

(1 Corinthians) Christian Liberty and It's Limitations

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen emphasizes the importance of limiting Christian liberty through love for others and the advancement of the gospel in his sermon on 1 Corinthians.

Duration: 50:58

Scripture: Romans 15:3, 1 Corinthians 10:7-12, 1 Corinthians 10:14, 1 Corinthians 10:31

Topics: "Christian Liberty", "Spiritual Discernment"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being wise and cautious in our choices regarding entertainment and media. He warns about the potential dangers of movies, music, and other forms of art that can lead people back into sinful behaviors. The preacher encourages believers to consider the impact their choices may have on others and to prioritize love and edification over personal preferences. He also highlights the need to understand the continuity of the Apostle Paul's arguments in the Bible, rather than just focusing on individual chapters and verses.

Transcript

Today to the eighth chapter in our study of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. And the eighth chapter begins a section that deals primarily with the limitations of Christian liberty. And it continues on through the first verse of the 11th chapter.

And today we're going to try to make it through these three chapters because I want you to see the continuity of thought here and to understand the arguments that Paul is presenting when it comes to the subject of Christian liberty. And so we're going to have to go rather quickly through it. But of course, we have the option of coming back to some of these things later.

But I think it's important to get the flow of thought from the beginning of the eighth chapter all the way through the end of the 10th chapter and then the first verse of the 11th chapter. So keep that in mind. The issue here has to do with Christian liberty and the limitations to Christian liberty.

And let me just break it down for you chapter by chapter real quickly. Chapter eight shows us that our liberty is limited by love for other Christians. That's sort of the essence of the eighth chapter.

The ninth chapter shows us that our liberty ought to be limited for the sake of the gospel. Our liberty ought to be limited for the sake of the gospel. And then the 10th chapter shows us that liberty at times must be limited lest we find ourselves back in bondage.

So these are the three things that Paul is going to cover in these chapters. You know, so often when you're reading through your Bible, we fail to follow the train of thought and therefore we miss the essential message that's being communicated. There are times, of course, when we don't go through our Bibles in the sense we just sort of open them randomly and pick out a verse and the verse seems to be applicable.

And so we go with it. And that's fine. It's OK to do that occasionally.

But the important thing is to get the essence of what the apostle is trying to communicate. The important thing is to understand that he's arguing for something. And because our Bibles are divided into chapters and verses, sometimes we can miss an argument because we just look at it.

But by chapter and verse, we study the 8th chapter and we think, oh, that's wonderful. And then we move on to the 9th chapter and we fail to see the continuity. And then by the time we get to the 10th chapter, we wonder, what does this have to do with anything? And how did he get here? So, again, it's important to follow his train of thought.

So we want to try to do that all the way through. So chapter 8, verse 1, Paul says, Now concerning things offered to idols. We know that we have all knowledge.

Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by God.

Now, the Corinthians, of course, were notorious for intellectual snobbery. They were very proud of their learning. And the city of Corinth, as we understand from our initial studies of this epistle, was a center of Greek thought and learning.

And that mentality had crept into the church. And so Paul is once again addressing those who have knowledge, but he's speaking to them in somewhat of a sarcastic manner because their knowledge has puffed them up. Their knowledge has produced an arrogance about them.

And in their arrogance, they're not considering other people. They're not sensitive to the weaknesses of other people. And so that's what he means when he says knowledge puffs up, but love edifies or the word edified can be build up.

So knowledge has the tendency to make one arrogant and to look down on others subsequently. But love is concerned with building up another person. And that's the thing that the apostle wants to emphasize here.

He wants to emphasize that having knowledge is fine, but make sure that your knowledge is coupled with love and that you deal with people on the basis of love first rather than on the basis of knowledge. So he says, therefore, concerning the eating of things offered to idols. Now, let me say this before we move on.

To some degree, the actual problem that Paul is discussing is somewhat irrelevant to us here in this culture. But there are principles contained here in his argument that are totally relevant to us regardless of the culture. Now, there are, of course, cultures where these things are literally applicable.

There are cultures that are still immersed in idolatry and making sacrifices to idols and things like that. These things are still literally relevant among Hindus, among Buddhists, among animist people who are still steeped in idolatrous practices. Of course, these verses would have a direct application to them.

But for most of us living in Western culture, that isn't so much of an issue. But yet certain principles, as I said, are still very relevant to us because the whole issue here is the exercise of Christian liberty and the limitations to Christian liberty. So with that, he says, therefore, concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know, we know, when he says we know, he's talking about those who have knowledge.

We know that an idol is nothing in the world and that there is no other god but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we for him and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things and through whom we live. However, there is not in everyone that knowledge.

He's addressing those who have this knowledge. They're mature enough to understand that an idol is really nothing. It's just a wooden image or a stone image or a metal image.

It's nothing. It's not a god. There's only one God.

He says, we know this, but not everyone among us knows that. Not everyone is attained to that mature understanding of things spiritually. He says, for some with consciousness of the idol until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol and their conscience being weak is defiled.

So, you see, some in the fellowship had not attained to this liberty. They hadn't come to this place of being able to look at an idol and just say, oh, that's nothing. It's just a piece of wood or it's just made of stone.

There's no spiritual authority to it at all. There were some in the fellowship that were still living with some of the superstitions from the past, and therefore, when it came to an idol and having any association with any aspect of idolatry, they were very, very sensitive in this particular area. Now, among the people, there was this idolatrous worship that would go on regularly, and part of the idolatrous worship involved certain feasts during the year where people would come together and celebrate and they would eat food together.

The implication is also that in the temples of the idols, they had little restaurants actually set up. You see, people would come and they would bring their meat as an offering to the priest and the priest would inevitably end up with more meat than he himself could use. And apparently they decided to open up a little business and have a little restaurant on the side and make a little money off of the meat that was brought in.

But the meat had always first been offered to an idol. Now, some of the more mature Christians are the ones who had the superior knowledge in this sense. They understood that this whole idolatry thing is meaningless.

There's only one God. So they'd get a good deal on lunch. They'd go down to the idol's temple and they would eat there.

They didn't have any problem with it. It wasn't an issue to them. But there were others who didn't have that same kind of confidence, and of course, that became a problem for them.

And that's what Paul is talking about here. So he says, you see, not everyone has this knowledge for some with consciousness of the idol until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol and their conscience being weak is defiled. But food does not commend us to God, for neither if we eat, are we the better, nor if we do not eat, are we the worse.

But beware. And this is where the application comes in. But beware, lest somehow this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to those who are weak.

For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge, shall the weak brother. Perish for whom Christ died. So you see what Paul is saying to them.

Is that love is to be the rule when it comes to Christian liberty, Christian liberty is to be limited by love for other people. The goal is to build people up in the faith, not to tear them down. And if my liberty, if the exercising of my liberty is going to possibly stumble a weaker Christian than out of love for them, I need to forego my liberty.

I need to let it go. And Paul gives an illustration of one who has the liberty they're eating in the temple, one who doesn't have the liberty, seeing this other person exercising their liberty and then their conscience is emboldened. They say, oh, well, if he can do that or if she can do that, then I can do that also.

They go ahead and they do it. And then their conscience smites them. And what happens is that Satan takes advantage of their weak conscience and he brings condemnation upon them.

And in doing so, he. Destroys, to some degree, the work of Christ in their life. Now, Paul is not implying here that.

Their faith is completely destroyed, the word perish here can be translated destroyed, it can be translated to lose something that you had. What he's talking about is that the Christian who comes under condemnation loses ground in their walk with the Lord. And what he's saying is we never want to be the cause of that in another person's life.

So he says, but when you thus sin against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat lest I make my brother stumble to see Paul is showing them by his own example, the position that he's going to take. Of course, Paul had the same knowledge.

He knew that an idol was nothing. But yet at the same time, he wanted to build up other people. So if he saw that his liberty could possibly be a stumbling block to a weaker person, he wasn't going to exercise his liberty.

And he says it very adamantly. He said, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat lest I make my brother stumble. In other words, I'm willing to forego that liberty for the sake of someone else.

Now, again, the eating of meat and the whole issue of things being sacrificed to idols isn't really relevant to us necessarily. But there are certain things that I think could be put in the place of the example that Paul gives, things that are relevant to our culture and could potentially stumble a person, certain areas where we might feel a freedom to enjoy certain things that other people might not have that same liberty toward. And therefore, we need to be sensitive to those things.

Let me give you an illustration. Let's just say for illustration's sake, there's a person who comes into the fellowship, becomes a Christian and comes out of a life that was a life given over to debauchery, a life that was given over to drunkenness, a life that had been devastated through the abuse of alcohol. Now, here comes this person.

This person is now a Christian. Christ has come into their life, set them free from their sin, set them free from the devastating consequences of their sin that was brought through the alcohol and so forth. And they have now this strong conviction that they're never to be associated with anything like that again.

They just feel very strongly that to enter a pub or to even, you know, bring home something to drink and enjoy it after dinner, that's something that they just could not do. Now, they meet an older Christian, one that's been a Christian longer. They have a pretty good grasp of the scriptures.

They understand the grace of God. They understand that there are certain liberties that a Christian does have. And they begin to look to this Christian as sort of an example, someone that they want to emulate, someone that they want to follow.

And they confide maybe with this other person, this area of weakness and this conviction that they have that they can't be involved in something like that. For the stronger Christian to say, oh, oh, that's that's legalism. That's foolish.

No, you you have liberty. Come come on down to the pub. I'll buy you a beer right now.

It's not a problem. You see, to do that would be wrong because you're going to wound their weak conscience. And likewise, and then if they see you sitting at the pub, their conscience would be emboldened.

Oh, well, I guess if they can do it, I guess I can do it as well. And they go ahead and do it. But where you do it and you don't have any convicted conscience over it, they do it.

Condemnation comes upon them. They feel like, oh, I've done it. I've committed the unpardonable sin.

God can never forgive me. And it could conceivably even lead them through condemnation and despair back into the very lifestyle that Christ saved them from. So what's the conclusion? The conclusion is this.

I, who have liberty, must at times limit my liberty for the sake of another person. Sure, I have the freedom to do it, but I must always ask this question. Is my liberty going to be a stumbling block to a weaker person? And if my liberty is going to possibly stumble a weaker person, then I have to limit my liberty for love's sake.

See, that's what Paul's getting at. And so the first point here in chapter eight is that Christian liberty is limited by love for others. Now, as we move into chapter nine, again, the same subject, but just a slightly different application to it.

He says, am I not an apostle? Am I not free? You see, here's the issue, the issue of liberty coming up. Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ, our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. My defense to those who examine me is this.

Do we have no right to eat and drink? In other words, do we not have liberty? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also other. Apostles, the brothers of the Lord and Cephas, or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Whoever goes to war at his own expense, who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, you shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. Is it oxen God is concerned about or does he say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes no doubt this is written that he who plows should plow in hope.

He who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more nevertheless? We have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. You see what Paul is saying, what he's arguing.

He says, I have certain liberties. I'm free. I don't have to work like I do making tents.

I could easily require that you provide for me because that's perfectly consistent with what the scripture teaches. He said, I have the liberty to be married and to take my wife and my family with me into the ministry. He said, but I have deliberately set aside those liberties lest the gospel of Christ be hindered.

So here we see in Paul that liberty at times is to be limited for the sake of the gospel. In other words, if the use of my liberty would hinder the furtherance of the gospel, then I ought to set my liberty aside so the gospel can go out freely. That was Paul's mentality.

He says, do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple and those who serve at the altar partake of the offering of the altar? Even so, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. So it's perfectly consistent with scripture for those who are ministers of the gospel to be provided for by the people they minister to. But, Paul said, I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me, for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.

For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me. Yes, woe is me if I do not 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. For though I am free, the issue of liberty again, for though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all that I might win the more.

You see, Paul is saying here, I've limited my liberty, lest the gospel be hindered. I have foregone certain privileges that I might otherwise enjoy. I have done it so that there can be no stumbling block, that I might potentially win more people to Christ.

Now he goes on and he gives an example. He says, and to the Jews, I became 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 here's an important point that we need to emphasize. I want you to notice what Paul is doing. Paul says, I've become all things to all men.

So many people have misinterpreted what Paul meant. People have misinterpreted what he meant and actually use this verse to justify the very thing the apostle is condemning. They've used this verse to justify the exercise of their liberty.

Paul didn't mean when he said, I've become all things to all men, that he was exercising his liberties to the extreme. What Paul was doing was limiting his liberties and becoming all things to all men. That's what he was doing.

He wasn't adding more and more to his list of liberties to become all things to all men. He was actually taking away from his liberties. Now, I emphasize that because I have heard people justify some of the most carnal behavior by quoting Paul out of context here.

I've seen Christian people who have gone out and basically just become very much like the world. And then you look at him, you say, well, why are you doing this? Hey, I'm becoming all things to all men. That I might win the more.

Well, the question is, are you winning anybody? Well, not yet. Nobody knows I'm a Christian yet. I've blended in so well.

You see, that's the danger. That's the danger. We just have to be careful.

And people have misinterpreted Paul and and they're using this all things to all men, really just to, in some cases, be as much like the world as they possibly can. You know, I'm always suspicious when someone, you know, suddenly goes through some real bizarre change. You know, just to give you an example, you know, let's just say for illustration's sake, you have, you know, a fairly conservative sort of a person.

And. You know, suddenly they show up tattooed from head to toe, rings all over their body. You know, they've got this entirely new look, they might even come pull up on a Harley Davidson or something, you know, and.

Tell you they're on their way to minister. And you're looking, I'm saying, wait a second, you know, who are you? What are you? What happened? The person is completely out of character. This isn't who they are.

And yet they're attracted to this sort of a lifestyle, so they're going to. They're going to justify the lifestyle that they're attracted to and compromising with it by saying, I'm doing this for the Lord. I'm doing this for ministry.

Well, no, that's that's entirely wrong. Now, if that's who you are, if you've got tattoos and nose rings and all of that, that's fine. God wants to change you in that area, that's up to him.

But to adopt. This new persona to adopt this new look and all this, this is the kind of thing that. That is not what Paul is referring to here.

And we have to be careful again, becoming all things to all men was limited, limiting his liberties, it wasn't expanding them. And so you find people who will say things like. You know, they spend their most of their time in the pubs as a Christian.

Well, what are you doing there? Well, I'm becoming all things to all men. I'm drinking with them and I'm carousing and I'm doing all these things to show them that, you know, a Christian can live a normal life and, you know, I'm going to witness to them and I'm doing what the apostle did. I'm becoming all things to all men.

No, that's not what the apostle did. Limited his liberties. So we have to be careful because the flesh is so subtle.

Satan is very wise, too. He can come and make these kinds of suggestions to us. And and what it is, it's just really a cloak to live after the flesh.

And we just put a spiritual, put a spiritual label on it. So we have to really guard against those kinds of things. And if we're going to become all things to all men in the sense of following the apostle, that means we're going to limit our liberties in certain ways as he did.

That's what he's talking about. He says, now this I do for the gospel sake. You see, he was doing it for the gospel sake.

And that's that's the whole issue. If I'm really doing something for the gospel sake, well, that's that's the right that's the right motive for doing it. But I need to make sure that that is why I'm doing it and that God has called me.

To do that. So he says, 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 tempered in all things.

Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we 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 less when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

So this is what Paul is doing. He is willing to limit his his liberty so that the gospel can go out freely. And he never wants to exercise his liberty to a point that he would become disqualified as a minister of Christ.

Now, again, looking at this chapter in the light of contemporary things, people who are in the ministry are going to have to at times limit their liberty so that the gospel is not hindered. I know of a pastor who, based upon all the years that he's been in ministry, all the faithful service, has a legitimate salary with which he could, you know, live on a much higher standard if he chose to do so. But he intentionally limits himself in that area so that he's not a stumbling block or a hindrance to the gospel.

And one of the practical things that he's done over the years in seeking to avoid hindering the gospel is he has refused to purchase a brand new car. And whenever he purchases a car, he always purchases a used car. Now, he has every right to buy a new car.

He has the money to do it. He has every right to drive a new car. But yet, because so often there are people who are purporting to be in ministry who are taking advantage of people financially and flaunting that by driving, you know, the brand new car, the latest model and all of that, he's very concerned that he would not stumble anyone with something like that.

So his commitment is just, I'm going to drive a used car and it'll never be an issue. He has the liberty to drive a new car, but he's not going to because he doesn't want to be a stumbling block or a hindrance to the gospel. So those who are who are in the ministry, like Paul was, we have liberties, but there are times when we must forego the liberty because in exercising the liberty, the gospel could possibly be hindered.

And Paul's heart was to never hinder the gospel, to never do something that would give an offense so that someone else could look on and say, you see what I said about those Christians? Oh, look at this person who claims to be a servant of God. Look how they live. Look at their lifestyle.

Those those are the kinds of things. That's what Paul is talking about here. And so the second thing is that liberty is limited for the gospel sake.

Now, as we go into chapter 10. Follow again closely the argument here, Paul is going to now get down to another important thing that we must keep in mind when it comes to liberty, and that is that we never are to exercise our liberty to the point of finding ourselves back in bondage once again. So he says, Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink.

For they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. But with most of them, God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

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, nor let us commit sexual immorality as some of them did. And in one day, 23,000 fell, nor let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted and were destroyed by serpents, nor complain as some of them complained and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall." Now again, here we have to connect it back to where we began in chapter 8. He's talking to now the knowledgeable person, the one who's concerned about exercising his liberty. He's talking to the guy who goes into the idol's temple and sits down for lunch. And he says, if any man thinks he stands, let him take heed, lest he fall.

In other words, what he's saying is, watch out that your liberty doesn't lead you back into sin. Oh, you have all this liberty to go to the idol's temple. Well, you better watch out, lest you get too comfortable in the idol's temple, and pretty soon you find yourself back in idolatry.

That's the point that the apostle is making here. So he says, no temptation has overtaken you, except such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men, judge for yourselves what I say. So Paul is now going back to that issue, and he's showing that he's actually concerned for these people who claim to have so much knowledge that they have the kind of liberty that could lead them to go dine in the idol's temple.

And he's saying to them, flee idolatry, don't have anything to do with idolatry. Oh, yes, you have liberty in this area. Forgo your liberty.

Because if any man thinks he stands, let him take heed, lest he fall. This is how people fall back into sin. Generally speaking, they fall from their walk with Christ back into sin because they start dabbling with things that they shouldn't be dabbling with and they approach it in an arrogant way, thinking that this is not going to have any effect on them.

But in actuality, it does have effect on them and they end up falling back into it. Now, listen to what he says, 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? For we, though 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? Rather, that the things which a Gentile sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. And I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.

You see now, Paul. He has already acknowledged that an idol is nothing and that there is only one God. But now he points out that there is something to idolatry beyond just the image, that there are demons connected directly with idolatry.

And therefore, to go into the idol's temple in this exercise of liberty, what you actually end up doing is participating in something that is very demonic. And in doing so, you're endangering yourself. That's what he's pointing out.

That's what he's talking about here. He says 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? All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let each one seek, but let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

So you see now, Paul brings the whole thing around. He begins in chapter eight by talking about the liberty they had, acknowledging that there is only one God, that the idol itself is nothing. But now he brings it around.

He says, look, when the Gentiles are doing these sacrifices, they're actually worshiping demons. Do you want to go in and participate in this? Do you want to have part with that? And so what he's saying, in essence, is beware, lest your liberty leads you back into sin. And that, of course, is something that we today need to be aware of.

I could go on and on telling you about the people that I've known over the years who have been insistent on exercising certain areas of Christian liberty and are now no longer walking with Christ. They're back in the world because they insisted that they could participate with the world, that they could enjoy the same entertainment that the world enjoyed, that they could listen to the same music that the world listened to, that they could participate in the same things that the world participated in, and it was not going to have any effect on them. See, in reality, it has had an effect on them, and many have gone back into the world.

You see, the whole thing is very subtle, and we have to always remember the demonic element. Satan is behind the course of this world. The Bible makes that perfectly clear.

The course of this world is being directed by the prince of the power of the air. And so as we go out in the exercise of liberty and start participating too closely with the world, we endanger ourselves. But you see, again, beware lest any man think he take heed, lest any man think he stand, or if any man think he stand, lest he fall.

I have to be aware of the fact that I can be pulled away from Christ. I can be drawn back into the world potentially, and therefore, I need to be very wise in my dealings with this world. We have the arts today.

We have movies and the theater, and we have music and all of those things, and we have liberty in those areas. But when it comes to those kinds of things, we need to be very careful because what is orchestrating that whole dimension is the devil himself. And how many people are being caught up and drawn away through the pull of maybe a movie and the philosophy that's being communicated through that movie? How many people are being sucked back into sexual immorality because of something they've subjected themselves to visually? How many people are being seduced mentally because of the message they're listening to musically? You see, we have to be really wise.

I think like, you know, many people, I have certain things that I really like, certain styles of music I like, and I have things that I like, but I don't allow myself to participate in them simply because I don't want to stumble somebody else, I don't want to hinder the gospel, and I don't want to end up back where I started. I don't want to end up back in the world. And I know that that's a possibility.

That's a reality. Music, for example, I love all kinds of music, and boy, I can listen to a certain group and just think, yeah, oh, that's my kind of music right there. But you know what I find happening is when I subject myself to that regularly, I find myself being preoccupied with that and not with the things of the kingdom of God.

And a lot of times, I also find myself reflecting back on my former life because my former life used to so much center around that kind of music. And we can easily find ourselves just swept up in the course of this world if we exercise our liberty beyond what we ought to. We need to be careful.

For the sake of the weaker brother, for the sake of the gospel and for our own spiritual well-being, we need to be careful with the things that we subject ourselves to. And we need to remember, if any man thinks he stands, let him take heed lest he fall. Oh, that could never affect me.

Oh, I'm immune to that. Well, Satan is very subtle. I don't think there's a backslidden Christian in the entire world that intended on backsliding.

They didn't set out to do it. They didn't say, oh, I'm going to do this and this is going to lead me to fall away from Christ. No, instead they said, oh, this isn't a problem.

I can handle this. This isn't really a big deal. We have to be so careful.

Now, finishing up, Paul's going to give some basic guidelines for this whole thing of of eating the problem that the Corinthians were faced with. He says, eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience sake, for the earth is the Lord's and all its fullness. If any one of those who do not believe invites you to dinner and you desire to go eat whatever is set before you, asking no questions for conscience 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 sake, for the earth is the Lord's and all its fullness. Conscience, I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks? See, Paul is saying, again, for the sake of someone else, limit your liberty.

And the argument would be, well, I gave thanks for this. You know, how could there be anything the matter with this? If it potentially is going to offend, then we have to limit our liberty. Therefore, whether you eat or drink, and this is this is where he sums it all up and this is where every one of us ought to be, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

You see, if that's my thinking, then I'm not going to have to worry about stumbling someone about hindering the gospel or about myself falling back into sin. If I'm doing whatever I do for the glory of God, if I'm just asking myself the question as I'm going to exercise my liberty, is this going to glorify God? That's a question I have to ask myself. I had a situation a few years ago that really the Lord used this particular incident to to show me something about this whole subject of liberty.

Years ago, somebody had given me a just a cassette, music cassette of a secular band, a band that I really liked. And they gave it to me as a gift. And I figured, well, you know, I'm going to listen to it.

And I enjoyed it. And, you know, I think maybe I had a little bit of a check inside, you know, a little bit of like, I don't know if I should really be listening to this, you know, but just kind of pressed beyond that and did it anyway. You know, I just drive around in my car just listening to it, enjoying it.

Just a great, great sounding guitar, good voice, you know, all that kind of thing. And I got to a point where I wasn't even thinking about it. I wasn't thinking about it as being an issue.

And, you know, it wasn't leading me back into sin or anything. I was just enjoying it. And one day I was driving along and I came upon three or four young guys that I knew who went to the church.

And I was driving along in my car and they signaled for me to come over. And as I drove over to them and rolled down my window, almost unconsciously, I reached over and I flicked it off. And when I did that, all of a sudden, it dawned on me that something wasn't right.

Because I didn't want those young men to hear me listening to that music. And, you know, I had buried it down there and sort of just, you know, try to pretend like it was an issue. But with that unconscious act, I suddenly realized this is a bigger issue than I want to think that it is.

And what my motive was in not wanting them to hear it was simply this. Music is so subtle and such a powerful force in our culture. Here's a young Christian who can get caught up into the music thing, which can in some ways be innocent.

But later on, it can lead them further and further out to where finally the world has a complete hold of them. So, you know, these are the things that I have that liberty, but I have to limit my liberty lest they become a stumbling block to someone else. So this is it.

If what I'm doing cannot be done to the glory of God, then I ought not do it. It's as simple as that. I shouldn't do it.

If it can't be done to the glory of God, whatever it is, if it's not going to glorify God, if it's not going to further the cause of Christ in my life or in the life of someone else, then I just shouldn't do it, even though I might have the liberty to do it. I just shouldn't do it. Give no offense either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the Church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved.

Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ. Here's where you see those who put the Bible in chapters and verses made a real blunder in making verse 1 of chapter 11, verse 1 of chapter 11. It should be the final verse of chapter 10, because Paul then moves on to an entirely different subject.

But this is what he says, imitate me just as I also imitate Christ. And if you remember the parallel passage back in Romans, we studied that some time ago. Again, Paul pointed us to Christ and he said, Christ is our example who did not serve himself, but he served God.

And as a Christian, that is to be my position also. I'm not to serve myself. There are things that I like, things I enjoy, things that please me, but that's not that's not the final thing.

The final thing is I'm a servant of Christ and what pleases him and what glorifies him. So. Here we are.

Three chapters later. But yet you see the continuity of thought, and again, I thought it was important to follow Paul's argument all the way through. We have liberty.

All things are lawful for me, but not everything is helpful. All things are lawful for me, but not everything builds up. As Paul said previously, all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of anything.

Here's one final thought on Christian liberty. When you think of liberty, remember that liberty is first and foremost, the freedom not to do something. It's the freedom not to do something.

People are always thinking of it in the terms of freedom to do anything you want. No, liberty is first and foremost, the freedom not to do something. If you have to do something.

Then you're not free. You're bound. That thing controls you.

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