had the ordinances of divine service, because they were the church (Heb 9:1); they participated as much in Christ for their time as the Corinthians did for their dispensation.

10:5 **In spite of great spiritual and providential advantages, God severely chastened the sinners.**

- A. Paul had reviewed numerous providential and spiritual blessings upon the wilderness church, yet God judged them severely in the wilderness for their unbelief and foolish sins (Jude 1:5).
- B. These fathers in the wilderness were children of God and saved through Christ by covenant.
 1. We consider them collectively as saints, just like we consider N.T. churches collectively.
 2. Paul called them “fathers” of Corinthian Gentiles, which can be only spiritually (10:1).
 3. They were chosen (Deut 7:6-8), chastened (8:5), children (14:1), and loved (33:1-3).
 4. They were used as illustrative examples for saints (10:6-11,14; Heb 3:1,6,12-14; 4:1-3).
 5. Paul will shortly disclose that similar chastening was happening at Corinth (11:28-32).
 6. They had the ordinances of divine service, because they were the church (Hebrews 9:1).
- C. They were unconverted in many respects, were chastened severely, and missed God’s best.
 1. While they believed at times, they were generally unfaithful (Ex 14:31; Ps 106:10-12).
 2. Paul taught elsewhere these Israelites did not believe the gospel (Heb 3:16-19; 4:2-3).
 3. He dealt thoroughly with the lack of faith of that generation (Ps 95:7-11; Heb 3:7 – 4:11).
 4. Stephen taught that those Jews worshipped others gods in the wilderness (Acts 7:37-43).
 5. They lusted (10:6), idolized (10:7), fornicated (10:8), tempted (10:9), murmured (10:10).
 6. There were many instances of God’s displeasure with them and severe judgment of them.
 7. No one over twenty years old made it to Canaan, except for Joshua and Caleb (Heb 3:16).
 8. Moses and Aaron, quite faithful, did not believe (Heb 11:23-29; Num 20:12; 27:12-14).
- D. The Corinthians had no right to boast in their spiritual advantages without proportionate fear.
 1. Israel in the wilderness was God’s church, beloved of God, but punished for carnality.
 2. Though they were blessed with many spiritual gifts, God would still judge for sin (1:4-7).
 3. Spiritual advantages, like gifts or knowledge, do not preclude the severe wrath of God.
 4. Paul will clearly tell the Corinthians shortly that God was judging them (11:27-32).
 5. If they played with idolatry or wanted to go back to “Egypt,” God would judge them.
- E. We know temporal chastening, from man’s view, is not evidence for or against eternal life.
 1. God promised to chasten His covenant children, yet preserve them forever (Ps 89:28-37).
 2. Chastening may appear like judgment, but be the proof of salvation (11:32; Heb 12:5-11).
 3. A child of God, secure in salvation by grace, can be severely judged by God in this life.

10:6 **The church in the wilderness by advantage and judgment gave examples against lusting.**

- A. The “these things” are the things given so far: their great providential and spiritual blessings and privileges, and their severe destruction in the wilderness under the wrath of God.
- B. The “neither” of the next verse will add other more specific examples of carnality (7-10).
- C. The Corinthians and other New Testament saints should learn from that lustful generation.
- D. Rather than be amused at the stories or despise Israel for their lustful rebellion, we should read the Old Testament with a mind to examining our own lives for foolish lust and rebellion.
- E. The church in the wilderness lusted for Egypt and its fleshpots (Num 11:1-6,33; 14:1-4).
- F. When facing the good land of milk and honey, they wanted to return to Egypt (Num 14:1-4)!
- G. What a subtle reminder by Paul for these Corinthians not to lust after Corinthian meat!
- H. Reader, what are you lusting for in this world that will bring judgment, or cost you Canaan?

- 10:7 **The church in the wilderness was tempted to idolatry when they made the golden calf.**
- A. Because Paul quoted from Exodus 32:6, we know the event here is Aaron's golden calf.
 - B. Aaron and Israel still worshipped the LORD in name with the golden calf (Ex 32:1-6), but such corruption of God's worship is absolutely forbidden by the LORD (Deut 12:29-32).
 - C. Moses ground up their calf, put the powder in their water, and made them drink it (Ex 32:20).
 - D. Moses sent sons of Levi through the camp to kill 3,000 friends and relatives (Ex 32:25-29).
 - E. What was the cause of this gross idolatry? They got impatience with their pastor (Ex 32:1)!
 - F. If you were a Corinthian, would you get the point here ... or would you get it later (10:21)!
 - G. Paul uses "idolatry" and "eating" to subtly poke the Corinthian readers in his first example.
 - H. Reader, what idols have you set up in your heart or in your life to take you away from God?
- 10:8 **The church in the wilderness was tempted to fornication with Moab when 24,000 died.**
- A. The daughters of Moab were the source of temptation for the men of Israel (Num 25:1).
 - B. This is the great event where Phinehas halted the Lord's judgment by his zeal (Num 25:2-9).
 - C. Though 23,000 died in one day according to Paul here, a total of 24,000 died (Num 25:9); which is easily reconciled by 1,000 living into the next day or days. We are Bible believers!
 - D. Corinth was a city given to fornication and lasciviousness, and so is the United States today.
 - E. Reader, where do you allow fornication in your life? Thoughts? Modesty? Television?
- 10:9 **The church in the wilderness complained against their circumstances and many died.**
- A. We tempt Christ when we foolishly presume on His promises or provoke His wrath by sin.
 - B. They were making their way toward Canaan and became far too discouraged (Num 21:4-9).
 - C. It is one thing to be cast down, but another to be destroyed – moved to sinning (II Cor 4:9).
 - D. If anyone thinks the brass serpent is a perfect analogy of freewill and a general redemption, please note that many were already dead before the brass serpent was even constructed!
 - E. Reader, when do you get discouraged so much you give up and let the flesh take over?
- 10:10 **The church in the wilderness murmured against God and Moses and many were destroyed.**
- A. They murmured often (Ex 14:11; 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3-4; Deut 1:27), but Korah and friends did so particularly against the Lord's use of Moses and Aaron as leaders (Num 16:1-40).
 - B. Though Korah and others were swallowed alive, the people murmured again the next day; and the LORD sent a plague among them that took another 14,000 (Num 16:41-50)!
 - C. Here is where the Corinthians should have checked their spirit against the apostle Paul (9:3).
 - D. They murmured often, but they did so particularly against manna, for meat (Num 11:1-35).
 - E. They murmured often, but they did so greatly in murmuring against Canaan (Num 14:1-45), so the LORD destroyed them over the next forty years with an extended destruction.
 - F. Only "some" of Israel died in the wilderness for this murmuring, for those under 20 all lived.
 - G. It is a temptation for Christians to murmur or complain, which we must avoid at all costs.
 - H. The Lord Jesus Christ should be enough for you to be content in life (Heb 13:5-6; I Tim 6:6).
 - I. Reader, what do you murmur about in your life? Spouse? Church? Money? Friends? Office?
- 10:11 **Paul concluded this history of the church in the wilderness by showing their example to us.**
- A. Adding four more examples of sin and judgment, Paul described them as "all these things."
 - B. These examples warn us of the judgment we must expect, if we play with any of these sins.
 - C. The history of Israel, which most of you read every year, is for your admonition in holiness.
 - D. There was no protection for Israel in the election of God or the ordinances of the church.
 - E. The "ends of the world" are the last stage of world history before the coming of Jesus Christ.
 - F. Reader, how are you compromising your safety and tranquility by following those sinners?

- 10:12 **There was no room for haughty confidence by any believers in the church at Corinth.**
- The Corinthians were arrogant and haughty in their spiritual gifts and knowledge as a church.
 - The church in the wilderness was not short of them in grace, but they were judged severely.
 - There is no place to put confidence in treating sin lightly, for God will surely judge that man.
 - On what basis do you think you have God's approval? There is only one basis – godly living!
 - We cannot become self-confident, at all! We must remain ever dependent on the Lord Christ.
 - The warning of Jesus, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," is reflected often.
 - Solomon teaches often in Proverbs that pride cometh before a fall (Pr 16:18; 18:12; 29:23).
- 10:13 **God does not tempt any man in any matter that he cannot well handle by God's grace.**
- Here are precious rules and promises that ought to help bear us up when we are tempted sore.
 - This verse is here for any saints overly intimidated or frightened by Israel's pitiful history.
 - Though you feel your temptations are exceptionally hard, they are equal to those of others.
 - Of course, at times you are tempted by trials or sin more than you are at other times.
 - But others experience the same cycles of blessing and temptation toward them as well.
 - Your temptation may also differ in kind, but it does not differ much in draw or weight.
 - God is faithful – He rules all temptations – and He will not allow you to be tempted too hard.
 - God does not tempt any man by creating lust in the heart of man toward sin (Jas 1:13-16).
 - But God does tempt men by creating difficult circumstances and situations (Gen 22:1-2).
 - Because God rules temptations, we ought pray to be lead away from them (Matt 6:13).
 - He remembers your frame when He tempts, and you can remind Him (Ps 103:14; 13:3).
 - God will always provide a way of escape out of every situation, so we can truly bear them.
 - Please grasp how the apostle continues to provide arguments against abusing their liberty; for anyone gripped by the chilling examples given could confidently know they can be avoided.
- 10:14 **Paul gently began bringing his arguments to a close by warning them against idolatry.**
- The "wherefore" shows he is drawing a conclusion from all that has been written from 10:1.
 - Paul used Spirit-inspired wisdom to win and warn these presumptuous saints from idolatry.
 - Paul epitomized the saying, "Wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt 10:16).
 - He has not mentioned their indirect idolatry, nor even meat offered to idols, since 8:13.
 - And he addressed them as dearly beloved, following his multiplied arguments for them.
 - With all he has said, saints would jump up and say, "I'll have nothing to do with idols!"
 - It is wisdom to help sell your correction or rebuke of a child or brother with affection.
 - He is about to prove by a few arguments that eating in the idol's temple was idolatry (14-22).
 - Though they did not call such eating idolatry, the blessed God did for its intimate connection.
 - It is here that saints must consider Halloween, Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day, etc., etc.
- 10:15 **He appealed to them by Christ's gentleness and meekness to consider three reasons.**
- Consider how he addressed them as wise men, which would help relax their defensiveness.
 - Though he knew they were quite ignorant in some things (3:18; 4:10; 10:1; 12:1; 14:38)!
 - Wisdom, as Solomon taught often, is the power of right judgment; which is confirmed here.
 - The sacrificing of liberty (8:1 – 9:27) and the examples of wicked Israel (10:1-13) are over.
 - Paul dealt with three specific situations – eating meat in the idol's temple (14-22), buying meat in Corinth's markets (23-26), and eating meat with an unbelieving neighbor (27-30).
 - He asked them to use wisdom and understanding to rightly judge his next three arguments.
 - Wise men will appeal gently and sincerely to another man's wisdom when rebuking him.

10:16 **Paul used the Lord's Supper to show the intimate union with Christ of eating and drinking.**

- A. Remember his subtle introduction of eating and drinking in idolatrous religion earlier (10:7)?
- B. Here is the only Bible place that the Lord's Supper is called communion, and that indirectly.
- C. His subtle argument is that partaking of sacrifices brings one in common union with the idol, but he used the communion of the Lord's Supper to introduce the argument most gently.
- D. The cup of blessing was the cup of red wine used to symbolically represent Christ's blood.
 - 1. The word "cup" is used metonymically for the wine in the cup, as in the formula (11:25).
 - 2. The fruit of the vine, contained in the cup of the Lord's Supper, is a blessing (Ps 104:15).
 - 3. By fruit of the vine, it is grape (Matt 26:29). By effect at Corinth, it is wine (I Cor 11:29).
 - 4. Its great blessing is the truth it tells of eternal redemption by His blood (I Peter 1:18-20).
 - 5. It is blessed, when the administrator offers thanks to God for it before partaking (11:25).
 - 6. By partaking of the cup, we show our common union in the blood of Christ (Luke 22:17).
 - 7. **Communion.** Sharing or holding in common with others (OED). See also II Cor 6:14.
 - 8. Though the Catholics withheld the cup for 1500 years, Jesus gave it to all (Matt 26:27).
 - 9. Do not be confused by the word or concept of "communion." It is used only here for the Lord's Supper. It means the common union that believers have with Christ by His blood.
- E. The bread that is broken was the unleavened bread to symbolically represent Christ's body.
 - 1. Unleavened bread, used from the preceding Passover, was broken into pieces for eating.
 - 2. By eating the bread, we show our common union in the torn body of Jesus Christ (11:24).
 - 3. Of course, we do it to remember Christ's death until He comes, but we also show unity!
 - 4. A single loaf is always used; which must be broken in pieces for each saint to show unity.
 - 5. Therefore, we reject the machine processed little crackers and wafers used by most today.
- F. The Lord's Supper is often and properly called Communion, because it shows the common union of believers in a New Testament church in the Person and Sacrifice of Christ.
- G. Wise reader, judge his point: partaking of the Lord's Supper is common union with Christ; therefore, partaking of an idol's sacrifice shows common union with the idol and idolaters.
- H. He puts the wine before the bread in this context for easy transition to the next verse.

10:17 **Paul furthered explained how bread at the Lord's Supper shows our total unity in Christ.**

- A. The plural believers making a church are one bread and one body by union in Christ (12:12).
- B. The bread broken for communion gives two pictures – individual pieces from one loaf indicating our participation in one body, and the body of Jesus Christ being broken for us.
- C. During the Lord's Supper we take one loaf and break it into pieces to show common union!
- D. We do not use manufactured crackers or wafers that were never part of a loaf as others do.
- E. There are three ideas on communion: open, close, and closed: we keep closed communion.
 - 1. How can a church keep church judgment of I Cor 5 with other than closed communion?
 - 2. How is doctrinal and practical unity truly known but among members of a local church?
 - 3. For many more arguments: <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/BibleTopics/Communion/ClosedCommunion.htm>.
- F. Wise reader, judge his point: partaking of one loaf shows our unity together in Christ; therefore, partaking of one bull offered to Zeus would show unity with idolaters of Zeus.

10:18 **Paul then used Israel and the sacrificial system to show further participation with the altar.**

- A. Consider; Paul is building a case that eating in a temple is common union with the idol (21).
- B. There are two Israel's – Israel after the flesh and the Israel of God (Rom 2:28-29; Gal 6:16).
- C. Without regard for spiritual significance, Israelite partakers of sacrifices were worshippers, for the only ones allowed to partake were those worshipping the God of Israel.
- D. Wise reader, judge his point: those who ate the sacrifices in Israel were participating in the worship of God; therefore, eating the sacrifice directly from the altar was worshipping idols.
- E. Paul was able to use Israel's sacrificial system against pagan idolatry, for devils ape the truth.

- 10:19 **Paul reminded the Corinthians he had already stated his position that idols were nothing.**
- A. By the use of rhetorical questions, he stated clearly that he still held the idol to be nothing.
 - B. He had stated this clearly in the very beginning of introducing the problem (I Cor 8:1,4-6).
 - C. He maintained his agreement with the stronger brethren in Corinth that the idol was nothing.
 - D. He held his agreement with the stronger brethren in Corinth that the meat was not altered.
 - E. It is not the idol itself that alters the place or the meat, but rather the fellowship with idolatry!
 - F. Wise reader, judge his point: he will not give ground and allow stronger brethren to object by admitting that the idol is intrinsically of any significance in itself, or that the meat is changed.
- 10:20 **Idolatry is devil worship, and Christians should not have any fellowship with devils.**
- A. While he agreed in principle the idol and offered meat were nothing (19), he yet showed that idol worship was worshipping devils, which Christians should reject absolutely and totally.
 - B. He now got tough about idolatry – there are devil spirits being worshipped through idols.
 - C. Though pagans may say they are worshipping God, they are in fact worshipping only devils.
 - D. There is a spirit world out of sight: it is devils we are to fight (Eph 6:10-19; Rev 12:17).
 - E. Paul knew his enemy and blinding influence on hearers (II Cor 4:4; I Thes 2:18; Zech 3:1-2).
 - F. Wise men understand that opposition to Christ is from the devil (John 6:70; I Chron 21:1).
 - G. Each human being in the world is either a child of God or of the devil (Genesis 3:15; Matthew 13:38; John 8:44; Acts 13:10; Ephesians 2:1-3; I John 3:8,10).
 - H. Devils provide the lies of false religion miracles of idol worship (John 8:44; II Thess 2:9-10).
 - I. Note how they ape God's religion with first, animal sacrifices, and then, false Christianity.
 - J. This understanding of pagan worship was taught in the Old Testament (Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:17; II Chronicles 11:17; Psalm 106:37-39).
 - K. Consider even the man of sin, the papacy of Rome; it is the work of the devil (II Thess 2:9).
 - L. Consider even the doctrines of the Roman church; they are doctrines of devils (I Tim 4:3).
 - M. Consider the Jesus, gospel, and spirit of false Christianity; it is Satan (II Cor 11:3-4,13-15).
 - N. The crucifix, Mass, Hail Mary, and Pope are so manifestly devilish as to annihilate argument.
 - O. Christians must reject fellowship, common union, or agreement with devils (II Cor 6:14-17).
 - P. A Christmas tree, by virtue of pagan and devilish worship, is having fellowship with devils!
 - Q. A sunrise service, by virtue of pagan and devilish worship, is having fellowship with devils!
 - R. A Valentine's card, by virtue of pagan, devilish worship, is having fellowship with devils!
- 10:21 **Christians cannot commune by eating with Christ and also with the devils of idolatry.**
- A. He earlier appealed against eating in the temple by liberty, to begin very gently (8:10-11).
 - B. It should be self-evident: a Christian cannot take the communion cup and the devils' cup.
 - C. It should be self-evident: a Christian cannot eat of the Lord's Table and the devils' table.
 - D. Paul showed the connection to the idol by considering the Lord's Table and Israel's altar (16-18); he added that an idol is a front for devils (19-20); and then he showed the sin clearly as trying to hold communion with both the Lord Jesus Christ and with devils (21)! Powerful!
 - E. He will condemn agreement, fellowship, or communion with false religion further in the very popular passage being unequally yoked together with unbelievers (II Cor 6:14-17).
 - F. It is there we are specifically told to separate from them and not even touch unclean things.
- 10:22 **Eating meat in an idol's temple provoked the Lord to jealousy and mocked His strength.**
- A. The LORD Jehovah is a jealous God, as in hating any form of idolatry (Ex 20:1-7; 34:14).
 - B. He is most possessive and jealous; He demands our entire affections; jealousy creates rage.
 - C. He will not give any of His glory to graven images, as He hates them greatly (Isaiah 42:8).
 - D. The blessed God hates the mixture of idolatry with His worship (Deut 12:29-32; 32:21).

- E. He directed idolatrous Israel to leave off His name and take up idolatry fully (Ezek 20:39).
- F. Idolatry is the ultimate in spiritual adultery, which offends Jehovah terribly (Ezek 16:25-34).
- G. Is it a wise thing to provoke holy Jehovah, the only true God, to jealousy with idolatry?
- H. The rhetorical question needs a negative answer; Paul is not asking the mere simple question.
- I. He is asking, “Do we dare?” “Do we wisely?” “Do we rightly choose to provoke the Lord?”
- J. Who is stronger than the Most High and can take such liberties and dangers with impunity?
- K. Reader, what do you value in your life that compromises your absolute devotion to Christ?

- 10:23 **Paul then returned to consider sacrificing things of liberty for expediency and edification.**
- A. Having condemned eating meat in the idol’s temple (14-22), he takes up two other situations.
 - B. There is a definite switch here, and we should recognize it: moving to matters of liberty.
 - C. In this one verse, he summarized all he taught in chapters 8 and 9, the welfare of others.
 - D. Things might be lawful (meat offered to idols), but they might not be expedient (suitable).
 - E. Things might be lawful (meat offered to idols), but they might not be edifying (constructive).
 - F. Some things are wrong outright, but lawful things are ruled by usefulness and edification.
 - G. Reader, do you use all lawful but questionable things in a way that is useful and edifying?
- 10:24 **Every man should seek the spiritual welfare of others, rather than selfishly seek his own.**
- A. Matters of liberty (meat offered to idols) should be used preeminently with others in mind.
 - B. All choices we make in matters indifferent should be made to profit the souls of our brethren.
 - C. The “wealth” considered here is spiritual progress, a clean conscience, and righteousness.
 - D. The highest definition of love is serving another to maximize their approval by Jesus Christ.
 - E. Reader, do you have the spirit of Paul for the eternal and spiritual welfare of other saints?
 - F. If you have liberty to drink wine, do you only use it in such a way to make others better?
 - G. Sister, you have liberty in clothes; but do you always choose clothes to protect brothers?
 - H. Man, you have liberty in speech; but do you choose your words for the good of others’ ears?
- 10:25 **Paul allowed the Corinthians to eat meat sold in the meat market without asking questions.**
- A. Offered meat and un-offered meat was sold indiscriminately, from which they could buy.
 - B. **Shambles.** *plural.* A place where meat (or occasionally fish) is sold, a flesh- or meat-market.
 - C. Paul’s practical advice was to not ask about the meat to avoid any conscience problems.
 - D. In such a matter of liberty, ignorance is bliss, for your conscience can simply eat it as meat!
 - E. If a brother with a weak conscience were to ask you later about it, you would not know!
 - F. Since you are not in the temple, near the altar, or choosing idol meat, God does not care.
 - G. Yet, by what went before (23-24) and what follows (28), others could end your purchase.
 - H. If you have official or practical duties with idolatry indirectly, go in peace (II Kgs 5:18-19).
- 10:26 **The basis for possibly eating offered meat is the knowledge of God, Who owns all meat.**
- A. Paul returned to the powerful argument of our knowledge of the one and only God (8:4-6).
 - B. All the meat on the market counter should be viewed as the Lord’s, for He created it all; and this is possible, even if the meat had been offered to idols, for there was no knowledge of it.
 - C. A person could simply buy meat, as meat, without any regard for idol worship whatsoever.
- 10:27 **Paul allowed the Corinthians to eat meat at unbelievers’ dinners without asking questions.**
- A. How can a saint eat with an unbeliever, but not an excluded brother (5:11)? A greater crime!
 - B. Minor companying with the fornicators of this world is part of living in the world (5:9-10).
 - C. But those turning from the truth should be shunned (Romans 16:17-18; II Thess 3:6,14-15).
 - D. Pagans would periodically have feasts and invite their neighbors without stating the purpose.
 - E. The event here is comparable and similar to what is commonly called a “block party” today.

- F. If a saint were inclined to go, they were allowed to go and eat without asking about the meat.
- G. In such a matter of liberty, ignorance is bliss, for your conscience can simply eat it as meat!
- H. If a brother with a weak conscience were to ask you about it later, you would not know!
- I. Again, the meat on the table should be considered the provision of the Lord God (26,28).

10:28 **However, if a man made the meat a religious issue, the saints could not continue eating.**

- A. A man identifying the meat as offered to idols exposed two consciences – his and yours.
- B. You first should not eat of it due to the conscience of the man pointing out the fact to you, who for whatever reason is making the meat a personal matter offensive to himself.
- C. The conscience in this verse is your conscience, proven by asking no questions (25,27); after knowing it is meat offered to any idol, there is no room for the ignorant bliss you had sought.
- D. The conscience in this verse is your conscience, proven by the separation from the identifier.
- E. The unbeliever or weak brother is either testing your faith or testifying of his faith: either condemns the meat, for you do not want to violate his conscience or condemn your own.
- F. Since the earth is the Lord's and meat is owned by Him, the idol's meat should be rejected.
- G. Notice Paul's use of this phrase in verses 26 and 28 to both justify and condemn eating!
- H. Even very lawful things can become wrong when they are made an issue by other observers.
- I. A man pointing out meat was offered to idols makes it a conscience matter for him and you, for you are then eating meat specifically identified as associated with an idol and its devil.

10:29 **Though having liberty in a thing, saints want to avoid other consciences condemning them.**

- A. This and the following verse are not objections against honoring another's conscience, though they sound that way. Paul is explaining a further aspect of another man's conscience.
- B. There are three aspects of conscience here: the sake of him that showed it (28), your own conscience, which is no longer ignorant (28), and the first conscience condemning you (29).
- C. Here is a powerful ellipsis, for the conscience in 28 is certainly the believer's; but the other's conscience is also important, for an unbeliever or weak believer can judge your liberty!
 - 1. The conscience in 28 is the believer's conscience because of asking no questions (25,27).
 - 2. The conscience in 28 is the believer's conscience due to separation from the identifier.
 - 3. The conscience in 29 is the weak believer's or unbelievers by virtue of "but of the other."
 - 4. The ellipses are "only" and "also," for the phrase carries the clear sense, "Conscience, I say, not thine own [only], but [also] of the other."
 - 5. By removing "only" and "also," the care of the other conscience is exalted beautifully.
 - 6. Such use of an ellipsis, limiting or modifying a negative, can be found in several places (Matt 6:25,31; 7:1; John 4:42; 6:27,38; I Cor 7:29-30; Jas 5:12; etc.).
- D. Others could easily judge a Christian's conduct as being lascivious or atheistic in conduct, even though the believer had a perfectly good conscience about what he was doing.
- E. Paul stylistically assumed the first person here to describe doing something by his own liberty, but being condemned by another man, who viewed his actions as ungodly.
- F. Paul used the first person to show his own will to go to such lengths to avoid false charges.
- G. Christians do all things honestly before men and avoid looking evil (Ro 12:17; I Thess 5:22).
- H. Christians do all things, even good things, in a way to avoid appearing evil (Rom 14:16-18).
- I. The glory of God is in view (10:31), which is damaged by other's condemning your liberty.
- J. Reader, do you make sure avoid anything, even something good, which could be offensive?

10:30 **Though liberty exists for a thing, we should guard against charges of evil or hypocrisy.**

- A. See the notes on the previous verse, where Paul introduced this view of others' consciences.
- B. Paul used the first person to show his willingness to avoid condemnation in lawful things.
- C. Paul asked, "Why would I go ahead in a lawful thing and justify condemnation by others?"

- D. A man, who knows he can graciously partake of meat, should not do so if it raises eyebrows.
- E. The glory of God is our ultimate objective, which is compromised by appearing to do wrong, even if we know what we are doing is not wrong! That is how we exalt the glory of God!

10:31 **The general rule applying to meat offered to idols and all other things is to glorify God.**

- A. This verse is located here as the explanation for 29-30, where good actions can be criticized.
- B. The proper glory of God in our sight and in the sight of others should be our constant goal.
- C. You can deface the glory of God by not taking into proper account the consciences of others.
- D. All lawful things should be pursued with thanksgiving in the name of Jesus Christ (Col 3:17).
- E. We must always seek the glory of God and His religion in His sight and the sight of men.
- F. We must ask, “Is God Himself pleased?” “Is God glorified?” “Is my conscience pure?” “Are others made weak?” and “Could others perceive evil and falsely accuse my religion?”
- G. Reader, are you answering all these questions before doing anything questionable in public?

10:32 **We should go as far as possible to avoid offending any within or without the church.**

- A. The Jews and Gentiles required different approaches, but offence to both should be avoided.
- B. The Jews were scrupulous about minor things; and the Gentiles did not care about anything!
- C. Then there was the church of God, where weak brothers could be tempted by most anything.
- D. The offence here is creating stumblingblocks and a temptation for others to sin (8:9,12).
- E. But there is also the offence of having your good conduct evilly spoken of (Rom 14:16).
- F. Paul had already explained his varying conduct in various places to save others (9:19-22).

10:33 **As opposed to offending any weak consciences, we should rather do all to edify them.**

- A. We want to do all we can to help and serve others for the conversion of as many as possible.
- B. These are not matters of doctrine or godliness, but rather matters of liberty and indifference.
- C. This single verse summarizes what Paul taught in detail about self-denial in liberty (9:1-27).
- D. The burning love of your soul should be the spiritual growth and peace of men (Rom 14:17).

Conclusion:

1. The matter in Corinth was primarily meat offered to idols, which was a serious problem in the early churches.
2. But we have other matters such as wine, television, tobacco, modesty, hobbies, speech, athletics, etc., etc.

Additional study:

1. The doctrine of closed communion: <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/BibleTopics/Communion/ClosedCommunion.htm>.
2. Why Christmas is idolatry: <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/BibleTopics/Holidays/WeDontCelebrateChristmas.htm>.
3. Why Valentine’s is idolatry: <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/BibleTopics/Holidays/valentines.htm>.
4. Spiritual adultery: http://www.letgodbettrue.com/Sermons/pdf/Spiritual_Adultery.pdf.
5. Eating and drinking Christ of John 6: http://www.letgodbettrue.com/Sermons/pdf/Eating_and_Drinking_Christ.pdf.